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**MILT HINTON**  
**NEA Jazz Master (1993)**

**INTERVIEWEE:** Milt Hinton (June 23, 1910 – December 19, 2000)  
**INTERVIEWER:** William Taylor  
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**TAYLOR:** Milt, really this is going to be really a *This Is Your Life* kind of interview. I've talked to you on many occasions and you've shared a lot of your memories with me but I'd really like to go back and do something we haven't done. First of all let's talk about your childhood. We'll start with your childhood. Do you remember your grandparents?

**HINTON:** Yeah, both my grandmothers. I remember both of my grandmothers. In fact my mother's mother was born a slave. She was born a slave of Joe Davis, Jefferson Davis' father. He was president of the South. After the Emancipation Proclamation she took the name of the overseer, which was Carter. So her name was Henry Lettie Carter. After the Emancipation she married a man named Matt Robinson so her last name was Henry Lettie Carter Robinson.

This man had a horse and a buggy. He was a hack man. He had what you call a carriage so he did very well. They had 13 children, most of them didn't really live. Only five of them really lived to be to their adulthood, which one was my mother.

**TAYLOR:** Why did they lose so many?

**HINTON:** Well smallpox, she spoke... told us so much, such terrible things about what happened with smallpox. She went... her husband died five months before the last child was born so she had... this woman 12 or 13 children.

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**TAYLOR:** Excuse me, what are we getting? I'm sorry. So you were saying that smallpox...

**HINTON:** My grandfather... I never saw either one of my grandfathers but my grandmother on my mother's side, her husband died five months before his last child was born. You can imagine an old lady with 10 or 12 children, a black woman in Vicksburg, Mississippi in those days.

She had a tough time but she worked for a family as maid that owned the department store, Bear Brothers. Bear was their name and they paid her \$3.50 a week for washing, ironing, cooking, and everything. But she cooked enough... she [unintelligible] to buy as much food as she wanted for them so she fixed for them and had enough left over for her children. They'd come in the back door after she fed the family and give the children to take home... the older ones to take home to the younger ones.

She evidently was a [unintelligible] old lady. Well I know she was because she lived quite some time. She asked this man if she could put a little stand up outside of his store because in the morning people would be coming to work and she'd sell them a cup of coffer and two biscuits for five cents in those days. She had made the jelly. She augmented her \$3.50 salary doing this.

She talked about the really sad thing of how she lost so many children during the... they had an epidemic of smallpox and there was no place for black people...

**TAYLOR:** No hospital.

**HINTON:** No hospital. They had what they called a Piss House where they put them and they quarantined our house so she couldn't even get to her children. She had to put food under the gate to them. She was quarantined then and the ones that were babies, really too small to get around, they'd let her take them to the Piss House. So she wound up in this Piss House with them and she told me what a terrible place it was. They didn't give them water. People would drink out the urinal.

She said she could see... in the morning she could see... they had what you call a dray, that's a two-wheeled wagon. They had carted up black people on this thing. They would be groaning and they would still take them to the graveyard. They were still... so it was kind of a tough scene for her. But she was a Christian lady and she lived until I was in Cab Calloway's band, 1939.

**TAYLOR:** Really, my goodness.

**HINTON:** 103 years old she made. She was the one that really kept our family together.

**TAYLOR:** What about your other grandmother?

**HINTON:** My other grandmother was from Africa.

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**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yes, she was brought here by missionaries. My father was brought here by missionaries. That's where we had the conflict in our family. They brought the African people to Mississippi and they couldn't conform to the society. My father married my mother and naturally he was a young man and they sent him to school for agriculture but he couldn't conform with those conditions so he left. My mother and him separated when I was three months old and she never saw my father again. I saw him when... the first time I saw my father, I was 30 years old in Cab's band.

**TAYLOR:** Really? He was still here in the United States?

**HINTON:** He went to Africa. Firestone had built a rubber plantation, [unintelligible] in Africa to stay away from [unintelligible] in South America so [unintelligible] he did plant this rubber plantation and he used these blacks that had some advancement about agriculture. So my dad went back there but what I can hear about him, he evidently... he wasn't too successful there even though he managed this plantation. He came back to the United States but he didn't come back to my mother. He came back to Memphis, Tennessee and he was very well educated in agriculture. A cotton sampler was the best job a black man could have down in the South because he had that big machete and when the cotton buyers had to go and buy cotton, he had to rely on the cotton sampler, this black guy, to set his machete and feel that cotton and tell him whether it was grade A or grade B cotton and they would bid according to that. So that was a pretty important job and a good job. So he was doing that. That's when I saw him. I was playing with Cab Calloway.

**TAYLOR:** You were traveling in the South then?

**HINTON:** I was traveling in the South with Cab Calloway's band, Cozy Cole, and she was there with me around about that time. I was playing a solo and Benny [Unintelligible] the piano player said to me, he said, "I heard your father's in town, did you see him"? I said, "No". He said, "Well there he is standing over there in the wings". I saw this guy standing over there looking exactly like me [laugh]. I didn't know what to say to him. He had contributed nothing towards my education and my well-being, and my mother had to [unintelligible] I was feeling so... and I didn't know what to say but he said the right words. He said, "Your mother's done a wonderful job". When he give my mother credit... because I hugged him and kissed him, and Cozy Cole, and Shavern, and all of us went to the bard and had a drink together. So he stayed there in Memphis and then when they built the atomic bomb in Oakridge, everybody was concerned with the cotton that were used down there. Cotton is the basis... cotton acetate is the basis for explosives.

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**TAYLOR:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**HINTON:** Yes, it's a very, very important basis so they took all of the people, whether they swept the floor or not, that knew about cotton, and that's where... my father died there after they had made the atomic bomb down there in Oakridge, Tennessee. That's the only thing I have of my father is his citation. They gave everyone that worked a citation because the place had gone up. Everybody was gone up. So the only thing I have of his is his citation from Oakridge saying this is... and his razor. So my early childhood in Mississippi was kind of sparse. My grandmother was the there and she took care of me. My mother was trying... my mother was the only of the children that had a chance of an education, that grew into adulthood. She had four sisters and brothers. Two sisters and two brothers and my mother. They're the five that lived through my lifetime. My mother was the only one that was... for some reason they kept her in school. My uncles, my mother's brothers would go down to the railroad shack in Vicksburg, Mississippi and thumb their fingers in their nose at the railroad engineers and they would call them all kinds of little black names and throw coal at them.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh].

**HINTON:** And they'd pick this coal up and take it downtown and sell it. We have those bayous in Mississippi down there. The Mississippi River on its way down to the Gulf of Mexico... by the time it gets to Mississippi it's going full blast and it's going so strong that it pushes fresh water 90 miles out into the Gulf.

**TAYLOR:** No kidding.

**HINTON:** Ninety miles out, and then when it recedes it backs up with heavy rains and the sea water backs up and then all the... backs up into all the ... backs up into these old underbrush places, what we call little holes and gullies and this is what you call bayous. The water backs up in there and all kinds of seafood and things in there, they can't get out because when the water recedes and they're trapped in there.

**TAYLOR:** They're trapped, yeah. So that's seawater that's... I see.

**HINTON:** That's seawater, yes, that's seawater, and fresh water that's...

**TAYLOR:** They're mixed, yeah.

**HINTON:** But we have all kinds of animals, fish and things that [unintelligible] for the sea. Those big turtles would be there and as a kid we used to go down there and take those turtles out and turn them over and [unintelligible] and take them downtown and sell them to the hotels and get a couple of dollars, a few pennies for [unintelligible].

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**TAYLOR:** You were saying that you and some of your friends would go down and find those turtles?

**HINTON:** Yeah, we'd go down to the bayous and skinny dip in the bayous. It was extremely dangerous. All kinds of cotton mouth moccasins in there, all kinds of varmint in there but we didn't care, we were skinny dipping in there and the Lord would be in our favor. Those days they was running from us. They were just as afraid of us as we were of them. We'd just hit the water with our hands like that and the snakes and things would go away. We'd get these big turtles and flip them out, turn them over so they can't move around and take them and sell them. So my early childhood was kind of a great thing. The only thing I can remember about my father, once he was... then he came back. I was with my grandmother and my mother. To get the story straight like this, our minister, the Reverend... this is kind of interesting. I think you might find it interesting because you know these people. The pastor of Mt. [Unintelligible] Baptist Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi was a minister named Reverend E.P. Jones, [Unintelligible] Perry Jones and you know them as the Jones boys in Chicago.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, sure.

**HINTON:** Well that was father and he was the pastor of that church. Well my mother was the organist in the church and as I said, she was the only one in our family that had any kind of education. We had a piano. All the choir rehearsals were held at our house. She was the choir director, organist and nursemaid for the Reverend [Unintelligible]. She took care of them and the youngest ones had to take care of me. So he was always preaching in that church to the older folks, "Get your young people out of here because there's no kind of opportunities for them". He preached that every Sunday in church, "There's no future for us, but see if we can get these young people out".

Well the powers that be heard this and they ran him out of town. They ran him out of town and he came to Chicago and he brought my mother with him. He got a church in Evanston, Illinois. I remained in Mississippi with my grandmother and the Reverend Jones came to Chicago. His sons came to Chicago with them and they got jobs on the railroad, Pullman Porters and jobs like that... and porter jobs.

And we stayed in Mississippi. In 1910, the year I was born, a black man couldn't just leave Mississippi. They kept that power structure there. You could not go down to the railroad and buy your ticket.

**TAYLOR:** Why?

**HINTON:** They wanted to keep that cheap labor because the black male is the labor. They didn't care about the women. They all boasted in the south that they [unintelligible] lynched a black woman. It was always a black man that was always given the big

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problems and so they wouldn't allow him to go down... to leave. He couldn't go down. My uncle worked in a white barbershop. My uncle, the first one that started in the Chicago in 1910, the year I was born, he was working at this white barbershop and no self respecting white barber would work on Sunday, but in 1910 white people didn't have bathtubs in their home. People came down to the barbershop on Saturday and on Sunday to get a bath. It was 25 cents to get a bath and a shave. They had the razors there, hot towels and everything.

The white boss would leave the barbershop in charge of my uncle, who was a porter, saying, "Now you keep those tubs clean, keep that water hot, charge 25 cents for the use of the"...

**TAYLOR:** Towels, yeah.

**HINTON:** "And tell me Monday how many you sold". Well if 40 people came in he got 40, 25 cents. Monday morning he told the boss he got 25. He kept 15 quarters for himself [laughter], and there was no way to give an account for that.

Then he found a friend in Chicago that wrote a letter to him saying he had an aunt in Memphis, Tennessee that was sick, that she was dying, that she would like to see her nephew before she died. He took this to his boss and his boss said, "Well in that case I'll let you go. If you've got the money to buy a ticket I'll take you down to the railroad station and buy you a round trip ticket. So he took him down to the railroad station, with the quarters that he'd been absconded, and bought him a round trip ticket. He said, "Now you go on up and see your aunt and you come on back here".

Well when he got to Memphis, Tennessee, he sold the other half of that ticket and came on to Chicago, and then in Chicago is when he found that things were great. Chicago was bursting, the biggest stockyards in the world was there. It was the center... the World War was getting ready to start, about 1917, and things were happening.

Black labor was very important. They needed porters. They was breaking the strike at the stockyard in Chicago so they were using black employees to break the strike. Porters there... bell caps, red caps in the railroad station... Chicago was like the center of the United States [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** So that was a lot work then for people.

**HINTON:** A lot of work. See everybody was... reminds me, all blacks from the south... that's the reason you see so many... I know just from my experience of my school days, the guys that I came up with, Joe Williams and all, they came from Alabama. Our folks were coming from Mississippi. Tennessee people were coming to Chicago, once they were listening to these ministers and things and getting their young people out.

And they all congregated in Chicago because there was lots of work. There was also a lot of good decent housing there, these three story houses. It was kind of expensive but if you're making \$30 a week now instead of \$3.50 a week, you can do very well.

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**TAYLOR:** You can afford it, that's right.

**HINTON:** So things were coming up and we were doing very well there. People were moving into Chicago from every place. Now that we all get there and get to working and get some decent places, then they sent for the old folks and children. So it took from 1910 when my first uncle left there, to 1918. After my mother came with Reverend Jones... and she sent for her sister. My other uncle, we found him a way to get out.

Now they've got all them in there, then the last people that left Mississippi from my family was the old folks and the children, my grandmother and I, and we left there. It took until 1918 before I got to Chicago.

I saw a lady last year in Vicksburg, Mississippi, I went down there, that knew my grandmother. This lady just passed away this year. She told me... like talking about memory, she told me that she knew my grandmother and she went to the railroad station, that's the day we left, and she said it rained that day.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh].

**HINTON:** And it really did. I've heard my grandmother mention it because we missed the train. She sold all of her furniture and everything and packed a lunch. She missed the train so we had to sit around the railroad station until the evening train came to leave. My mother had sent me a nice little suit and cap that had some cardboard deal in it and I had waited... this disrupted all of that stuff and they said when I got to Chicago we looked so bad they just bundled us in a cab real quickly to get us home so they could clean us up.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh]. Yeah, travel in those days was really a mess for black people...

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah it just was horrendous.

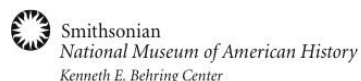
**TAYLOR:** Because the trains were dirty and you have very terrible accommodations.

**HINTON:** Yeah, you're right, there by the engine and the soot was all back there, flying back on you. Well that was 1918. I came to Chicago with my grandmother.

**TAYLOR:** Well tell me a little about your mother. You were saying that she was a musician.

**HINTON:** Oh, yes, my mother was a musician. She was a no frills lady, thank the Lord. She's a no frills person and you can see... from my mother you could see that we had a matriarchal society. A black woman could do practically anything she wanted to do and say things that the black man could not indeed...

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**TAYLOR:** Get away with [laugh].

**HINTON:** Not at all. An example, I remember an insurance man. We paid 15 cents a week for some insurance and the white insurance collector came to collect the insurance. He came to our house to collect the insurance. My mother would say, "Would you take your hat off in our house"? Well a black man couldn't tell a white man to take his hat off [laughter]. No kind of way. The guy would either take it off. Even if he said something mean up to her, he would do that. So it was that sort of thing. So my mother being the only one in the family that had... she had some education. The one thing that I regret to this very day, my grandmother had a little small baby grand piano in this house, we had a house with two rooms and kitchen up on stilts so the water could run from under there, how she ever got that piano... and I never thought to ask her why... because the choir rehearsals were held in our house on Thursday.

**TAYLOR:** {Laugh}, yeah, right.

**HINTON:** That's when music... there was always music around. You hear the people sing all these songs, *Dear Old Girl*, *The Robin Sings About You*, all these beautiful songs after church and then Thursday nights were rehearsals. So there was always music around there. But I never thought to ask my grandmother how she...

**TAYLOR:** Got that piano [laugh].

**HINTON:** So naturally my mother being somewhat of a musician... and she had to examine papers in the insurances.

**TAYLOR:** Did she study privately? Did she study music?

**HINTON:** She studied music with a teacher in Vicksburg. I don't know who the teacher was but she came to Chicago and she continued...

**TAYLOR:** So she was trained.

**HINTON:** Yeah, she was trained. Oh, yeah, she read well. I've got tapes right here where I did... I had in this house with her playing, her and I playing.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah. She was a very no frills lady. She was all for standing up for your rights and I guess I was never too much like that.

I think I might have told you sometime, Nat Cole was one of my mother's students and she liked him very much. We could never get along. She couldn't teach... you can't teach your kids. It's very difficult to teach your kids. She would always say to me,

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“Why can’t you be nice like Nathaniel?” And I couldn’t stand him [laughter], because he was nice.

He was [unintelligible] my mother... his father, Nat’s father in Chicago had a little storefront church and my mother played the VYP [unintelligible] young peoples [unintelligible] at five o’clock in the evening. She would let Nat play there and I had to go along. I played violin on that day.

So she was a very no frills lady like that, very strict about things. In our society of black people we had more... how do you say this, segregation, unblemished black people like me were really on the low end of the totem pole. People that were light-complexioned blacks didn’t have anything to do with people like us. They had what they called a Blue Vein Society. If you were light enough for you to see the...

**TAYLOR:** The veins.

**HINTON:** See the veins, see the blue blood in your veins, it was thought that you were a little different breed and so consequently these people had always a better chance of education and better jobs.

Well my mother of course was completely unmixed black and she sort of resented that because she was very competitive with this. I can remember when I was 13 years old, they had a National Negro Music Association and they started a Junior Musical Association.

**TAYLOR:** They still have that.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Margaret Barnes, I can [unintelligible] great lady’s name, well we all came up together. But they were all light-complexioned people. Dorothy Donigan... all light complexioned people. I’m playing violin and doing very well with violin. My mother belongs to this convention and she wants me to join the Junior Musical Association. I went down to the YMCA in Chicago, down on the 34th Street I think it was, to this meeting and nobody had anything to do with me. I was the only dark guy in there. Nobody said a word to me and I felt terrible.

**TAYLOR:** I’m sure, yeah.

**HINTON:** I went back home and told my mother, I said, “I’m not going back down there”. She says, “I didn’t send you down there to socialize”. She said, “There’s a scholarship involved and there’s going to be a scholarship, and I want you to go down there because you can win it”. And she insisted that I go back and of course I did and I won the scholarship.

So it was that kind of a relationship. She was always gung ho for rights except where it concerned white people because we were from the south and she would absolutely insist... she would insist that the white person would do something, come in our house and behave... but as I grew up and she saw me having a contest... contesting some white

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kid, she said, “Wait a minute now, be careful, that’s a white man you’re talking to”. I said, “You told me to protect myself [laughter], to speak up for my rights. But there was still that difference from the south.

**TAYLOR:** Well she was concerned about your safety really [laugh].

**HINTON:** Safety, yes, she was, she was. I remember when I was 13 years old, that’s July 18, 1923, [unintelligible], I went to Jane Adams Poorhouse to study... to take music lessons on Saturday, 25 cents to lesson. That’s the first time I saw Benny Goodman.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah, Benny and I were in the same class there taking music lessons together and it was not in his family.

**TAYLOR:** Now where did you go to take these lessons?

**HINTON:** On the west side, Jane Adams Poorhouse. It’s a poorhouse house. Sixty-eight years later they honored me there. Just last year I gave a concert there. Benny had been there before. But it was 68 years...

**TAYLOR:** Before they got around to you [laughter].

**HINTON:** Before they got around to me. But the Jane Adams Poorhouse is still in Chicago and they’re still doing marvelous work for young underprivileged children.

**TAYLOR:** That was a wonderful idea to have inexpensive lessons with very good teachers and make the instruments accessible to the kids and everything.

**HINTON:** Sure, yes. It was nice for us. I shall never forget it because it helped me so greatly. We didn’t have any money. My mother had a really tough time trying to get me through because I didn’t have any...

**TAYLOR:** Well let’s go back to Vicksburg for a minute, just before we talk some more about your mother.

**HINTON:** Yeah, sure, sure.

**TAYLOR:** In Vicksburg when you were growing up with your grandmother, you had a great relationship with her from what I’ve heard you say.

**HINTON:** My grandmother?

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**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**HINTON:** Of course. But the other grandmother, which I didn't tell you too much about, she was an African lady and I loved her. I loved her very much. The two people didn't get along because now her son had left her daughter [laugh]. They belonged to the same church and they didn't get along at all and I don't know why it was but my mother... my grandmother on my mother's side, we were putting really on the poor end of things. We didn't have anything. But my father's mother had a big piece of land, her husband was dead too, but she had this big piece of land where people were ready to grow cotton and corn on this.

**TAYLOR:** Did she own this land?

**HINTON:** She owned it and she had a house there, a little house there. Now they don't speak... and I'm really three, four, five years old. My mother would take me to my father's mother's house and leave me at the gate. She wouldn't go in because she's mad because... she would leave me at the gate, and then my grandmother, my father's mother would come out and get me and they'd take me in. I would stay there for a weekend and it was delightful.

They were two different people... type of black people completely. My father's mother smoked a pipe. She had... her teeth were all stained. She had this little stream that ran through the back of our house and she had... the milk was in there, sitting in there to keep cool. She had lots of fruit trees around. She didn't use sugar she used molasses and she put molasses on rice and she drank tea while my other grandmother drank... it was coffee always on the other side, but she had tea. And molasses and rice was delightful to me, that sweet taste [laughter].

So I really enjoyed being with her. The difference in the two families... they both seemed to love me and treat me [unintelligible] to be their grandchild. I had the best of both sides. Then my mother's folks would come get me, they'd put me outside that gate again [laughter] and I went.

**TAYLOR:** What kind of music was being played when you were growing up in that period in Vicksburg?

**HINTON:** Well in Vicksburg my first recollection of music, the sound of music, was late at night strollers.

**TAYLOR:** Strollers?

**HINTON:** Strollers would come out, a bass violin and guitar, somebody with a jug or...

**TAYLOR:** And he's walking around with a bass violin?

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**HINTON:** Walking around, yeah, late at night and they would play and it was bocco, was no [unintelligible] [musical sounds] and they played very softly at night and standing outside, just like winos, and the people would wake up and go give them nickels or pennies and then they'd go on to the next street.

**TAYLOR:** What kind of music were they doing, what were they playing?

**HINTON:** It was... I can't...

**SPEKAER:** Was it blues or...

**HINTON:** It was blues type of music but there was no singing though.

**TAYLOR:** Right, just instrumental kind of...

**HINTON:** Just instrumental and very soft, but just enough to hear, not enough to really tear the neighborhood apart or something. No trumpets, no horns, but the guitar and bass, and the bass was [unintelligible], it was zooming.

**TAYLOR:** Now rhythmically, would this be like ragtime or would it be different? As a musician now, what would you think about it?

**HINTON:** I would think it would be more like ragtime. More like ragtime although we always associated that with just piano, but it would be that type of...

**TAYLOR:** Feeling, that kind of...

**HINTON:** Strolling feeling that they...

**TAYLOR:** So rhythmically it would be in that... kind of like that.

**HINTON:** Yeah. I remember later in Chicago, one the big bands that came out of that era was the Walter Barnes band. Walter Barnes was from Vicksburg, Mississippi. In fact he went to my mother... he was a boyfriend of my mother's youngest sister and he was the one... I've got some wonderful tapes here on Ed Birch. Ed Birch, he passed a couple of years ago, and we grew up together like brothers and I talked to him about this whole era. He worked in Walter Barnes' band at the Cotton Club when Al Capone opened the Cotton Club with Cicero. So I have some wonderful tapes on him talking... telling about that.

**TAYLOR:** What kind of music did Walter Barnes play?

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**HINTON:** It was popular tunes of the day, jazz and things. There might be some records around here of Walter Barnes. He played clarinet, not a good clarinet; Ted Lewis type of thing that he played.

**TAYLOR:** So he played like popular of the day?

**HINTON:** Popular of the day, yeah, popular things, Donna Miller.

**TAYLOR:** When those guys played did they sound like say Ted Lewis or did they sound like black bands?

**HINTON:** They sounded like black bands.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah. So they had something else going on rhythmically?

**HINTON:** Yeah, a completed rhythm, like in Ted... the guy's saying the drummer's name and all the guys that played in the band because I'm 15, 16, 17 years old.

**TAYLOR:** So you know what's going on.

**HINTON:** I know what's going on because that's 1929 and that's when the revolution started in Chicago as far as musical revolution. It changed the whole scene of the south side.

**TAYLOR:** Really? What do you mean, what kind of revolution?

**HINTON:** Well Chicago, they had... all the people that came up from the South... you've got the Vind Dome Theater. Do you know about the Vind Dome Theater?

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah.

**HINTON:** With [Unintelligible] band, with Louis Armstrong in there and Eddie South and Jimmy Bertrame, all [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Now is that the biggest black theater?

**HINTON:** The black theater and it was just fabulous. Across the street was the Grand Theater that had Dave Payton but they were more classical, they were more minstrel type of playing.

**TAYLOR:** Really? The difference in Payton... what did they play? You say classical, in what respect?

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**HINTON:** They played things like Willie Woogies stuff of...

**TAYLOR:** Will Mary and Cooke.

**HINTON:** Will Mary and Cooke stuff.

**TAYLOR:** So really more in the European... based on the European models?

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah. And then Dave Payton was the pianist and absolutely anti-jazz. He was not for syncopation at all. He wanted to play melodic things and they did just that in their tuxedos and really... [Unintelligible] band, even though they were just in tuxedos.

But they played the overtures. After the movie was over there was an overture [unintelligible] something like that. Then they went into *My Daddy Rocks Me* and *One Steady Road*, and Eddie South was playing solo and Louis Armstrong would play a solo, and every Sunday my mother would take me [unintelligible] to 15th, 14th to see this. All people of any kind of stature at all would try to get down to the Vind Dome Theater on a Sunday to see this marvelous show.

**TAYLOR:** It's a social event.

**HINTON:** Social, yeah, it was a social and it was really... you got both sides of it. But Dave Payton, he [unintelligible] Chicago with a [unintelligible] and he was now complete anti-jazz.

**TAYLOR:** Well that's sort of like what you were talking about with the color discrimination between black people. It was the same thing where you wanted not only to look white but you wanted to play white music or music that was acceptable to white people and so forth.

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

**TAYLOR:** So it was a whole dichotomy in that area where many people felt to get ahead you had to be more like white than like black.

**HINTON:** That's right, that's exactly... and so the epitome of the two theaters there, was that it was the Dave Payton theater... Dave Payton at the Grand Theater and Erskine Tayback across the street at the Vind Dome Theater.

Now of course the other subservient theaters, they had the Monogram, which was a comic place where they had all the comedians. Then we had...

**TAYLOR:** What kind of comedians did they have in those days?

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**HINTON:** Marshall Garbage Rogers and [Unintelligible] just died. I worked for him in Chicago and...

**TAYLOR:** Ralph Cooper?

**HINTON:** Ralph Cooper. I worked in Ralph Cooper's band in the Regal Theater.

**TAYLOR:** He had a band?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he had a band there.

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know that.

**HINTON:** Yeah, he and Leonard...

**TAYLOR:** The dancer?

**HINTON:** Yeah, they were a team and then...

**TAYLOR:** And then Leonard went... he did all the shows down in Atlantic City.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** I know the guy you're talking about.

**HINTON:** And Ralph Cooper's got the band.

**TAYLOR:** What was his name, Leonard....well we can think of it later but, yeah, I know who you mean.

**HINTON:** And then Ralph Cooper stayed at the Regal Theater and had a band because he was the MC. A good looking guy, the Cab Calloway type good looking, and light-complexioned guy, and they put him in charge of a band. Kay Johnson, Bird Johnson's brother was in the band, yours truly, I can't call the names of all of the guys. We played a little overture, the opening, and played for some singers and dancers, mostly a [unintelligible] was coming to the Regal Theater because that's where that revolution that I started to talk about... later Erskine Tate...

**TAYLOR:** What was the revolution? What were they revolting against?

**HINTON:** I'm using the wrong word. It wasn't a revolution. It was a change in era. Before silent movies... Erskine Tate was doing a turn of silent movies.

**TAYLOR:** Right, so he played background for the movies?

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**HINTON:** Yeah, he did background for the movies and then they had a show after the movie was over. After Al Jolson made the first talking picture they don't need music in the theaters anymore, it's on the screen. They don't even need an overture or anything.

**TAYLOR:** That quick?

**HINTON:** Everything, oh, yeah. Every black violin player lost their job and in our neighborhood of course all black violin players lost their jobs because we didn't use them in the nightclubs. The nightclubs were small. The Golden Lilly had Punch Miller in there and the [Unintelligible]

**TAYLOR:** What did Punch Miller play?

**HINTON:** Trumpet, bass trumpet player from New Orleans, yeah. Punch Miller and they had Jimmy [Unintelligible] was the clarinet player.

**TAYLOR:** Clarinet player, yes.

**HINTON:** And these were small combos, playing in basement level places, small clubs where it was just a piano, [unintelligible] on that piano. We played with them. They had drum, bass, and the piano and maybe two horns.

**TAYLOR:** So this is really a small club?

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, all these clubs... they just blossomed up after the...

**TAYLOR:** War?

**HINTON:** After the silent movies. Because the theaters didn't exist anymore so the violins have lost all of their jobs.

**TAYLOR:** So the theaters only played movies, they didn't use live entertainment?

**HINTON:** No, not after the silent movies...

**TAYLOR:** After the talkies.

**HINTON:** Yeah, it's all on the stage. First they started [unintelligible] entertainment units, they came in, so they didn't even use local... they just had a local band maybe to come in and play for that and that went on for quite some while. The violin players all lost their jobs and I'm just beginning to get interested in music seriously now and I'm wondering what's happening to all these violin players. I see them For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

and all these guys are dressed very nice, the majority of them are dressed very nice, and they come down to the union hall in good shape. They didn't look like they were quite financially... and I wondered what happened, how did they do this? I found out, they were cigar makers.

**TAYLOR:** What?

**HINTON:** Yeah, they made cigars, rolled cigars. They all got... most of the violin players were from Louisiana and they knew how to roll... make cigars so on that back porch [unintelligible] three stories out and a back porch. They would sit there in the morning and roll these fine cigars and take them down and sell them to the department stores. So this is the way they survived. And I really didn't know this until [laugh] I went by one day and saw the guys that I knew doing this thing. This is what they did... how they survived.

And then the bass violin came in because the bass horn became a little too noisy to work in these small clubs. So you needed something a little more subdued so these violins became... it wasn't like New Orleans when you had to march to the cemetery and march back. There was no... you can't do that in Chicago, the cemetery is 30 miles away. So now the violin players... there aren't very many of these violin players. Bill Johnson was the king. He came there with King Oliver and he was a big red man that lived to be 100 years old, a stocky, sweating, snapped the bass very strong. He was amazing to me and he began to get the work.

**TAYLOR:** What was his name again?

**HINTON:** Bill Johnson, a big red man. He died a couple of years ago, a 100 years old.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah. Now the trombone players, they don't need all the tailgaters on the back of the trucks no more. They don't need all these tailgaters in Chicago so only the good trombone players survived, Kid Oray, Preston Jackson, they survived. There were a lot of trombone players like Jimmy Newman, who would probably have a clarinet and one trombone and the next place would have maybe a trombone and a trumpet so there weren't three or four trombones. So trombone players were beginning to get scarce. So later you see why guys like John Lindsay show up as a great bass player. He's a trombone player. When I saw John Lindsay he was a trombone player but he couldn't compete with Kid Oray and with Preston Jackson. Preston Jackson took Kid Ouray with Louie's High Five. So I saw this change [laugh] and the next thing I know, the trombone player, I forgot his name that quick, I see him with a bass. Well he's already in a bass [unintelligible] and these other bass players, I...

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**TAYLOR:** And he was playing bass lines anyway.

**HINTON:** Yeah, he's playing bass line anyway so it was quite easy for him to conform. Everything we call "fist in a bass", everything was in D flat, E flat so all you had to do [laugh] D flat with your fist or E flat with your finger. So they got to survive and do this thing.

Now you look in the jazz books, John Lindsay is considered one of the... of course he was. He made a lot of records but they was not academic at all. I think around my era Quinn Wilson and yours truly were the first guys that really had a chance to really study bass to get the...

**TAYLOR:** Well you were a violin player.

**HINTON:** Yeah, I was a violin...

**TAYLOR:** You studied violin.

**HINTON:** I studied violin but then I went and studied bass with Denetra McCloskey and I really wanted to learn how to play the thing correctly. But before that the other guys were just... they're what we called "fist in a bass". That's the other thing. And that was the era that changed... that revolutionized the whole chain of music in there with the Hot Five. There were five pieces. Earl Hines had that only big band in town until Walter Barnes and Al Capone opened the Cotton Club... or Walter Barnes.

**TAYLOR:** Now Earl Hines had a band before the other guys? He had a big band before the other guys? Was he the first to have a big band?

**HINTON:** He was the first to have a big band working in a club, yeah.

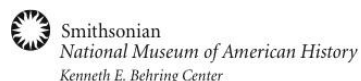
**TAYLOR:** Oh, okay.

**HINTON:** Yeah. There were a couple of guys that played in a dancehall, a couple of bands that would... not to really note. Jimmy Bell was one that played at the Savoy Ballroom and places like that but Earl Hines got the Grand Terrace, and Ed Fox...

**TAYLOR:** Which is a huge nightclub.

**HINTON:** Huge nightclub for that period. We got Earl Hines from Pittsburgh and they got Percy Venable from Pittsburgh also, a great choreographer and they put on a tremendous show. And then the gangsters started. They wanted something for themselves on the west side at Cicero's. Al Capone opened up a Cotton Club, which is black entertainment. No black customers of course.

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**TAYLOR:** In talking about Chicago in those early days when you first moved to Chicago, when did you start to play the violin? Was that when you began to study or did you study before?

**HINTON:** No, my mother was teaching piano and she didn't get to me at all. You just always had to follow her [unintelligible] so she left me alone, but she was wise enough, she sent me to a violin teacher, Professor James Johnson, a wonderful lad.

**TAYLOR:** Now where was this? This was in Chicago?

**HINTON:** In Chicago. In fact she bought my first violin on July 18, 1923. I got my first violin and I went to a guy in the neighborhood that had a music store, he was a banjo player, Joe Black and he started me out. Then my mother found one of the blacks, one in the neighborhood named Mr. Woodford that was a good violin teacher and I went to him. There was an unusual situation concerning my childhood. As you know, most black people in Chicago are descendants of slaves from the South and we were quite unique. There was a lot of togetherness there. People I don't think really realize the great togetherness. Because no one else loved us, we loved each other. Our parents were strict on us. They took great care of us.

The school, [Unintelligible] High School that I went to, which was way before DeSabo, it was an integrated high school. The faculty was integrated. It was 99 and 44/100 percent black. The only white kids in there were people... white people who had parents that had stores in the neighborhood and their kids went to school there. But the faculty was integrated.

Everybody was very much concerned with the students and the students were pretty much on the ball because parents had paid a lot of dues to get to Chicago and man if my mother had to stop her work to come to school for something I had done incorrectly I was in deep trouble.

So there was quite a different scene to see what was going on as far as the learning process. The teachers were concerned with us and we got a good chance. We were highly competitive.

Of course this is back in Chicago and we were the first ones to get a congressman. Oscar Deprist was the first congressman and consequently the congressman is the one that appoints a student to West Point. We never had a black child to go to West Point before and one of the students in my class got their first chance to go to West Point [Unintelligible]. He's still around. I don't think he stayed there but he was one of the first to get the chance because we had a congressman that could appoint him.

So we had learned the power of the vote in Chicago and it was to our advantage. We could go to political institutions, clubs and say, "I'll give you a half million votes. What are you going to do for us? If you don't do anything for us you don't get a half million votes. So consequently there was a great deal of progress as you know that went on in Chicago like that.

But all of a sudden there was... I looked... I always played baseball and actually baseball

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was the thing in Washington Park. And over in the one corner of the park there was a bunch of guys playing cricket, black guys, and we thought that [laugh] was unique, the guys were cracking at this thing and doing these kinds of things and we wondered what they were about.

They stayed very much to themselves. They were I guess much more cultured in their way then we were in our way. But there was no mixing of the thing except that they found out that I was studying violin and they had a string quartet and they needed a second violin. They spoke to my mother and she would have killed me if I hadn't gone [laugh].

I didn't really want to go but I went every Sunday to rehearse with them and this is where I really... I've been very grateful to these gentlemen because I learned how to read [unintelligible], and intonation, and the phrasing. They were older. I was kid and they were older gentlemen so it was a very great learning process for me and I'm very grateful.

But they were in such a minority on that side. So I had the chance to have both sides of going on Sunday and working with these guys, and delivering my newspapers during the week, and getting up at 5:30 in the morning and going by the Grand Terrace and peeking in the window on my way and seeing the waiters putting the chairs up on the tables, you know, the night is over, and seeing some black musician with a tuxedo on, a nice cold glass in his hand and nice lady standing beside him, and I said, "Hey, this is great". So this was my vision of looking at these two ways of seeing these things.

And going home... my mother was still with the choir. She wanted me to be a choir director. She wanted me playing for the choir and I said, "Look, the choir director works at the stockyards. He gets \$30 a week".

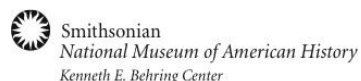
A trumpet player named Huey Swift had a society like [unintelligible] black and a society band and restaurant called a New Jeffrey Cabin. I guess the bass player must have gotten drunk or disappeared one night and they needed a bass player and so they said, try the kid. So they called and I went and played this gig with them and got \$19. I'm making \$9.25 a week for my 200 newspapers every morning and in that one night I'm making \$19. Well that did it, I was in it.

And then a couple of weeks later this guy disappeared again and I get another shot at it but I had to get through at four o'clock in the morning, come home and start my newspaper route. My mother said, "Now you've got to make up your decision. You're either going to play music or this". And I think that was one of my biggest decisions, whether to keep that newspaper route or take a shot at this music [laugh]. I don't know whether I'm right here or not [laughter].

**SPEKAER:** That's great. Well that whole period in terms of the opportunities that were possible must have been really just so different from what you had known in Mississippi.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah. Well I saw some horrendous things. Do you want me to mention about the lynchings?

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**TAYLOR:** Yeah, sure.

**HINTON:** Well what happened, before I left, the day I left... I was eight years old. One of my uncles... somebody in the family had gotten sick and my aunt my mother's youngest sister was a few years older than I and she was always in charge of me. We had gone to the hospital and on our way back from the hospital we had to go right down Clay Street. There was a big crowd in the middle of the street. It was like seven or eight o'clock at night and I looked at this crowd, we had to go right by there, and they had a black man hung up on a rope. They put a drum of gasoline on him and they had set it on fire and he was burning, just like a piece of bacon, and these guys were all around shooting him, shooting his carcass. He had long been dead. I wanted to look. They weren't paying me any mind, kids, you know, and my... Sissy was pulling me away. In Mississippi in those days you lynch a man and you cut the tree down and paint the top red so that it was noted that the lynching was done. And on my way to school the next day this red paint was dripping off of this tree.

I have an account of that lynching in a book downstairs called *The 1000 Lynchings*, with an account of the lynching that I saw. One of these guys shooting... in all this shooting, one guy shot over there and shot another guy. They were taking up a collection for this guy.

And my grandmother with three sons and things, the black railroad men would take their boy children and put black pepper in their socks because they would send those dogs out to smell, and see that's how they got this guy, said that he had done something. The dogs barked at him so he was it. So the black railroad men would take pepper and put it in their boy children's socks so the dogs wouldn't bark, wouldn't come near them and smell at them. So those were the kind of horrendous things that we had gone through.

**TAYLOR:** For most people who lived there... it's difficult for anyone who didn't live through that to understand the difference between the extended family that you described, both in Chicago and in Mississippi, where you really did look out for your neighbor's children and your friends, and everybody was...

**HINTON:** For everyone.

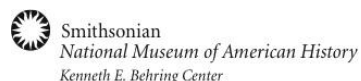
**TAYLOR:** Well you had to.

**HINTON:** And this is still going on in Chicago. The ones that are my age are still...

**TAYLOR:** Have that attitude.

**HINTON:** Still have that attitude [unintelligible]. But that extended family, I find it's something we seem to be missing to this day.

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**TAYLOR:** Yeah, right.

**HINTON:** I know my grandmother... if somebody was sick she would say, "Go take Ms. Jones this [unintelligible] and this soup over there". And they would also tell on the kids if you were doing something wrong. Anybody could correct you and then they'd tell your family about it.

**TAYLOR:** Well you and Mona have certainly carried on that tradition out here in St. Albans.

**HINTON:** Well we really try. Her folks are from Mississippi too.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really?

**HINTON:** Yeah, her folks are from Mississippi, different places. Did you know Hank Jones is from Vicksburg, Mississippi?

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know that.

**HINTON:** Yeah, Hank is from there. The rest of the boys are from... that was that migratory era.

**TAYLOR:** The rest of them moved up to Michigan.

**HINTON:** Yeah, Michigan. Well the same with Mona's people. Mona was born in... my wife was born in [Unintelligible] Illinois. They were in the process of moving there and they had to stop [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** Right, give birth to the baby.

**HINTON:** Yeah, give [unintelligible]. But her sisters, her older sisters were born in... and her brother was born in Mississippi, and her younger brothers and sisters were born in Ohio. Their father got to Ohio, Sandusky, Ohio and established himself there. But that was that kind of thing. In fact, that's how I met Mona, at my grandmother's funeral. We've been married 53 years.

**TAYLOR:** Really? I'll be darn. When your grandmother passed away, how did you meet Mona?

**HINTON:** Well I was working with Cab Calloway in the Cotton Club and when my grandmother passed away, she was the lady that had raised me, I dropped that bass and went straight home.

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My mother had a choir, had a girls choir and Mona was in it, my mother's choir. I came in there and all these pretty little young girls were around there. I'm a big dog musician from New York and I'm looking around. They've got the wake, back then there was a wake. All these nice ladies were there and was having a nice time and my mother was there with her very strict face, "Now you came here to mama's funeral. Leave those girls alone. You're New York". Of course you see I did, 53 years later [laughter].

The really funny part about it was Mona had eyes and of course I had eyes. I was looking around. So I whispered to her, I said, "Look, I'm going back to New York but the band's going to be in Indianapolis, Indiana next week at the Circle Theater, why don't you come down, come on down". She said, "Okay". So I went and got it all set up, got my wine and everything set up. Mona's going to come down and I'm playing at the Circle Theater. I said, "Just come on in and tell them you're with me".

My mother had some friends down in Indianapolis and she decides to come down there [laughter] and she sees Mona sitting on my bass drum, she said, "Go right back" [laughter]. She lost it [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** She'll have none of that.

**HINTON:** None of that foolishness [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** Boy, that's funny.

**HINTON:** Boy, she was beautiful.

**SPEKAER:** Well in terms of... you were talking about your newspaper route and some of the other things that you were doing. Now you met Eddie South, at least his mother, when you were doing this.

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's true. Eddie South's mother was on my paper route and I remember coming to collect... on Friday I came to collect the 20 cents a week and I saw his pictures on the wall. He was in Europe then. That's about 1929 or '30 I guess. He was in Europe. I was beginning to play the bass but I've still got my violin, I've got my paper route.

I'm looking at his pictures on the wall in her house. She says, "That's my son, Eddie South". She was a beautiful lady, really good-looking lady. I knew his father. They weren't together at that time. I think his father probably lived in California. But she said, "There's my son. He's a great violinist". I said, "Yes". She said, "You play violin"? I said, "Yes, ma'am". In fact she said "bass". She said, "Maybe some day you'll get a chance to play with my son". I said, "Well, thank you, I hope so".

Eddie was there... and there was guy... they were at that time figuring on... because you followed... you played with Eddie later on.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

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**HINTON:** At this time he had a manager named Sam Scholnick. He was trying to get Eddie to come back. Eddie was the darling of Europe, the “Dark Angel of Violin”. He was playing for the Rockefeller parties and all those big social affairs in Europe and he made quite a name for himself. This manager decided he thought it would be nice to put him in one of the hotels in Chicago. It never happened before but...

**TAYLOR:** Right, but he figured...

**HINTON:** But Eddie was such a classy act. He was just three or four of them...

**TAYLOR:** He thought he could do it.

**HINTON:** At that time Eddie had a piano player named Spaulding out of Kentucky, fantastic player, classical... more to the type player, not much jazz. Cliff King, a clarinet player called Clarinet King, marvelous player. He was doing that thing where you break the clarinet down and wind up playing just the mouthpiece. He could do all that kind of stuff. Stanley Wilson, a guitar player was playing a four-string guitar. He had a drummer from South America some place in this band. So this guy was thinking about bringing him back to the states. So he got a violin player whose name escapes me and I’m embarrassed that I couldn’t... Charles Elgar, a very famous musician around Chicago and New Orleans. He was one of the cigar rollers.

**TAYLOR:** Cigar rollers, right [laugh], after the talking pictures.

**HINTON:** Yeah, after talking pictures. He kept himself doing like that. A very cultured man and a great photographer. He always had lots of pictures. I’ve been trying to research his family to find some of them because he had wonderful pictures. Eddie had studied with him years ago so this man Scholnick got Charles Elgar to organize a band for Eddie, a society type band with five or six violins and a trombone and trumpet, Bob Schflett at trumpet and Jimmy Bertrame, the drums. It would be nice music like *Dancing On The Ceiling*, a few... *Stardust* and things like that to go in one of the hotels. Like Emery Deusch, that type of thing. So they organized this group. Eddie is still in Europe and Charles Elgar got this group together. We rehearsed at 47th and South Parkway in Chicago, over the Chinese restaurant, Chu Chin Chow, I think was the name of it. We rehearsed for a few weeks to get the band into shape, playing this type of music and everything was [unintelligible]. Eddie came back and rehearsed with us and it was all... the man had given us contracts, \$75 a week, which was astronomical for those days; \$75 a week, guaranteed 40 weeks out of the year. He came back in time, Eddie rehearsed with us and the powers to be said, “No good, you can’t work in this hotel”. So there was nothing to do. Eddie had to buy the contracts back from the fellows. Everybody got \$300 to sign the contracts back. I think it kind of broke Eddie’s soul. When he got to me he said, “I can  
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get you a job in one of the small clubs. Al Capone has got a club downtown called the Club [Unintelligible] and I can get you in there and you use a bass". So don't give the cat no \$300, hire him [laughter]. So I didn't get the \$300 but I got the job.

**TAYLOR:** That's great.

**HINTON:** And who worked there... I'm sure that was 1932, and we go to work at a place owned by Al Capone. I never will forget it. A guy named Andy Packard was his lieutenant. A small club, not much bigger than this room around here. It seated about 60 people but the news got around that Eddie was playing there and all these gangsters came in, select people came to hear him.

At the same time Ben Burney was at the College Inn. He was a big bandleader and his musical arranger and conductor was a guy named Dexter Deal. Dexter Deal father's was a violinist so Dexter Deal would bring his father over here this hour.

**TAYLOR:** But he played saxophone didn't he?

**HINTON:** Dexter Deal played saxophone, yes, and his father... he was musical director for it. But his father played violin.

At the same time Ben Pollard had a band. Benny Goodman was in that band, Gene Crupa was in that band... no, Gene Crupa... Ben Pollard was a drummer. Benny Goodman, Jack Keygarten, they were in that band. Intermission was the same time. They would come over to the club to hear the sound and this... now with me, again after high school... where we'd known one another in high school because even though we didn't go to the same high school... I'll get to that later about things like that. So we got to meet these kinds of ways and relate and listen to one another playing. At least they got to hear us.

**TAYLOR:** Right, you were aware of them.

**HINTON:** Yeah. We couldn't go to hear them but of course they could come to hear us. But the awareness was there. That's where Eddie started to really get some popularity. That's... what did I say, 1935? No, '32, because 1933 the Democratic Convention was held at the Congress Hotel in Chicago. That was the convention that nominated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for President and it was held at the Congress Hotel and by this time they decided that Eddie could play at one of those hotels.

They put us in the lobby in a fountain and water was dripping all around. Eddie and the four of us were in this fountain. Eddie [unintelligible] standing listening to the violin player, [Unintelligible] and myself. We played at this convention. I remember that was just so good because it was convention that nominated Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

**TAYLOR:** That's right, and that was very important.

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**HINTON:** Yeah. From there we went to California, my first trip to California. Now Lionel Hampton and I had gone to school together and Lionel had married Gladys and moved to California.

**TAYLOR:** And he was married then?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was married then. In 1933 he was married to Gladys. And Gladys... they moved to California because Gladys was an excellent seamstress and she got a job sewing for one of the great movie stars, Gloria Swanson or one of the big movie stars. She had a good job. Lionel got the job out there working with Les Hiss band. We grew up together so he was....Lionel met us at the railroad station, the little group playing for us as we came into town.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh].

**HINTON:** We got a job at the... at least I got a job in a club on Sunset Boulevard called the Club Ballyhoo, another small club. All of the violin players in the movie theater... orchestra, they'd heard about Eddie. We've only got three pieces now. This is a trio. Everett Boxdale, Eddie South, and myself.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah. We were really cooking. We had [unintelligible] a few of those things that Eddie taught us, *Rhapsody In Blue*, *American In Paris*, *After The Ball*, and [Unintelligible], *The Sentiment's Not Yours*, Hungarian songs. We got to play in this small club and it was where all these little players from the movies came out to hear. That's the first time I really saw guys writing on their cuff. The guys would be writing on their cuff.

We played there. There was dance team, a trio, a dance team that danced in parts of the show. A trio, a girl and two boys. The girl Carman Miranda and one of the boy dancers was Caesar Romero. I don't know who the other guy was. That was 1933. A very successful... Buck Clayton was on his way to China. He had come out [unintelligible] I remember distinctly.

**HINTON:** We had a very successful engagement and came back to Chicago and things just went on from there.

**TAYLOR:** Well in terms of... in one of the things that you said, just for your story, I'd like to relate to you, many years later I was working with a trio, which was the Eddie South trio and Eddie had thrown all that same material on me.

**HINTON:** Sure [laugh].

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**TAYLOR:** And, you know, the piano is supposed to sound like a [unintelligible] so you're running this piece.

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's right [laugh].

**TAYLOR:** You're running all over trying to play all these notes and he's playing [humming].

**HINTON:** Sure [laugh].

**TAYLOR:** So I said doggone it, I'm young and I'm just out of school, I said, "I'm going to fix it". As you know it's harder to play a different arrangement of something you already played.

**HINTON:** Right, that's true.

**TAYLOR:** I knew he had an arrangement on *Rhapsody In Blue* so I made this... laboriously sat down and wrote out this very difficult arrangement rhythmically so that we're swinging. It's not the concert thing, this is a jazz version of *Rhapsody In Blue* and it had all the same stuff but it's swinging. So I said, "I know this is going to hang him". So I bring it into rehearsal one night... one afternoon and Eddie said, "Aw, that looks nice", and he picked up his violin and then he played it like he wrote it [laughter].

**HINTON:** He was amazing.

**TAYLOR:** He was wonderful.

**HINTON:** He was just a wonderful guy, yeah, he sure was. One of the things that I really appreciated about him, he really zeroed in for me on my pitch, on my pitch. He was amazing. Keys didn't mean anything to him and usually everybody plays... in jazz we play down on A flat and start up on E flat or something like that. But Eddie put that [unintelligible] of his up in there trying to decide what he was going to play and if he said, [unintelligible] and it [unintelligible] da-da, if you came down on A flat you were wrong because he was in E [laughter]. And he'd look at you like he was hurt that you didn't play [laughter]. So you had to be very careful and listen very intently to do that but it's a great lesson. I can never forget the lessons that I learned from him.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, the thing about him that I think I admired so much was that not only was he an impeccable musician, I mean really everything he did was with such great taste...

**HINTON:** Yeah, class.

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**TAYLOR:** And such class and so musical, but he just imparted that. Everybody in the group... whether you felt that way, you did that, that's the only way [laugh].

**HINTON:** You had to, that's right. He made you. I've got a letter downstairs that I'd like for you to see sometime. He wrote it in 1933 to me. He had that violin case. Somebody had given him a violin case that was made out of alligator skin and it had the [unintelligible]. He had carried it around the world. It was getting a little frayed and somebody gave him a new case and he said, "I'm going to throw this case away". I said, "Eddie, don't throw it away. Can I have it, please"? He said, "Sure, kid, you can have it". So he wrote me a letter, it says... and it's dated. It says, "Dear Milt, I hope that your career will carry you as many miles as this case has carried me".

**TAYLOR:** That's prophetic. That's really prophetic.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, it really is and I keep... that valise really is a very close thing for me.

**TAYLOR:** That's wonderful. Well in those days you said you went to different schools.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Now you didn't go to the same school that he went to?

**HINTON:** Who?

**TAYLOR:** Eddie South. Did you go with him?

**HINTON:** Oh, no. He was out of school before I was.

**TAYLOR:** Before you, okay.

**HINTON:** But the school that I went to was [Unintelligible] High School, the big school on the south side. If you lived farther out... some guys like Joe Williams I think went to another high school but the majority of black students went to [Unintelligible] High School.

**TAYLOR:** And they had a wonderful music program I understand.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, Major N. Clark Smith was absolutely... I'm so very thrilled and happy that now young students are researching Major N. Clark Smith. I'm getting a lot of letters from kids who are writing their thesis and their masters, their dissertations about  
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Major N. Clark Smith. Naturally I know him and worked with him. He was so important to black musicians of my era.

He was born in Kansas. His father was a military man. It was a big military place so he had a chance at an education that far excelled what the average black kid was getting during that era.

[Unintelligible] evidentially his father was a kind of non-commissioned officer and he was able to get him into different things. He must have been an excellent trumpet player. But musically he knew everything and he did go to... I don't remember what school he went to but taught in Kansas City, for a black school in Kansas City. Now there was a whole slew of black musicians out of Kansas City, Walter Page and all those guys that came under Major N. Clark Smith.

Then he came to Chicago and he taught at [Unintelligible] High School and there was Quinn Wilson, this big bass player that was with the Earl Hines band. A great composer. He was a great violinist. He was violin player, like I was, first. He was a violin player. He was my idol. We all wanted to be like Quinn Wilson, a very talented man. He studied with him. Ray Nance, [Unintelligible], Stoval Brown, I could name you a slew of musicians, Ben Burney. We all came from under Major N. Clark Smith. He was very military. You know, you had to toe the line and he insisted...

In the band we had a lady named Dr. Mildred Banjo... was a black lady that was just of [unintelligible] but she had the kind of charisma that she could make the biggest guy just wilt right in his tracks. If she looked at him, you know, if he was out of line, he'd just disappeared. So we had these kinds of people around. She was in charge of the orchestra, Major N. Clark Smith was in charge of the band. Then all this music is on the south side. At night I'll pass and go into these clubs. They have a radio on and are listening to Jimmy Noon, and listening to Earl Hines, and listening to all these big bands.

**TAYLOR:** Now you just mentioned something in passing, two things, the first one is the places where you could hear music. Now from what you were saying, music was everywhere.

**HINTON:** It was.

**TAYLOR:** Name some of the kinds of places. You played nightclubs, you hear it in the theaters, where else could you hear it?

**HINTON:** Well the breakfast dances, the breakfast dances were a big thing. Saturday night... it went late Saturday night until noon Sunday morning and these were clubs on the south side, black clubs where black people went to. The Sunset was a club where black people could go even though it was owned Joe Glaser's mother. But it was a club where...

**TAYLOR:** Now a breakfast dance, they had already played all night.

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**HINTON:** They already played all night.

**TAYLOR:** Already played all night so you'll hang out.

**HINTON:** All the musicians and all the entertainers from all the other clubs are coming over there to play and hang out and these go on ,til noon Sunday.

**TAYLOR;** I'll be darned.

**HINTON:** Then we had the Bookstore, a place called the Bookstore, after hour place. And I must mention to you, there was trumpet player named Joe Sutler that nobody mentions.

**TAYLOR:** Joe?

**HINTON:** Joe Sutler.

**TAYLOR;** Sutler.

**HINTON:** Joe Sutler. He was more famous then Louis Armstrong.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yes, he was, and made more money. And for some reason... very sparsely now, a few people are beginning to ask me about him. His name was the biggest. He was a hard worker. He went to... he would play the theater, which was through by 11 o'clock at night, then he would go to the nightclub and play ,til two or three o'clock in the morning, then he would go to the Bookstore, which was an after hour place to play ,til... this man was making \$600 and \$700 a week in those days.

**TAYLOR:** In those days, wow.

**HINTON:** Well of course he blew himself out because he lost his mind and went to an asylum. I was hearing about him but I never got to play with him. I was listening to him and listening to people rave about him. Then he went to the insane asylum and he got straight and he came out and tried to play the tuba. That's the time I heard him but he was...

**TAYLOR:** It was too late then.

**HINTON:** It was too late then. But I had played with Freddy Kephard.

**TAYLOR:** Did you really?

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**HINTON:** Yes, I played...

**TAYLOR:** Tell me about Freddy Kephart. How did he compare to Louis Armstrong? I've heard people talk about that.

**HINTON:** He was a powerhouse. He didn't have as much creativity as...

**TAYLOR:** But he had power.

**HINTON:** He had power. You could hear him two miles away. He was a big man, tall, but when I played with him he was on his...

**TAYLOR:** He was older then.

**HINTON:** He was older and he was getting sick. He lived right near me, 35th and State Street, just... Bingham... [unintelligible] had a bank, Bingham State Bank. He'd opened a new building, a new office building at 35th and State and they had a ballroom there and he got the job as a bandleader.

**TAYLOR:** Explain something to me about generations. The Louis Armstrong... well King Oliver and Freddy Kephart, now they were around the same age?

**HINTON:** Yes.

**TAYLOR:** Okay, so they were older then Louis?

**HINTON:** Yes. They were older then Louis.

**TAYLOR:** They were older then Louis. Who else would be in their generation, like that ... Sidney Mashay, would he be in that... or was he younger?

**HINTON:** He was young but he didn't get to Chicago. He went another way.

**TAYLOR:** I see.

**HINTON:** I'll tell you who, Boone Johnson.

**TAYLOR:** Boone Johnson, okay.

**HINTON:** He was in that age bracket. Then there was Louis, then there was Guy Kelly, this was my friend. Fabulous young friend from Baton Rouge. He was very much on the way as much as Louis but he didn't...

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**TAYLOR:** Really, but he didn't quite make it.

**HINTON:** He didn't... when Louis was still not known... he was out of Baton Rouge and I got to know him. He came to Chicago and did great with Gene ...

**TAYLOR:** Now was Zuly in that...

**HINTON:** Zuly, yes. Zuly was a senior citizen. He was... he's in Louis era. That's the Hot Five. He was Louie's drummer. But Louie to the day he died...

**TAYLOR:** Now who was before Zuly? Was it Baby Daz maybe?

**HINTON:** Baby Daz was... and a guy named Curry.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, right.

**HINTON:** Baby Daz, Curry and Tubby Hall.

**TAYLOR:** Tubby Hall, you're right, sure, sure.

**HINTON:** Tubby Hall, yeah. Now there was another guy, he was terrible, he wasn't a good drummer. He was a policeman. When he played drums he just kind of bulldozed his way in there and lift the body because he was a cop, but he wasn't...

**TAYLOR:** Wasn't good, yeah.

**HINTON:** Then there was Floyd Campbell that came out.

**TAYLOR:** Right, okay. You mentioned among the people that you went to school with, {Unintelligible}. [Unintelligible] was a newspaper man but he played the piano, huh?

**HINTON:** Yeah. Well he never played... my connection with [Unintelligible] in [Unintelligible] High School. We had a newspaper... I had a book... our class book is called the *Red And Black*. I have mine here, in fact I've got a lot of them. [Unintelligible] was the head... and our paper was the Phillips Site, [Unintelligible] paper was the... [Unintelligible] was the editor of the [Unintelligible] Site. So we had... I'm into everything that's educational, like I'm in the band, I was president of the symphony orchestra, I directed the dance band, I'm in the marching band and doing a couple of plays. So I want to get on the newspaper staff so [Unintelligible] put me on the newspaper staff.

He taught how to run the linotype machine. He got the mercantile guy to teach us how to  
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run the linotype. Linotype was just coming in but before that we had to use the case. Well I was interested in that because I told you, my mother in Mississippi was always at the Reverend Jones' church and they had a newspaper that had a press and my mother ran the press and set the case so she taught me how to...

**TAYLOR:** Set the type.

**HINTON:** Set the type from the case and that's quite a little...

**TAYLOR;** That's a very specialized job.

**HINTON;** Very specialized job so naturally it had me interested and when I came to... when the [Unintelligible] was displayed, I came in, in junior high and went to this school. I got on the newspaper. Well then Burley was older, he was much older.

**TAYLOR;** Right, oh, yeah.

**HINTON:** He ran the newspaper and I got to work with him. Now he was a skiffel piano player.

**TAYLOR:** What's skiffel?

**HINTON:** Skiffel is just boogie-woogie, another word for boogie-woogie. But they was the guys that played the house rent parties. Everybody would give house rent parties all over Chicago. This is where we really get in a thing. House rent parties, people... \$30 a week and you're paying \$100 a month for rent, it's kind of tough.

**TAYLOR:** You've got to get that money from somewhere.

**HINTON:** Yeah, so when it comes time for you pay your rent, you would give a house rent party and have all your friends come by and you'd cook a whole lot of chicken, and have some whiskey, and have some ladies by there. Everybody had some kind of old upright piano in the house. No bands, just a piano player and he played in the living room and everybody ate chicken and had a good time on a Saturday night and you've got yourself your \$100 for your rent. Well Dan Burley got into that thing. He could play this boogie-woogie.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, he could do it, even when he was older.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Now the guy that really was a big man was Dexter Travis' father.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

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**HINTON:** Yeah, see that's why Dexter Travis is so rich today [laughter]. Dexter Travis went to [Unintelligible] High School too but he couldn't get arrested because Nat Cole was there and Eddie Cole was there. Eddie Cole was the one we thought was most likely to succeed.

**TAYLOR:** Right, he was supposed to be the better pianist in those days.

**HINTON:** He was. Not Nat, Eddie, and besides he was funny. I can remember the songs he sang in high school, man, "I chanced upon a big brown bear, a clever old bear was he. He looked at me, I looked at him, and scared to death was [unintelligible] and all he said was woof. Oh, me, oh, my, oh, me, oh, my, my, and all he said was woof". They were poor, there was nobody in Chicago poorer then the Coles. They didn't have anything [laughter]. Eddie Cole got in ROTC so he wore the uniform all week [laugh]. He didn't wait for the day that we had practice, he wore his ROTC uniform all week [laugh]. Nat was always neat and clean like but Eddie was really the one we thought would be the one that would really succeed. So Dexter Travis' father was a king of the skiffel piano players, the [unintelligible] piano player. He made a lot of money and he [unintelligible] and bought the little houses and things like that [unintelligible] today. He's a very famous guy.

**TAYLOR:** Sure.

**HINTON:** And a great historian.

**TAYLOR:** You mentioned also the Jones brothers and they are even more famous. They got in the rackets and did all kinds of stuff.

**HINTON:** That's right, oh, yeah. They got in the rackets. They couldn't do anything as long as their father was living because he was president of the National Baptist Convention, which is a big thing. My mother was his secretary and assistant and all that, and everything.

So when he died those boys were pool reporters. They got together and opened a policy thing called Harlem in the Bronx, in Chicago. Harlem in the Bronx and got famous policy. That's three numbers. They got writers to go around and write the numbers down and you hit... paid a \$100 for a hundred to one or something like that, whatever it was.

But their reputation came when one of their writers, one of the guys who was writing for them, somebody played a number with them and the guy hit and the writer absconded with the money. So the Jones brothers said, "Well okay, you played with him, you've got your proof that you played, we'll pay you". The news got out, play with the Jones boys because they pay, even if the guy runs off with the money. So they got the biggest end of the trade.

My uncle, my mother's youngest brother, Matt, he was... this cat was really... he was

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one of the tough dudes, really tough. [Unintelligible] 51st Street and he was a big guy, dark and daring. He was there. So they used him... this Mississippi [unintelligible] Mississippi thing, they used him as a treasurer like. He took in the money at the... as the writers come in with their money to turn it in...

**TAYLOR:** They turned it in to him.

**HINTON:** They turned it in to him. Now he made a lot of money because you could make... all the Jones brothers wanted was 75 cents on every dollar so a writer writes a dollar, he turns in 75 cents and he keeps a quarter. So if a guy puts in 90 cents, all the Jones boys want is 75 cents so my uncle can take 15 cents of a number. All day long he's paying his 15 cents. If that number comes out, he's loaded. It hasn't cost him a thing. Then he was a guy that was in control of the things and if anything happened he could really handle it.

That's when things got out of hand. The gangsters found out that the Jones boys were making as much money as they did so they came and kidnapped the youngest boy [unintelligible]. We got him back. Then they came to take over one of the places like they had done on the west side and they left all of them right there when they came [laugh]. They left all of them there so nobody bothered them anymore. So the only way they could get there was when they... like they got Al Capone and like they... income tax evasion.

**TAYLOR:** Income taxes, right.

**HINTON:** Then they took all that money and went to Mexico and started getting in the textiles. They're still in textile industry down there and their mother went down there with them. My mother was their mother's friend so my mother used to always go to Mexico because that was their mother's [unintelligible].

So it was that kind of relationship that we had but that was all out of that... Eddie Cole's was a giant. Dexter Travis was... well he couldn't even get into our society [laughter]. We kid him about that to this very day, you know, because he had a lot of conversation... his father was a big man and Dan Burney was a big. Then Dan Burney got into the newspaper business. He got in Chicago [unintelligible]. And Dan Burney and Lionel Hampton were responsible for *Jet Magazine*.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** That's a fact, yes, sir.

**TAYLOR:** No kidding. How did that happen?

**HINTON:** Well Dan and Lionel were very close and Dan helped Lionel organize his first band. I've got that on tape here. I [unintelligible] his house and they've got that... For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

and these guys in Austria said, I've got a new album that they put out, just collected all of Dan Burney's music from everywhere.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really? He was quite... I heard him play. As a matter of fact, he was the first one I ever heard play skiffel. I mean I heard other kinds of boogie-woogie, but this house rent kind of thing... he was the editor of the *Amsterdam News*.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** I was playing up at Wells in Harlem and he come in and we said, "Boy, you don't know anything about this", and he'd sit down and I said, "You're right, I don't" [laughter].

**HINTON:** Dick Hyman... I spoke to Dick Hyman about it. He gave Dick Hyman his first job in Harlem.

**TAYLOR:** Right, at Wells, yeah, because he used to come in all the time. He loved piano players. He used to tell Joe Wells, he said, "Look, you've got to have a piano player I can come listen to" [laughter]. He said, "I don't want to hear this" [laughter].

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was [unintelligible], yeah, he loved piano. But he was a very important man that just went by the wayside, but now they're really trying to research a lot of things of mine, especially in the [unintelligible]. There's a bunch of guys over there that are very much concerned with blues and they corresponded with me and went to my school [Unintelligible]. They got my class books and we contacted several other guys. [Unintelligible] Brown was in [Unintelligible]. We got his class book. And Scoops Kerry was there. These guys have got about 25 class books, my class book. I was supposed to graduate in 1930. I graduated 1929, three and a half years from high school. So I'm in two books. My picture was supposed to be in the ,30 book but I graduated in ,29 so I had some articles and things in the ,29 book too. There's another guy, that's Lang Waller. He was also a newspaperman. He's still living here in New York City, retired and they're doing researching with him. It's actually [unintelligible] back to those guys.

**TAYLOR:** I've been trying to get some of the black students here in the states to do that same kind of thing. Unfortunately in most of the schools, the educational system and the things that they do for higher degrees, it has to do with European music.

**HINTON:** Right, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** And I said well that's dumb because the Europeans are coming over for their higher degrees, they're doing stuff on our music [laughter].

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**HINTON:** Right, that's true.

**TAYLOR:** It would be better if we did a little... you know, kind of mixed it up a little.

**HINTON:** That's right, researched.

**TAYLOR:** Because the thing that bothers me is that many Europeans don't know where to go and would not stumble on it in the same way that someone from the community would.

**HINTON:** Here, that's right.

**TAYLOR:** I mean you ask your grandfather, you ask your uncle or somebody like that and you find out things that would never come up in conversation if you're European.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** I'm delighted that they're doing it because at least they're showing it's important but I just wish we could get more people of color to be doing this.

**HINTON:** That's true. To mention that, I would like to refer to... stumbling on something like that, my book *Bass Line*, there's a man... this old lady, an old lady from Mississippi I told you that knew my grandmother, her brother is still living. He's 97 years old. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, and of course he read my book and he's very much interested.

He called me up and he said, "You've got a good book there my boy". He said, "A couple of things you got a little wrong [laughter] but sometime I'll talk to you". So I went out to St. Paul and I met Mr. Lewis and [unintelligible] and in my book I mentioned there's a man there in this book that I go to his house and he's a light-complexioned black man [unintelligible] beautiful house, nothing like where we lived in Vicksburg. They had a back porch and a screen and I remember looking... I remember sitting on this man's back porch looking at books, looking at pictures.

He had a photo album and I'm looking... I'm on this back porch and it's cool and it's nice and I've got a glass of lemonade or something and my mother had taken me over there. So Mr. Lewis, he told me the man's name. I forget it right now. He said, "Well that man had a saloon for white people only in Vicksburg. He made a lot of money. He had this saloon that only white people could come but colored folks would come to the door [unintelligible] your bucket and get a beer".

So I said, "Well I wonder what I'm doing at this guy's house. I said, "My mother took me over there. I said you think my mom was hanging out with this guy"? He said, "Now

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I didn't say that [laughter] but your mother was a nice looking woman". So it was that kind of thing, I'm stumbling up on this years later while I'm sitting on this guy's porch [laughter], this guy's back porch. It's quite clever.

**TAYLOR:** In those days the whole idea of what's going on in the community was like... it was a small community. Everybody knew everything that was going on.

**HINTON:** Everything that was going on, sure.

**TAYLOR:** There really were no secrets.

**HINTON:** Sure.

**TAYLOR:** The thing that amazes me is that in most of the small southern communities it was impossible to avoid people of other races.

**HINTON:** Oh, no.

**TAYLOR:** I mean even though you had these attitudes, you had to be influenced by them, they influenced by you.

**HINTON:** Oh, absolutely.

**TAYLOR:** In both positive as well as negative ways.

**HINTON:** Sure. An example, I mentioned this guy Guy Kelly, the trumpet player that I told you was from Baton Rouge that was... he was in deep competition with Louis, but Louie's in New Orleans and naturally there's more going on there than Baton Rouge. But everybody knows about Guy Kelly. He's a handsome black guy but... he wasn't so handsome but he evidentially was of... what's that Indian thing down there?

**TAYLOR:** The Cajun or...

**HINTON:** Talking about Guy Kelly, this great trumpet player. He's from Baton Rouge. Now he's darker. He had lots of bumps on his face and when he played the trumpet they would kind of burst so he always carried a handkerchief and he wiped his face. But he dressed immaculately all the time. His hair was straight, like that Indian hair and he wore the best clothes and best shoes. Now he lives in Baton Rouge and he's getting to be very popular. Now [unintelligible] hung together, the white man of any popularity in any [unintelligible] had two families in some cases, a white family and a black family and [unintelligible]. The sheriff of Baton Rouge had a black wife, a mulatto lady and he had children by her. She lived over there and he had his regular wife over here and everything was fine. But he didn't want his

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mulatto children to hang out with any unmixed black children. They had to hang out with the mulatto or else... never with unmixed black.

This girl, his daughter, Daisy, falls in love with Guy Kelly and Guy Kelly is unmixed black and besides he's the most popular guy in Baton Rouge. The sheriff can't stand this [laugh]. He can't stand this. So he gets so upset he sends them both to Chicago. So that's where I get it... this guy came to Chicago and did some records he made with Gene Adler's father, [Unintelligible} Rag with [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Alvin Adler.

**HINTON:** Yeah, Alvin Adler. Some records he made with him and he got to be a very dear friend of mine but he used to call me blondie [laughter]. We kid. But he was a good dresser and he kind of over exposed himself. He didn't last too long in Chicago, he died. Well his wife is still a friend of mine. She still lives in Chicago. She's a day or two older than I even, but she's a dear friend of Mona's and mine and we keep in contact with her. Now when she left Louisiana, his wife's family didn't have anything to do with her. Now she goes back every year. They're all family.

**TAYLOR:** All together.

**HINTON:** All together now. Every year she goes back to New Orleans. She's got a home down there. She's trying to rent it out or sell it but to show you, just like you said, time is changing that whole thing.

**TAYLOR:** But even then it was close, I mean it was family, sure.

**HINTON:** Yeah, it was close. It was amazing.

**TAYLOR:** It really is. The whole idea of the relationship between not only racial groups but in friendships. I mean a lot of people form really wonderful friendships between... they've crossed over racial lines and all that kind of stuff.

**HINTON:** Sure.

**TAYLOR:** And it really was... I think it happened more readily in the South because there was no... if you did it, there was no fooling around. You did it because you wanted to do it and you were serious [laugh].

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** In other places you may have had another agenda or something and you say well hey I'm just...

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**HINTON:** But if they like you that was it.

**TAYLOR:** Right, absolutely.

**HINTON:** Greenville, Mississippi was an unusual town. I played there with Cab Calloway back in the early days and it was amazing to see the racial relationship there. There were black kids there with blue eyes. I mean my color with blue eyes, which was quite unusual.

We would play a dance in Greenville and they would put a rope down the middle of the dance floor and the white people danced on this side and the black danced over here.

There were white people on this side, there's white and black people on this side... on that side, and you would never know it except that they knew that they were mixed.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, right. Everybody knew everybody.

**HINTON:** Everybody down there knew everybody so it was cool. [Unintelligible] come on, you wouldn't know the difference but they were black and everyone was white. And there were these black guys over there with blue eyes. We were just astounded [laugh] and yet the line was down... went down then the center of the dance hall.

**TAYLOR:** There the line is right down the middle. Well let's talk about Chicago some more. The whole idea of that kind of association like in Greenville... Greenville is a fantastic place in terms of the blues and all of the people that have come through there.

**HINTON:** Yeah, right.

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know it but there's a big Jewish contingent down there. We went to a synagogue that was one of the early... or had been there the longest, I don't know, but a really active synagogue that had been there. They were all through the slavery thing and a whole bunch of other stuff. It's amazing. I mean the people come from other places, other cultures and everything, and the manner in which they do what they came to do in the context of whatever is going on... the rabbi was relating some stories to us about interracial relationships in terms of... today now what they're trying to do in terms of education and some of the other things.

And he said, "This just didn't start". He said, "My predecessor did so and so and he's talking, running down some of the things that they had done, they had to [unintelligible] in those old days but he said, "Well now we can bring it right down front".

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** So it's very interesting to see things that just don't make it to the history books [laugh].

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**HINTON:** That's right. Like Chicago, it's so blues orientated. I can remember when I was a kid delivering newspapers, all of the older black guys worked in stockyards or places like that and they used to have to deliver coal right to the street. They had a manhole and you had to shovel that coal down into the manhole to get to the apartment. This was done by those little guys that had those strong backs.

I'd go out and see them shoveling that coal, this is my Sunday school teacher and all these people, they were shoveling that coal down there and then they'd cleaned up after that, by the afternoon, and I'd go by on my way back from school and they'd be sitting on the front porch with their guitar playing those tunes. I knew Mr. Hoskins. I can remember the names of these guys and years later I came to New York I got to play with them, with Sam Price.

His was one of the first recordings I got to make here up in Decca with Johnny Temple and Georgia White. All these... and one of the guys that was in Sunday school class that I didn't really consider much of a musician because he played in a band, but he played the E flat clarinet and nobody around our...

**TAYLOR:** Played E flat, no.

**HINTON:** Yeah, nobody [laugh] in our group played E flat on a jazz job but he was doing these blues dates that I wasn't paying any attention to. Now in Austria... I can show you a letter, these guys have asked me, "Please tell me more about Odell Rand". So I sent them my class book of Odell Rand in my class book and he was in my Sunday school class. His name is very popular over there now because he's on a great deal of those old blues records with those people.

**TAYLOR:** I'm really delighted about the fact that so many of those recordings have called attention to people who really were very creative in what they did with great respect to the black tradition. I mean, they say this is out of the same tradition as the spiritual and work song and all that, and without intellectualizing it they just went on and did it.

**HINTON:** That's right. I've always been a little bit concerned about Chicago though in the jazz because naturally coming out of [Unintelligible] High School, which was before DeSabo, which is a great jazz tradition, the jazz press haven't given much talk about [Unintelligible] High School. It's always [Unintelligible] and those guys. As we were talking about it, in the high school... we had 23 high schools in those days and every year we had a contest, all 23 high schools would go out to Dyke Stadium at Northwest University and we'd just play our little piece or whatever we'd do. There was 23 schools at that end of that and all 23 high school bands would amass and John Phillips Sousa would come out and conduct in the *Star Spangled Banner*, and there would Benny Goodman and his band over there, and Gene Cupra and his band, and Eddie Cole and yours truly [unintelligible] in this band over here from the [Unintelligible] High School band.

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We were doing very reasonably. Nobody mentions any of the guys that came out of this wonderful thing. Quinn Wilson, truly a great bass player and a great... wrote a lot of good songs for Earl Hines. Matter of fact, he really didn't get much of a name for himself. He married young, married young and had a lot of children. He couldn't afford to take a chance on going out on the road like we could. I was going out [laugh] on the road just to be out on the road because I had no family to look out for, to expect things from.

Some wonderful guys, like Dan Burney, like Scoops Kerry, great musicians.

**TAYLOR:** Was Inky Cohen in school with you at all?

**HINTON:** No, he wasn't in school with me but I know him very well. I worked with him. He was quite...

**TAYLOR:** Was he from Chicago?

**HINTON:** Yes, I'm sure he was. I knew his mother and she was a completely different color and everything from him... because he was even a shade lighter than you even, but his mother was jet black and a wonderful lady.

**TAYLOR:** Well he was a wonderful musician.

**HINTON:** He was a wonderful musician. He was [unintelligible] Earl Hines, trumpet and piano.

**TAYLOR:** Right, yeah, he's a great piano player.

**HINTON:** Yeah, great piano player.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, Eddie South used to talk about him all the time.

**HINTON:** Yeah, he did, he liked him. He got to be a delegate in a union or something like that [unintelligible] and he's also responsible for getting some of those recordings of Cass Simpson.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really, Simpson?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he got those recordings, I have some of them here, after he was in the insane asylum because they wouldn't let anybody go into the insane asylum. But Inky, being an official of the union got in there and got some of them and they're amazing, just to hear what he was doing. I got a chance to work with Cass Simpson.

**TAYLOR:** Did you?

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**HINTON:** Yeah, I worked with him.

**TAYLOR:** Who were some of the other people you worked with? Now you worked with Eddie. Who else did you work with in Chicago?

**HINTON:** Well I worked with Boyd Atkins.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah, Boyd Atkins. Al Capone had the Cotton Club on Cicero and then they begin to branch out. This guy Ed Depappa had the club where... a small club on the north side where Eddie South was. And Ralph Capone, Al Capone's brother opened a club downtown in Chicago.

**TAYLOR:** In the Loop?

**HINTON:** Yeah, and they made it all black entertainment. But Ralph was an animal. He was really mean.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh] Was he?

**HINTON:** Oh, he was just absolutely terrible. Al was a nice guy that we could work for. My uncle worked for him. Let me tell you about that too a little later. That's where I got all these scars on me, working for Al Capone. That's right.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yes, sir.

**TAYLOR:** What happened?

**HINTON:** Well Al Capone, he organized Chicago. He came from New York, from Brooklyn. He came to Chicago to be a bodyguard for Jim Colisemo and Jim Colisemo was killed in a room that had no windows in it [laugh] and Al Capone was the bodyguard and of course Al Capone took over after that.

Then he took over. Everything was alcohol, booze and prostitution, hotels. He took over. You bought your stuff from him, everything is okay but if you bought from somebody else, there was a problem and the problem was usually you and you usually lost.

What he did, which to me was so universal and interracial, in the neighborhood he came in and he used all the people in the neighborhood to work. He came to my uncle. My uncle Pete Ford had this cleaning and pressing place and he came and said, "Well look

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your house rent parties are going on. People have got to have their whiskey. I'm selling alcohol. I'll sell it to you for \$12 a gallon, you sell it for \$18 a gallon. You make \$6 on a gallon. Don't buy it from anybody else. I'll pay all police protection. I'll get you bonded whiskey that you can cut it. You'll make plenty of money but don't deal with anybody else". Okay, so my uncle did that.

We had three trucks, one truck said El Paso Cigars, one truck said Ford Cleaning and Pressing, and I forget the name of the third truck. And he came every Saturday, Al Capone came himself in a Mormon car, one of them Mormon automobiles, bulletproof with guards. Police would be lined up like they're waiting for a bus and he'd come in my uncle's place and sit down with this satchel of money. He paid every policeman \$5 and every Sergeant \$10 so nobody bothered him. He had nothing.

He'd get you a case of bonded whiskey, you know bonded whiskey with that little strip across the top. He'd bring you a case of bonded whiskey in there. He'd take that strip off of it, pour it in a tub and you'd mix it with alcohol and make three cases of bonded whiskey.

He had a black guy, I don't know whether this guy worked for the government. The black guy came in with sheets of this bonded... this strip that says bonded green strip. It was in sheets. It was my duty to cut these little strips with scissors. I sat back there in the back and cut the strips. You poured it back in a bottle and put this top back on it and you sell it for \$5 a pint.

Now it's a cleaning and pressing place. We had a Hoffman pressing machine in the front. All the action was done in the back [laughter]. The press machine is in front. I had to keep it hot, keep it steamed up. If you came in after school, if you came in to get your clothes pressed I could press you a suit for 25 cents [unintelligible]. If you wanted your clothes cleaned, the cleaners are gone. They're gone. You wouldn't be able to get [unintelligible]. We didn't take any cleaning.

That was my money, my 25 cents. I wound up making \$90 before the week was out because on the weekend I went with my uncle to deliver the alcohol to all these houses. He would send us these one gallon tin cans of alcohol, load this truck up with these one gallon cans of alcohol. My uncle's got his clients all at these houses where the house rent parties are going to and we're going to go... that's why I don't drive a car to this very day.

**TAYLOR:** Why?

**HINTON:** Well I got hurt in this and I never drove again.

**TAYLOR:** Well tell us about that. How did you get hurt?

**HINTON:** Okay, I'm driving. It was my turn to drive the car. I'm driving the car full of alcohol. My uncle is sitting beside me. It's in the summer. He's got a [unintelligible] shirt on with beautiful stripes and he's a big guy, ate like a horse. He always kept at least \$2,000, \$1,500 right here in his pocket. He's sitting beside me because he's got the

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addresses. We're going to [Unintelligible] Boulevard and 46th Street and a lady came across and hit me dead center with a Nash car.

I went out that window over there, my uncle went out this window and alcohol was all over the street. Police was standing there protecting it. My uncle was laying out there. I thought he was dead. He was out. He was out.

And I went to get up across the street and my arm broke here. I would try to get up, then my leg broke here. You can see my hand, my hand's broken. This finger was just hanging, just hanging. And I couldn't get up so I finally pulled up on my left side and my face was bleeding. I pulled up to somebody's car and looked in the car to see my face. I have a scar... see this scar here?

**TAYLOR:** Yeah.

**HINTON:** That scar was here and it goes down as the years go by. They scooped me up. They took my uncle to one hospital. He was out but he was just knocked out. I was in traction for days, for weeks. Everything on my right side was broken. This finger was off, it was just hanging, and I'm playing violin, man. I'm screaming, I'm going crazy. So when they take me to the hospital I'm screaming, "Please don't take my finger off". When the news gets to Al what had happened, he gets to my mother. My mother and Al Capone come down to the hospital. I'm sitting there and the guys tells [unintelligible], "I can't do anything with this finger. I just have to take it off". I'm screaming. Al Capone says, "Don't take it off". And here it is, they didn't take it off. It's put together wrong, one bone goes this way and one bone goes this way. I was 16 years old. You can see it. I never had one moment's trouble with it.

**TAYLOR:** No kidding.

**HINTON:** Never, never still. And that was over after that. When I tried to drive something happened to me. I can drive a car but I can't get out of it. If I try to reach the door, I throw up. I don't even know it. It just comes right now. I've tried it and tried it with [unintelligible]. I never tried. My daughter said, "You can't drive"? I said, [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Forget, it's not worth it.

**HINTON:** It's not worth it. So they said they could hypnotize me but I then I said then I might forget my music [laughter]. I might forget my music. So I haven't driven a car since.

But that was the kind of a situation. He controlled that south side, the alcohol. He controlled it and you made \$6 on every gallon. He gave all police protection and everything. All you had to do was to get your customers to sell it. But Ralph, Ralph was really a tough guy.

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**TAYLOR:** He was different.

**HINTON:** Really mean, fight people, hit them. He opened up a club downtown and had Boyd Atkins at the band there. Now Earl Hines is at the Grand Terrace and he's got Lucky Milliner. He's got he's got Percy Venable as his choreographer. They can't get Percy Venable ... Ed Fox... Al Capone wants Percy Venable but he can't get him because Ed Fox has got him. So he takes his nephew, Lucius Venable... Lucky Milliner. He takes Lucius Venable.

Lucius was a choreographer... Lucky Milliner. He took the name Lucky Milliner. He went to the Cotton Club and he put the shows on in the Cotton Club and he put the shows on downtown for Ralph Capone. He knew all about music... he knew nothing about music but he knew about two courses, tag four, tag eight. He's standing in the wings and we'd be playing and the chorus girls after he taught them the routine, if they weren't through, he say tag eight, tag four. So he got to be so great at that, then he came to New York later and they had bands.

**TAYLOR:** Lucky Milliner, the [Unintelligible] River Band.

**HINTON:** Yeah, his name is Lucius Venable, that's his real name.

**TAYLOR:** The first amateur contest I ever won was in Washington, D.C. His band was playing, with Billy Kyle playing piano.

**HINTON:** That's right, [laugh] that's right.

**TAYLOR:** It was one of the worst and most frightening things that ever happened. Billy was... I had heard Billy with...

**HINTON:** [Laugh] Kirby?

**TAYLOR:** Kirby, and man, I'm looking, I'm saying, "Oh, man this guy has beautiful touch".

**HINTON:** [Laugh] Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** And he'd just run all over the piano and everything. So I get on and I shoot my little best shot trying to play like Teddy Wilson and everything. I win so Lucky says, "Okay, you come back and play with the band, you get a spot". He put me on behind Billy playing *Old Man River*. Man, he was flying all over the piano. I said, "Man, I don't want to go on now" [laughter].

**HINTON:** It was a beautiful thing. Well Ed [Unintelligible] was like my brother all through school. He lived... I'm so happy that I taped him because he was in the band, he  
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was a year or two older than I. He got in Al Capone's band... Walter Barnes' band. He was in that band. I'm still delivering newspapers. Nobody give me a job [laughter]. In fact I'm just thinking about the bass. This guy that give me the job every now and then when I make \$19, but I'm still delivering newspapers and Ed Murphy's working for Al Capone and he goes to Al Capone and says, "Look, we're over on the west side and ain't no buses traveling over here this time of night". Al Capone said, "Go to that place and tell the man I said give you guys automobiles". The guy give each one of the guys in the band Ford automobiles with disc wheels... in the band.

And Ed Murphy's got a....here's my brother... I know I know more music than this guy because I always shot him down with the violin. He's got a Ford car with disc wheels and making \$75 bucks a week and I'm delivering newspapers. He's getting off at four o'clock in the morning when I'm coming out with my newspapers.

Dexter Travis says in his book... the guy said... he called me Sporty in those days, he said, "Hey Sporty, get a horn". That's what Vivian DeSalle said. "I've got to get rid of this violin and get me something I can make a living with". That was one of the deciding factors of me getting the bass and getting to going pretty good with it.

**TAYLOR:** Who did you play bass with first?

**HINTON:** It was Huey Swift, the first guy that gave me a job playing bass, and then I played with Johnny Long as a club date.

**TAYLOR:** Johnny Long, left handed violinist.

**HINTON:** No, no, Johnny Long is a trumpet in Chicago.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, another Johnny Long.

**HINTON:** Yeah. This Johnny Long is a trumpet player. Not a good trumpet player but a very wise guy. He had the club dates scene covered like Mitch Roberts. His name is Johnny Long and he wasn't a good trumpet player but he was wise enough to get good guys all the time. Joe Williams was the vocalist [laugh]. He'd get a good band [unintelligible] saxophone and I was doing fairly well on bass, and we played Baker's Casino and all the Saturday night things and played the Warrick Hall, the \$3 gigs and \$9 gigs.

**TAYLOR:** That was a lot of money in those days.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, oh, yeah...

**TAYLOR:** \$3, I mean you're cool [laugh].

**HINTON:** Yeah. In fact one of things was kind of sad and I mention it because you For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



know Eddie had such dignity but Eddie's jobs were few and far between. But in between Eddie's jobs I could out and take one of these \$3 jobs. Eddie couldn't do that. You know, that would lower his dignity.

So I would go out and make this money and I really didn't need much while I'm staying at home with my mother. In fact I'm getting the flack from the bass players at the union because, "That's the kid living at home with his mama, going out there making all the gigs". I was scared to go down to the union because I figured somebody would be beating me up.

So I got extra money so Eddie South would say, "Did they give you all some extra money"? And I would give Eddie \$10, \$15, \$20, and of course when he got the next job he would give it back to me. But I knew he couldn't go out and take a gig for \$6 or something like that and I was all over the place.

I tell you [laugh]... there was a little piano player that you should really know about by the name of Stump King. We called him Stump King. Now he was really terrible and he stammered besides but he had good gigs. He always had the good gigs and he'd get a bunch of good guys. The guys would say, "What are you doing"? He'd say, "I couldn't get nothing but I'm going to play with Stump King tonight [laughter]. We would play with Stump King.

**TAYLOR:** That's amazing how all over the country you would find guys that either didn't know anything about music or couldn't play and they were the ones that had the jobs.

**HINTON:** Connections.

**TAYLOR:** Everywhere, they had good connections.

**HINTON:** The very first band that we had together... [unintelligible] the younger guys like Scovall Brown, Ed Burke and Willie Randall, we were all rehearsing, having our rehearsal thing. We had a guy in the band, Ace Vant was his name and he was the worst musician of all of us. He really couldn't play. He had a trombone and he wasn't very good at it.

We were rehearsing at my house because there was always a piano there. So my house is the rehearsal and we rehearsed. This guy goes downtown to the Chicago Theater and tells a lady named Lucille Carrow that he had a band. And the lady, yeah. He said, "I've got a band". So she said, "Well let me hear it".

He brought us downtown and we had a rehearsal and we played. We must have sounded pretty bad but you could see that we were kind of getting together and the people started laughing. They said if they're game enough to do this, let's give them a job and they gave us a job. So the first job we had, Ace Vant was the leader [laughter], the worst guy in the band. It's just beautiful. But that was usually the system [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** A lot of places there. Where did you work? Did you work mostly on the  
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south side, or you worked in the Loop? Where did you work?

**HINTON:** I worked mostly on the south side, the Warrick Hall, the Savoy Ballroom. I worked the Savoy Ballroom with Erskine Tate. After the Vind Dome started to die down, after the silent came in and the big orchestra, Sammy Stewart, another piano player had an orchestra at the Metropolitan Theater. All these theaters closed down or didn't use any bands so the only thing left was for the dancehalls. There was a dancing school at Forham and 43rd Street and Vernon Avenue or something like that, a dancing school. You played by commission. You went in there with a band and if you made any money you got a percentage of it. We'd take ten guys and you'd play all night and you'd wind up with 35 cents [laughter] a piece. We would rehearse and play. And then what I call the union gig dances at the Warrick Hall on Wednesdays and Fridays. Well on a good night you could make \$3 to \$6 there.

**TAYLOR:** What did they do, the union in Chicago? The black union was a very... as far as unions go around the country was a very progressive union.

**HINTON:** Absolutely.

**TAYLOR:** What was special about that?

**HINTON:** Well it was special and it was progressive in the west end but they destroyed themselves. At first all of the clubs and things and the work was on the south side so there wasn't that much work downtown, so the white union wanted to join. [Unintelligible] said no because all of the bands that came into Chicago, Duke Ellington, Fetchy Henderson, Andy Kirk, all those bands had to pay tax to the colored union, you see. So we had a lot of money so we didn't want to join the white union. So they came out there. Then things changed because I've been a member there all my life and am still a member. Things changed and we wanted to join because music got scarce. We wanted 39th and State Street in the union and [unintelligible] I've got to tell you this one, [Unintelligible] was president of the local 10, a white union. He came out to the south side and had them call a meeting. He said, "I'm president of number 10. It's my responsibility as president of number 10 to get the work that we're getting for number 10". This was the downtown [unintelligible]. He said, "So you... that's off limits for you because it's our territory. You got the south side, that was your territory, you made money. Now that the south side is dwindling, that's your problem". So he said, "So it's my responsibility to keep this work. I'm going out to tell you. I'm not concerned with what color you are". He really came out and told us that. He also said, Whether we know it not"... he also is responsible for the integrating of the unions.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

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**HINTON:** Yes, he is. At the convention in Florida when he got to be president of the American Federation of Musicians at the convention in Florida, [Unintelligible] came up to the convention and told them, he says, “Now we’ve got a problem here with these black unions and white unions, two unions in their jurisdiction. We can’t have this”. He said, “We can’t have these two unions in the same jurisdiction. Now if the white union don’t want the black union, the black union don’t want the white union, whichever union wants to go with the other union all they have to do is collect enough money to pay the dues into the other union and send your charter back to the American Federation of Musicians and they will have to accept you because you’ve got enough money to pay your dues there now”. He did that at the Florida convention and that’s where we begin to get the change in the thing. That’s not too very well known.

**TAYLOR:** No, I didn’t know that.

**HINTON:** But he certainly did that.

**TAYLOR:** But he also did some things in terms of back in the „40s when he called that strike.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** They pulled all the music off of the... you couldn’t record, you couldn’t be on radio and in effect that really changed a lot of things in terms of the manner in which freelance musicians worked.

**HINTON:** That’s right. That’s really true. And also, most people don’t know, there is a mature fund, a very huge fund in the American Federation of Musician, a trust fund for any musician that becomes destitute and most people that we know that have problems don’t know that you can go to that.

**TAYLOR:** I didn’t know that.

**HINTON:** I know it, and I researched it because when Gus Johnson just got sick here recently, I was working with Gus Johnson [unintelligible] with his sister when he got alzimers. He’s still in bad condition. I went down to Local 10 and found out there is a trust fund that you can apply to.

**TAYLOR:** Is that only in Chicago?

**HINTON:** No, it’s the American Federation of Musicians.

**TAYLOR:** So that’s national?

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**HINTON:** National, it's national. It's called the [Unintelligible] Fund.

**TAYLOR:** Well that's interesting. There's a guy, I don't know if he's been in touch with you yet, his name is Herb Stoffer. He's running something called the... actually it's the Musicians Foundation and he's trying to do the same thing for musicians. He's trying to work with the union here but he's also trying to develop a fund so that when musicians get ill or they have special problems, then there's some money for them because the union isn't able to give enough to really make the difference for most musicians.

**HINTON:** Yeah, I'm aware of that although I don't... I'm not involved. My wife is involved in that.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, good, good. Because I know he had mentioned your name. I didn't know what...

**HINTON:** Yeah. Well what happened, there was... a few years ago George Wing decided to give free... two concerts at Carnegie Hall... ask the musicians, this is local New York, if we would play a concert free.

**TAYLOR:** A benefit, yeah [unintelligible].

**HINTON:** Yeah. And then we did and they turned the money over to Mona and Lee Coners wife [Unintelligible] Coners and it was that if a musician needed some money, he could borrow it and if he could pay it back, he could pay it back. There was no real stipulation that you really had to pay it back.

**TAYLOR:** But if you needed it you could get it.

**HINTON:** If you need it you could get it. So they had to make a stipulation [unintelligible] stipulating you had to be non-profit organization so there had to be stipulation you get up to \$500. You couldn't get anymore. A couple of other fellows I have heard that got more money because [Unintelligible] okayed it. But the money is still there. There's a lot of money still there.

**TAYLOR:** That's interesting to know because now there's... because of this movement... I think when some of the famous musicians get ill and you realize that in some cases they can take care of themselves.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** But then there are some who are just as well known as some that we know about who can't.

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**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** For no reason... I mean it has nothing to do with the fact that... other than they're freelance musicians and they don't have any pension, or they don't have what people who work on the job have.

**HINTON:** That's true. So [unintelligible] but there have been people and quite a few musicians have borrowed and paid them back. Some haven't but it's a big amount of money there.

Tommy Corners was the treasurer, Mona was the president. They had a committee of people like Dick Hamer's wife, several other people, Frank West, they're our committee so that if somebody wanted to borrow some money they had to get approval that this guy is a local [unintelligible] musician and he's... not just anybody can come in and get the money. If these guys okayed it, then the money was allocated to you up to \$500 bucks. Of course in the case of George Jones, he was sick for a while and nobody expected him to pay the money back but he was taken care of, and things like that. But the money was there. Now this other organization evidently came up later and they didn't have any money and they seemed to want to get in on this one so I don't know what the problem is but I think Rufus Reed's wife is treasurer now. She took Lee Coners wife's place who passed away.

**TAYLOR:** We're going to stop for a minute. I have to change tapes.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** In terms of the Chicago period, this was a wonderful period of jazz. Now you mentioned the Austin High group. I have talked to Jimmy McPartland and some of the guys from that group. As I understand it they really were coming over to the south side to really learn what was really a part of that tradition and to plug into that if you will, just by making a lot of...

**HINTON:** That's absolutely right. Benny Goodman especially mentions it but as I said, we'd meet... that greater south was waiting for [Unintelligible] the Club Ruby [unintelligible] Dixie Beal and [unintelligible] to come to here. They could come any place to hear us but we couldn't come any place to hear them.

So consequently after hours, when they got through after hours, they would come to the south side [unintelligible] and the jam sessions were great. After hours the places were closed and the jam sessions at breakfast dances and...

**TAYLOR:** What were the jam sessions like, where were they?

**HINTON:** In the same clubs, the place where... the breakfast dance was usually at the same nightclub where the show went on that night.

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**TAYLOR:** Just stay open.

**HINTON:** They'd stayed open, went on through. And they came and they got adjusted to playing and played together. I think both sides learned something. I'm sure the guys learned a lot of academics from white guys and they certainly learned a lot of creativity from black guys.

Jimmy Noon, who Benny Goodman praised to the high heavens, the [unintelligible]. I interviewed for the National Foundation of the Arts... I interviewed Bud Johnson about this. Bud Came to Chicago first before his brother. But Kay Johnson, he was a dear friend of mine. He came from Milwaukee and he wanted to get me to come up to play with some band up there.

Well I was in college and my mother as I told you was a no frills lady. I wanted to go so badly to play with these guys in Milwaukee and she put her foot down. When she said it, it was no. Bud always laughed because I laid in the floor and cried but it didn't get a thing [laughter]. I still didn't get to go.

But guys were migrating in. Teddy Wilson came in from Texas, Bud Johnson came in from Texas. Bud Johnson's father worked for Studabaker. Studabaker was a wagon maker. They made the covered wagon.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yes. Then they became an automobile company and his father worked for the covered wagon to the automobile company with them. Bud got to learn to play music and came to Chicago and got into Earl Hines band after that big accident that Earl Hines band had when Cecil Irvin got killed and Barry Franklin got hurt.

**TAYLOR:** I don't remember that, what happened with that?

**HINTON:** It was on the road and they had a big... Earl Hines band was on the road and they had a terrible...

**TAYLOR:** In a bus?

**HINTON:** Bus, yes. Had a terrible accident and one of the great tenor players, Cecil Irvin was his name, he was killed and Billy Franklin, the trombone was just maimed up terribly. Several guys were hurt and it was just... wrecked the band pretty badly.

A lot of young guys came in. Bud Johnson was one of the young guys. He came in and he was beginning to write... and doing some writing and getting the feel of things. One of the stories that he tells, which is quite true because I knew his mother, Kate Johnson... his mother worked in a white hotel. She was a maid in a white hotel in Texas, in Dallas Texas.

This white musician came through and she was cleaning his room and talking. She said, For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

“Well I’ve got a son that plays in Chicago. The guy said, “Well I’m going to Chicago, what’s his name”? She said, “His name is Albert Johnson and he plays with the Earl Hines band”. So this man said, “Well I’ve got a band and I’m going to Chicago, I’ll check him out”.

So one night while Bud was playing with Earl Hines, the waiter says, “There’s a gentleman over at the table that wants to talk to you. Bud goes over the table and the guy says, “I met your mother in Dallas, she told me you were here. The band sounds great”. He said, “Did you make some of those arrangements”? So he said, “Yeah, sure I made some of them”. He said, “Well next time play one that you made”.

So they played a couple arrangements that Bud made and this guy said, “I’ve got a band, would you like to make some for me”? He said, “Sure”. If I remember, I’m not sure, I think it was Roger Woof Kahn’s Band and he was at the Stevens Hotel.

So Bud said the first time he took him down to the Stevens Hotel, he stayed up all night to make this arrangement for him. The arrangement was great and they finished. It was the first time he had ever made an arrangement for a white man that he didn’t get to play in the band but he made the arrangement.

He said, “And the piano player came over to him and said, “Look, do you think you can write me one of those chords like Earl Hines play”? Bud said, “No, that’s [unintelligible]”. The piano player was Stan Kenton [laughter]. So it was that kind of a thing. Bud was doing his work way before we could play in those bands. They were coming around listening to what we were doing and then getting the guys to write.

A guy named Hill, Elliott Hill, a piano player from Chicago, nobody knows this, he was arranging for Lucy Arnez.

**TAYLOR:** No kidding?

**HINTON:** Yeah, for years, played through the whole thing. He was a young piano player in Chicago when I was playing [unintelligible] violin and places and nobody in Chicago even remembers about him. Elliott Hill was his name.

So it was those kinds of things that was going on. It’s changed. The south side was... because we could come... they could come to hear us.

**TAYLOR:** Now you were from Mississippi but a lot of the guys came to Chicago from Alabama...

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, [unintelligible] from Alabama, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, from places other than New Orleans because everybody talks about the fact that Louis and so many guys came up from New Orleans...

**HINTON:** Right.

**TAYLOR:** But as you point out they came from everywhere, all over the south.

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**HINTON:** They came from everywhere but New Orleans had the clout and had the [unintelligible]. Jimmy Noon is from New Orleans, King Oliver is from New Orleans, Bill Johnson is from New Orleans. All of these good players are from New Orleans and they [unintelligible] open because they're the ones that had the style. Charles Crest who was on the river. They had the style so when you came in there, they came in full blast as far as organizing the bands.

Now you had to be pretty cool to get into this society. That's my claim to fame to get into this society. When Zooty Singleton hired me in his rhythm section that was my entrée that I was worthwhile with him. I gigged around, man, with anybody, for the \$3 gigs. But Zooty Singleton was the man. He was their drummer. He had been with Louie. He made the Little Louie's Hot Five. He was the king of the drums as far as everybody was concerned.

He got a job at the Three Deuces downtown, downtown, the Three Deuces, the same guy that had hired Louis Armstrong. He opened at this Three Deuces with a small [Unintelligible] relief piano player. Zooty Singleton has got the band, a four piece band. Zooty Singleton on drums, Lee Colliers, a New Orleans trumpet player on drums.

Edward Boxtale from Detroit on guitar, and I'm on bass.

Well when I get in there Louie... because it was Mississippi guys except for Walter Barnes. They didn't have too much clout as far as establishment but Zooty Singleton had it and so... well if this guy's with Zooty, he must be okay. That's when Cab Calloway came and asked Zooty for me. He said, "Can I have him"? And Zooty gave me away [laughter]. There's a funny story about that I'll get to tell you.

**TAYLOR:** Tell me about that.

**HINTON:** Well Cab came...

**TAYLOR:** So you were working with Zooty now?

**HINTON:** I'm working with Zooty. In 1935, I'm working with Zooty at the Three Deuces. Art Tatum is the relief piano player but it's my unfortunate duty to go up... when he gets finished to go out to his last two numbers and play with him. I never caught him yet [laughter]. I could never dream what chord he was going to play next. But I'm playing with him for his finale.

He was a very cautious man. He didn't like... he walked with... tail walked with a bounce and he would have the waiters to set up the room like they was going to be there at night so he knew where all the tables were because he didn't want to stumble and feel his way through. It was down stairs so he walked right straight to the bandstand because he knew where...

**TAYLOR:** Where everything was.

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**HINTON:** He could see out of the left eye...

**TAYLOR:** A little bit, right.

**HINTON:** A little bit because in intermission we played pinochle and he put a big light behind him and he put the cards up like this. He put them all in place and he didn't look at them again. You just say ten of Jack, ten of spades and if he had the jack, he'd put the jack on it.

But I'm working and Cab Calloway is making his first trip with [Unintelligible] to California where Al Jolson, the same kid from the movie... Ben Webster's in Cab Calloway's band. He's got this great band and a fabulous bass player, Al Morgan, another New Orleans man. He was the man.

**TAYLOR:** A [unintelligible] guy.

**HINTON:** Yeah, big guy. He was a foot and a half taller than I, and handsome. He was dark but handsome and a very good dresser. I worshipped him, I just...

**TAYLOR:** He was a strong player.

**HINTON:** Yeah, a strong player. He'd twirl his bass and he... good playing. The thing that impressed me... I was too shy to say anything to him. I would wait for him to... I'd go in to see the theater... Charlie Carpenter who was...

**TAYLOR:** Lester Young's manager after a while.

**HINTON:** Yeah. We was in Boy Scouts together, Troop 533, Ebenezer Baptist Church. He was on the door at the Regal so I could go in and out of there at the time we were Boy Scouts.

**TAYLOR:** Was he any kind of a musician at all?

**HINTON:** No.

**TAYLOR:** He was not.

**HINTON:** No.

**TAYLOR:** Just the manager and business manager.

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was always in the theater business, yeah. He got in there by managing and hanging around with the guys. But he was on the door so he would....

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**TAYLOR:** Because he takes credit for that [unintelligible] [laughter].

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's true. Yeah, I know. But he was the one that was on the door and he'd let me in and out. I'd stand outside when the show was over to see what a bass player looked like and how he would conduct himself when he got through. Al Morgan would change clothes. He'd be immaculate and he'd come outside. I'd be standing by a curb and Daisy would ask him for an autograph and he'd reach in and autograph it. Then he reached in his pocket and pull out a sheet of stamps and pull off one and lick it and put it on beside his autograph. It was his picture [laughter]. I said, wow, I've got to do that [laughter]. I haven't made it yet but I said, man, that's great. Well anyway he went to California to do this movie with Cab Calloway's band called the *Singing Kid*. Morgan is so photogenic and Cab is photogenic, and they'd have little confrontations I think around a couple of chicks somewhere along the way. They're doing this movie and Cab is [unintelligible] and shaking his head and he thought the camera was on him and it was on Al Morgan [laughter]. And that didn't set too good.

**TAYLOR:** I know that.

**HINTON:** So things got to be a little shaky there and one of the directors said to Al Morgan, "Look if you were out here in California every time we did a picture with a band you'd have the job", because he did his thing. So Al Morgan quit and stayed in California and joined Les Hiss' band with Lionel Hampton, and Lawrence Brown, and all those guys.

And Cab Calloway had to come back east without a bass player and my friend Kay Johnson, Bud Johnson's brother, who... we had played together in Chicago, he's in Cab Calloway's band now and he said, "Well if you're going to come through Chicago, check out Milt Hinton".

So Cab came in one night, winter night in January, big coonskin coat on and a derby hat. He hits the door, hollers "Cab Calloway", you know. He comes in and everybody is looking at him. He comes over to Zooty Singleton and he says, "Zooty, how is that kid playing bass"? Zooty said, "He's good, he's a nice kid". So he said, "Can I have him" [laugh]? Zooty said, "Yeah, you can have him", [laughter] so he just gave me away [laugh].

So Zooty came upstairs and said, "Kid you're gone". I said, "I'm gone, where"? He said, "Cab just asked me for you and you'd better get out of here". I had to call my mom and tell her. Cab sang a song with us and he turned to me... never said a word to me until then. He said, "The train leaves at nine o'clock from the South Street Station". It was about 3:30 in the morning then. "Be there".

**TAYLOR:** Be there.

**HINTON:** So I called my mom and told her I got this gig. She had a little canvas bag with a change of underwear and a clean shirt. I get on this train at 9:30 in the morning. For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



and Kay Johnson is at a meeting. I'd never been on a train with a Pullman. You know, I didn't come from Vicksburg on no train like that. I got on this train and all these great musicians, Doc Scto, Cab Calloway, Free Squeler, Mouse Randolph, Foots Thomas, giants.

Ben Webster and Cab Calloway had missed the train. They missed it being as they were stoned. They got on at the 63rd Street Station and Ben Webster come on and said he was tore up. I weighed about 115 pounds soaking wet and he looked at me and said, "What is that"? Cab said, "That's the new bass player". He said, "A new what"? I figured there's a guy I'd never like as long as I lived. To my dying day he's my dearest friend. But that's how I got the job.

So Cab shook hands with Zooty and said thank you for letting him have his bass player and he said, "If you ever come to New York, if ever I can do you a favor, just call on me". So Zooty says okay.

So then Cab turns to me and says, "Kid, I'm going to do two or three weeks of one nighters on my way to New York so I'll let you do them until I get to New York and get me a good bass player".

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh] Until I get a good one.

**HINTON:** Yeah. I stayed in his band 16 years. We opened the Cotton Club in 1936, opened the Cotton Club at 48th and Broadway. Big show, we rehearsed it.

[Laugh] I got no union... I got no 802 union card. I've got the Chicago card. The dress rehearsal night [laugh] the union comes in to see everybody's card and I showed them my 208 card and they threw it on the floor. This is a dress rehearsal. So they said, "Cab you can't use this guy". So Cab said okay. To his manager, "Give him his ticket to go back home". He's trying to learn [Unintelligible] *Gal Of Mine*, he's trying to learn these new lyrics. He's got no time.

My heart is broken. So they finally... Claude Jones the great trombone player and Kay Johnson, they go to Cab, they said, "Look, you're Cab Calloway. Man, you don't let no union tell you what to do. That kid's been playing in the band two months now. We've got to open tomorrow, we can't open with no new bass player".

They said, "Besides, they've got a rule that a bass player... guy can work, put his transfer in and he can work two days a week until he gets his card". Said, "Let's let him work on the nights that we do the broadcasts because we're going to be on the air, man, we need"... [laugh].

So Cab said, "Yeah, I ain't going to let no union tell me what to do [laughter]. So he said, "Tell the manager, tell him to stay here. So that's how I kept the job. I'd come in there for the broadcast and do it. They were so kind to me. I'll never forget those guys for doing that for me.

So months later Zooty comes to New York and things are kind of tough. He's just getting [unintelligible] Cab told me if I let him have Milt Hinton, he'd look out for me.

**TAYLOR:** He'd do me a favor.

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**HINTON:** So he comes out to the Cotton Club. He comes back stage to Cab. “I just got in town and things ain’t working too good for me”. He says, “You told me if I ever needed any help... would you help me”? So Cab says, “Oh, yeah, wait a minute, I’ll be right back. So Cab goes in his dressing room, comes back [sound], puts something in Zooty’s hand. Zooty says, “Thank you, Cab”, went out in the street on Broadway, opens his hand, it was \$5 [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** Big help.

**HINTON:** For years later every time... as long as I loved Zooty, as long as I’d see... if I had something, I’d always give him a \$100. I said, this is on account Zooty [laughter], trying to make up... he was a beautiful man. I loved Zooty.

**TAYLOR:** He was wonderful. He was one of those guys that like you had wonderful stories and he knew everybody.

**HINTON:** Yeah, everybody. He sure did.

**TAYLOR:** I loved to hear him talk. He knew some history.

**HINTON:** I always wanted to be like him. His wife Marge is a musician and a great lady I would say and they knew everybody, all of the movie stars. I said gee I would like to see my wife and I someday know people like Zooty. I think we were trying to get to that sort of point.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, well you did [unintelligible].

**HINTON:** I really loved Zooty. And Louis loved him. He took care of him and took him with him everywhere he went.

**TAYLOR:** Well it’s amazing when you stop to think about guys like that who really... their stock in trade was creativity.

**HINTON:** That’s right.

**TAYLOR:** I mean it was what do I as an individual have to say. So Zooty sounded one way, Baby Dodd sounded another way, Joe Jones... everybody had his... you’re playing the same instrument but it’s a very personal thing. That’s one of the things about your bass playing. I mean it’s a very personal way of doing something.

**HINTON:** Well thank you.

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**TAYLOR:** But then you can adapt that. The thing I think is so significant is you can adapt it to any situation, whether it's [Unintelligible] or Ben Webster, or whoever. I mean it doesn't matter. I mean you say, well okay, this is where he's going, this is what I do for that [laugh].

**HINTON:** Yeah, well thank you. Well that's one thing I want to say about these young generation of musicians. I find they are very respectful. I'm so grateful to see this come back. They're so respectful of their elders and people [Unintelligible] and Terence Blanchard, there's a bunch of young guys that are coming along that I'm just so happy to see they're carrying themselves greatly. The way I saw Zooty was... Louis Armstrong respected Zooty. Zooty was older than Louis.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, sure.

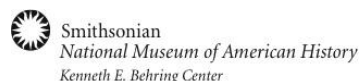
**HINTON:** And Louis respected him. He respected Barney [Unintelligible] because Barney [Unintelligible] was older than Louie and I used to see this thing and it was wonderful to see the respect, and that was maybe four or five years difference, not 25 years [unintelligible] and I am but like four or five years. But I remember sometime... Louis didn't have as much knowledge about things as Barney [Unintelligible] and I would see if there was ever a problem... when I was working with Louie, if there was ever a problem that come up by somebody saying, "Look, Louis I think you'd better do this. We're going do this". I see Louis sort of stop for a minute and he would wait and see what Barney's going to say about it, you see. It was wonderful to see that kind of dignity that he had for him. I remember seeing him do the same for Zooty. Zooty went to Europe on some tour and came back and a great painter here, Misha Resnakoff had a studio downtown and was a great jazz lover. He gave a great party for Zooty coming back. He had all the guys from Conner's and everybody come over there to welcome Zooty home. Louie was in town and Louie was invited so Louie said, "We've got to be there, Zooty's coming back". Zooty came in the room and Zooty was standing... Louie was standing there and Zooty looked at Louie and he said, "Look at that old boy, sure getting fat" [laughter]. Then he went around and greeted everybody else. So Louie said, "Well I was here so I can go now" [laugh]. So it's good to see that kind of thing coming around again.

**TAYLOR:** Well it's one thing that a lot of musicians who are actually younger than you but not that much, I mean you're maybe four or five years older than they, and they have the same kind of respect so now it's coming back to that I think.

**HINTON:** Yeah, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** I think it kind of missed a generation there.

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**HINTON:** Yes, yes.

**TAYLOR:** But it seems to be returning. I agree with you, that's a very good feeling, I agree.

**HINTON:** That's a good thing. It's a good thing. It keeps the thing going.

**TAYLOR:** Sure. It's really nice to plug into a tradition and it's even nicer when you're a part of that tradition as you are.

The things in Chicago, which were happening on the south side, how did the blues fit into... I mean at one point from what I've read and what I heard, there were the musicians who were like at the one theater you were talking about where they're playing more on the society or European classical approach, and then you had the musicians who were really playing Mississippi, and New Orleans, and Alabama, really playing what was really from the black tradition more so and they were developing that kind of thing. How did those two things come together? They came with the Eddie South thing, but how...

**HINTON:** It was more or less like a class distinction. If you studied you got a little bit away from it but then all of a sudden you begin to find out that this is where your roots are, then you begin to come back.

Like we in Chicago, who live in Chicago, the people that lived on the west side... black people who lived on the west side of Chicago were a little estranged from the people that lived on the south side because we were in mass on the south side. Everybody was there and we sort of looked at those guys over there as being a little strange. It was because it was over on the west side and [unintelligible] excellent musician.

Then when they began to come to the union and gather more to come over on the south side, things began to change. Then all of sudden, I don't know really how it happened, but then we begin to recognize *Muddy Waters* and guys like that.

This guy Odell Randall that was in my Sunday School class, I didn't pay much attention to him because he played a E flat clarinet and we didn't use him in a jazz band but this man was in with all the ethnic blues guys and he made all those records with Johnny Temple because like I said they were race records. You couldn't hear, maybe like *You've Got Bad Blood Mama*, [unintelligible] *Let Me See What Else You've Got*. And he's playing all this beautiful clarinet and just soft clarinet in back of it.

These records are getting a lot of publicity because they were race records, they were made to go back down south. They didn't play them much in Chicago because you couldn't get them unless you bought them and took them home because there was no place... no air time for them at all, couldn't have no air time.

But then we began to feel this thing. I really think about Mr. Hoskins. I used to see him every night after he got through, to wash his face and clean up after shoveling that coal all day. He'd sit out on that front porch with his feet up and that guitar and singing his blues. That was his salvation, the whole thing.

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**TAYLOR:** Right, absolutely. In terms of the kinds of social life in Chicago, you mentioned that there were... there people had like three story houses and they had places, which were city places as opposed to the country type houses that many of them came from. Did people become more or less property conscious? Were they interested in owning property or how did musicians...

**HINTON:** We only began to get later... after... because you're coming from not having anything to an apartment building with five rooms, which would be astronomical amount of money now but it was a \$100 a month, which was a hell of a lot of money when you're making \$30 a week. You've got to pool all your resources. So you're thinking more in terms of the comfort of five rooms and four rooms and the kitchen and there was no big thing about buying homes. The only homes were on South Proctor, which was not as modern as Kings Boulevard. When I came there it was Grand Boulevard.

**TAYLOR:** Right, Grand Boulevard.

**HINTON:** That was because Cutter Hay, and [Unintelligible] and Swift, all their houses, these big mansions... some of them are still there. The frame of these old mansions are still there and they was grand. And then as the time began to move around and black people began to get into a littler finance, these people moved out. Now the only black people that had any money of any amount around those days were women. Mrs. Malone of [Unintelligible] College. They still celebrate Hattie Malone day in St. Louis, Missouri.

**TAYLOR:** In St. Louis.

**HINTON:** Yes, to this very day, Hattie Malone Day. My wife... this lady started the first school for girls to learn about cosmetology, hairdressing. She set up or had a building built in St. Louis, a dormitory and a theater and she was teaching these girls how to do hair coloring. Everybody was streaking their hair. It was a big thing. There was money to be made in that.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**HINTON:** And she made a lot of money but she was for dignity. She ever hired Eddie South to come down to St. Louis to play at lunchtime. These girls after streaking the hair, at lunchtime they had to come in this little theater and sit down and listen to some nice music like Eddie South would play because see this was the kind of lady. Another lady was Madame Walker.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, I was about to say Madame Walker.

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**HINTON:** Madame Walker from Indianapolis, Indiana. She's got a big building that's still there now and she came. So they bought these buildings. They were the ones that had money. They bought these building to put up these... to give these young girls a chance to get some education in cosmetology, hair dressing, and that's Madame Malone and Mrs. [Unintelligible].

Now Madame Malone is the one... all my wife's daughters, sisters came to this school to study cosmetology. And Mona was about the last one. She was doing that when she was going to church and I met her. She was Mrs. Malone's secretary. Mrs. Malone had bought this building on 44th and South Parkway there and she turned it over to the *Chicago Defender*.

The editor's name was Abbott. He was interested in young people so he decided to get a young band and he got Major N. Clark Smith. This man that was our musical director at Winter Phillips to... a young band to play to publicized his newspaper. We were supposed to go around the country and play music like the [Unintelligible] first class level because they've got money. You know, they didn't stand on a corner like [unintelligible] and pass your hat. This was for us to be presented because Major N. Clark Smith, he was really a captain or something in the United States Army and he formed this band. Lionel Hampton was in it. Hayes Alberts was the drummer.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was the drummer in this band and Lionel Hampton was the drummer and both of them...

**TAYLOR:** I just knew him as bass player.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah. Well he was the drummer. I'll tell you another story about him later.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, okay.

**HINTON:** He was the drummer in those days and he got in the band, Lionel was in the band and I wanted to get... both of those guys were a couple hours older then me and Lionel was in long pants and I had on short pants and Lionel didn't want me in the band because I had on short pants. I know I could read as much music because I'm playing violin. I come from the violin, I'm cool with that reading see [laugh] and Lionel tried to keep me out of the band. Nat Cole wanted to get in the band to play the [unintelligible] and I'm older then Nat so I tried to keep Nat out [laughter]. I tried to keep Nat out of the band. It was all in these buildings that was owned by Mrs. Hattie Malone.

Major N. Clark Smith, young black kids should really... and school kids should know about him. I remember when I was in high school and he was right... he said there one day in the bandstand, he said, "You kids never heard of the symphony orchestra". And For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

we had never... not in person, you know. We never had. For some reason... I don't know his connection for the army. Lionel & Healy had sponsored him.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, the music store.

**HINTON:** Yeah, they sponsored him. They had sent him on a tour around the country, around the world writing music. He wrote a lot of music. I've got some of it downstairs.

**TAYLOR:** What was Lionel & Healy like in those days? There are no music stores like that now.

**HINTON:** No. It was the harp... but he had sheet music and instruments.

**TAYLOR:** But they had everything.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Did they have the studio where you could practice and all that stuff?

**HINTON:** Yes, they had a studio.

**TAYLOR:** They had all that stuff.

**HINTON:** Yeah, they had all that.

**TAYLOR:** So it was really like a music factory almost.

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's right. Now I never knew what Major N. Clark's relation was but I knew he had this relation because in the first place, he knew everybody and we didn't, and when he said to us one day in the classroom, "You kids never heard of the symphony orchestra. I'm going to call up Fred Stock and have him bring the symphony orchestra out here and play for you".

Well, you know how we were kids, this guy's out of his cotton-picking mind. Fred Stock is going to bring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra out on 39th Street and [Unintelligible] Avenue to play for us. Next week they were there and played. The first time I heard the symphony was right in the Winter Phillips High School and Major N. Clark Smith had them come out.

Then one day he said to me... he started me off on pick horn in the band. He'd count, one and two and three and four [laugh]. He [unintelligible] to count. We only had two bass horns in there...

**TAYLOR:** Playing that syncopation too [laugh].

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**HINTON:** Yeah. They only had two bass horns. I'm interested in getting to the bass horns but there are only two there and I've got to wait for one of these guys to graduate so in the meantime he started me with the pick horn. If it wasn't big I didn't want to play it. So then he put me on the bass saxophone. I got that bass saxophone [laugh] and was waiting for the bass horn.

One day he said to me, "Go down to Lionel & Healy's and tell them I said give you a sousaphone". I never heard of the sousaphone, didn't know what it looked like. So I went down there and I took the note that he gave me and they gave me a sousaphone. The case is as long as from where I'm sitting to where you're sitting, which is about six foot long and it's heavy as heck.

I'm downtown. I've got to take this bus back to the south side. I get on the bus with this thing, I can't hardly turn the curb to get it on the bus. When I get home with it my mother liked to died. "Oh, my God, what has he got now". My mother sister's said, "Oh, sister, we tried so hard to make something out of him [laughter]. What is he going to do with this big thing" [laughter]? Everybody was against me.

Now I opened the case up. A sousaphone, [unintelligible] is a French instrument. It's made like a contrabassoon but it's brass and you can't break it down. It's the whole ting and it's a double reed. The reed is about that big, about two inches wide. You've got to keep it in a glass of water to keep it moist. I got this instrument and I take it home and it's fingered like a saxophone.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, is it?

**HINTON:** It's very like a saxophone.

**TAYLOR:** But it is a brass instrument.

**HINTON:** It's a brass instrument. A brass instrument and it sounds... it's got that deep breathing sound like a contrabassoon, like a bass and I loved it, man. Your whole body is shaking [laugh].

**TAYLOR:** Right, the double reed.

**HINTON:** Yeah, my head is shaking [laugh]. I loved it. He got this instrument for me and that was my closest thing to the bass horn until this other guy graduated. But I ask people around now... a lot people have not even heard of sousaphone but it was a beautiful instrument and I really enjoyed playing it. It cost me 75 cents for a reed. I can remember I only got two of them.

**TAYLOR:** [Laugh]. That's a lot of money back then.

**HINTON:** A lot of money. I had two of them in a preserve jar, keeping them in  
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water, keeping them damp.

But he was such a great impression on us. He was not a jazz man. He would want you to... the written music... and play what he had written. He had written quite a few things. He'd been down to the Caribbean and wrote something called *Pineapple And Mint* and things like that, with a Latin rhythm to them. I give some information to some young people that are getting their doctorates, and they're studying and doing their work stuff on him.

**TAYLOR:** You mentioned in passing, Will Marion Cook and Will Fodrey and there was a group of extremely well trained musicians here in New York at that time...

**HINTON:** The Cleff Club.

**TAYLOR:** The whole Cleff Club. Were they well known in Chicago?

**HINTON:** Yeah, they were well known. Will Marion Cook was, and Huey Blake, they were well known. I'll tell you the instance when I ran into them. 1933, the Chicago World's Fair in Chicago and on June 19th, celebrate June [unintelligible], they had National Negro Night for the Chicago World's Fair, 1933 at Soldier's Field. All the great black entertainers of that era, Roland Hayes, [Unintelligible}, Marion Anderson, they were all there and they got this... need a symphony orchestra.

Now I'm studying bass now, I've got [unintelligible] but I'd never played in a symphony orchestra in my life. They've got this orchestra and they don't have any bass players so he said, "Stick the kid in this section". So they stuck me in the section.

Huey Blake was the conductor. Will Marion Cooke's music was being played but [Unintelligible] and his wife Abby Lane, was that her name, his wife? He was a great violinist. He quit playing violin.

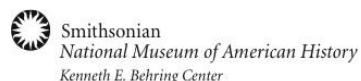
**TAYLOR:** Yeah, I know.

**HINTON:** He gave up that because they wouldn't accept him on [unintelligible]. He wrote some beautiful music and this was a very fabulous night. I'll never forget it because it was first time to play in anything like that with Roland Hayes there and all these people. It's the man from New York. What is his name? He studied with [Unintelligible] a singer. He studied.... Because [Unintelligible] taught music at [Unintelligible] and he had this black student in his class and he asked him to sing some of the songs and he sang the spirituals. That was the foundation of the New World Symphony.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really?

**HINTON:** Yes.

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**TAYLOR:** Oh, wait, oh, yeah, Dett, Nathaniel Dett.

**HINTON:** No, not Dett.

**TAYLOR:** No?

**HINTON:** No, not Dett. This man's a singer.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, he's a singer. I see.

**HINTON:** He sang in white churches here in New York for years. A great singer. But he was a student of Antoine [Unintelligible]. He was there and...

**TAYLOR:** He was. Because I know Dett was too.

**HINTON:** Nathaniel [unintelligible]. But you're talking about some people that some of these people never heard about that, Dawson...

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, Dawson, a wonderful symphonic writer. I know that at that time the Cleff Club, well actually earlier than that, had become very powerful here in New York.

**HINTON:** Oh, it was powerful, yes.

**TAYLOR:** And I wondered if that was just local or whether that had...

**HINTON:** Well I think it was more local in New York but everybody knew about it because... there was a lot of banjo players in the Cleff Club.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, they played a lot of string instruments, tibles and all those...

**HINTON:** Yeah. I know a man named Mr. Pope that was one of the great players. He left New York and went to some place in some other town and opened up a hotel. I remember staying in one of his hotels, one of the places where we had to stay on [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** What about Dorsey, Thomas Dorsey, who really is like the godfather of gospel music but at one time was the...

**HINTON:** Roosevelt was [unintelligible] before Dorsey, was the guy from hicks burg, what was his name, Roosevelt something.

**TAYLOR:** That influenced him?

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**HINTON:** That influenced him.

**TAYLOR:** I don't remember his name, that's why I was asking you [laugh].

**HINTON:** Yeah. My church, my mother and them, they wasn't into that gospel. They were still on that [Unintelligible]. We were doing [Unintelligible] and those things and that sort of stuff. But then this guy who was from Vicksburg, Mississippi, Roosevelt, we knew him, and he got to be famous with that. Then Dorsey came in and gospel became very popular because it fell right in with the blues thing that was happening.

**TAYLOR:** He had a great line though. He said... you know, he was a ragtime, they called him Georgia Tom. He was a ragtime piano player and somebody asked him didn't he feel strange playing this ragtime in religious music. He said, "Well I don't think the devil should have all the good music [laughter]."

**HINTON:** That's good, that's right. That's right, that's beautiful. It was a wonderful era to grow up in, to see that Chicago because it was isolated, which we don't want anymore, but it was isolated enough where you had to do something.

**TAYLOR:** That's an important point though. I mean somebody like a Duke Ellington or men that travel all... you mentioned Sammy Stewart and people that went all over the world, Eddie South. When they came back they had to come back into the community.

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

**TAYLOR:** So there was no choice.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** So you had access to them that you might not have under other circumstances.

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's right too. It was great to see, and I can see myself and knowing... hearing Bill Johnson, this great bass player that was so strong. I didn't see Pops Foster. You see, if you knew all those people, they had two routes, they followed the ocean or the water or people followed the river of New Orleans right up the Mississippi River, came on up to St Louis and then into Chicago. The other group came from New Orleans and followed the sea and went right on to San Francisco. A great group of New Orleans people in San Francisco but they were people from [Unintelligible] Stevedore part and people that followed... Pop Foster even went there and died out that way years later.

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**TAYLOR:** Right, yeah. I met him... I had met him in New York but I really got to know him fairly well in these last years when he was playing with Earl Hines and he was doing some things out in San Francisco. He was a wonderful old man.

**HINTON:** Absolutely wonderful.

**TAYLOR:** I mean he was very old when I met him but man he was playing, he could play [laugh].

**HINTON:** He sure was and he was so concerned with young people.

**TAYLOR:** He was.

**HINTON:** He tried so very hard. He wanted to do what we're still trying to do, he wanted to get a bass choir together with Georgia [Unintelligible] and a bunch of us [unintelligible] to play for him. But he was always interested in young players and came around very kind. I only saw him in New York. But the man that I saw growing up was Wilmand Grove. Oh, he was such a dignified gentleman. He was a New Orleans gentleman with that Homburg hat [unintelligible] and he was powerful. I've got some old... some of the [unintelligible] shot from *Check And Double Check*.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really? From the movie that Ellington made?

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, right.

**HINTON:** I keep them just to show people that one scene of them playing... to hear them both play. He was in Ripley's column for playing so many notes a minute. He played fast, and he was classy and kind. I'd sit and watch him, just hoping maybe he dropped his [unintelligible] just so I could hand it to him. I found out that his sister lived next door to my mother and when he came to Chicago he stayed with his sister. The back porches coincided and I'd take the garbage out on the back porch and stay half the day waiting for his sister so I could say, "Tell Mr. Brewer I just want to say hello to him". He was so kind to me. I remember his kindness. He lived in Brooklyn. A very dignified man.

**TAYLOR:** The whole Ellington band had... he insisted on that kind of elegance.

**HINTON:** That's right. Yeah, elegance.

**TAYLOR:** In the way they dressed and the way when they were on stage... the way  
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they acted on stage.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** That I'm told is really... as a matter of fact Hubby said that that really was... he used as his model many of those older musicians like [Unintelligible] and the Cleff Club people and stuff like that.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** He said that's really what Duke had in mind. He said, "I'm going to do that".

**HINTON:** That's right, that's true. Yeah, Virgil was something. He was really an amazing man. He scored [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** I don't believe that. I heard that.

**HINTON:** That's true. He did, I saw him. I promise you I saw it at the time.

**TAYLOR:** I know, I heard it.

**HINTON:** He did the first Cotton Club show downtown, down at 48th and Broadway.

**TAYLOR:** Remarkable.

**HINTON:** I remember seeing him where he talked down in his throat there and he was... [unintelligible] gentleman. You had to play his music correctly. I remember very well that one day he said, [Unintelligible] said to him, "Mr. [Unintelligible]", he says, "The second bar C, where is my note"? So he said, "Well it's F, Mr. [Unintelligible] says F", and she said, "Well I've got a D". He said, "Well it's the copy's mistake. Here's my score, it said [unintelligible]". He's showing us the score [laughter]. So the copyist had made a mistake.

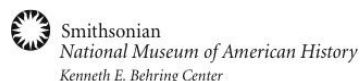
I wish that all those records, all those things for Bert Williams, that his orchestrations and mine, all the things behind Bert Williams...

**TAYLOR:** And musically it's just...

**HINTON:** Musically, yeah classical, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Really classic, yeah.

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**HINTON:** George Gersham was his copyist.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, really?

**HINTON:** That's right, George Gersham was [Unintelligible] copyist.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, he wrote a lot of other things for the Zigfield Follies and...

**HINTON:** That's right. Twenty-three years he wrote for Zigfield, 23 years.

**TAYLOR:** Remarkable.

**HINTON:** Remarkable.

**TAYLOR:** I have talked to you for a long time without stopping so I'm going to stop.

**HINTON:** Kid Oray.

**TAYLOR:** You mentioned Lil Armstrong. Tell me what... she was in the original, at least in all the pictures that I see, of the King Oliver band.

**HINTON:** Right.

**TAYLOR:** Did you know her?

**HINTON:** Yes, I knew her. I knew Lil. I knew her in Chicago and I knew her here. Of course I didn't know her well in Chicago but I knew her later in the years because of Louis and being around with her. She was a great musician. She wrote a lot of those songs. She wrote [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** That's her.

**HINTON:** That's Lil's, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** I talked to her many years ago and from what she was saying, she didn't come right out and say it but from she was saying, I gathered that one of the reasons that they needed her was because she could read music. She's a well trained musician.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** And they had to learn stuff quickly.

**HINTON:** That's right.

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**TAYLOR:** So from the way she put it, that something would come in that they want to play. She'd get the music. She says do it like this, and say oh, yeah and then...

**HINTON:** When they picked it up, that's true because there wasn't too much reading among those guys. In fact [Unintelligible], you know about him, he was one that said, "Just play those little black notes". He had to teach those guys to read things, you know. Most guys didn't really read but Lil was reading and writing music. I got this wonderful shot the other day of her with Buster Bailey on clarinet, Johnny [Unintelligible] on banjo, Kid Oray on trombone, Zooty Singleton on drums, Red Allen on trumpet, Lil on piano and I played bass.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, that's great.

**HINTON:** Got another one shot that shows Dinah Washington sitting on the floor and Duke [unintelligible] next to her, they're rehearsing a song and I'm playing for them. A rehearsal, they're not recording.

**TAYLOR:** Not recording.

**HINTON:** He sure knows how to make a guy feel good. I called him and told him how much I loved him and thank him.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, that's great. It's nice to have some pictures and a photographer [laugh].

**HINTON:** Yes. He used to kid because I've been lucky enough to get pictures that he couldn't get because I'm already in the studio and they didn't let a photographer in while we were recording because of the ticking of the camera. I'm in there already with my camera. Every time the conductor takes a break to explain something I got a picture. One day Chuck Stewart said to me, "That's all right one of these days I'm going to get a good bass" [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** But in listening to the things that you say about people, you know, Kid Oray and all those guys, there was something still that... Red Allen for instance. I mean I hear... Louis Armstrong to me was one of the greatest jazz artists ever but Louis didn't do it all. I mean Red Allen, Freddy Kephart...

**HINTON:** Bud Johnson, that's right.

**TAYLOR:** And many of those guys... things which were theirs.

**HINTON:** That's right.

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**TAYLOR:** So even though... it's not to say good, better, or best, it was just different.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** I mean he does it this way, this guy does it that way.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** I really like... one of the things that I've always written about whenever I wrote about jazz was the fact that in terms of building a style, no one person... I mean Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker didn't do it all for bebop.

**HINTON:** No, no.

**TAYLOR:** I mean you've got to take into consideration Fats Navarro and all of the other people that contributed, Little Banny, all the people that contributed what they did.

**HINTON:** Sure.

**TAYLOR:** So on the bass when... you talked about the tuba and the fact that they played the Arco on the bass, and you talked about Whelman and Broad, were there others who really contributed to the language, a lot to the language that you used in Chicago so that you'd say well hey, this is the way to play properly in this style, this is the way we do it. Were there people that you looked up to?

**HINTON:** Yeah. Walter Wright, very wonderful bassist, a New Orleans... tall, dignified, a no frills guy. Sometimes the no frills guy didn't get through because he didn't take a partying and all that kind of stuff.

**TAYLOR:** You're right.

**HINTON:** They didn't get through but they played beautifully and contributed a great deal. Walter Wright was one of my great idols. Things were so different. I know he must have been 45, maybe 50 and he was through. Yeah. I mean as far as the styles, they wasn't using him anymore and he was too proud to say well that's it. I can remember one distressing thing. He took a job of a union and went to poker games in the evenings, had a little bar where they served booze and he [unintelligible]. But the gigs that he could play, willing to play, they would get me for, the younger guys were coming out.

**TAYLOR:** Younger guys, yeah. Well that's happening today.

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**HINTON:** Of course, it happens to me [laughter]. I've seen it happen so I understand it. But I can remember distinctly, and I remember this because I love to repeat it. One day... it was New Year's Eve. Everybody can get a gig New Year's Eve. There ain't enough musicians to go around New Year's Eve. They run out of bass players and they asked me and I was busy.

I remember I was up at the union. Walter Wright was serving drinks. This guy said, "Hey, Walter, you want to make this gig tonight"? And he said in that southern drawl, "You all ain't called me all year. You know what you can do now" [laughter]. He wouldn't take the job. I said to myself, gee, I hope I get to that place one of these days where I could turn down a gig like that.

But [Unintelligible]... but he was a wonderful bass player and all his good work in the theaters and played for Sammy Stewart and all of them, but now... but he had contributed. He had a wonderful bass.

Then there was another guy, I think his name was Sooney and he was very fair and he got a job with a white band and he never... several guys did that who were light-complexioned, and never came back to the black society.

I know one of my dear buddies, Jimmy Allen was his name, and we were just really tight. He was a very fair guy. He was practically white. We rehearsed and did things together. Some society band heard him play and he went with them and went to Hawaii. We never him again. Things were so different, you couldn't be relying... saying to hell with me because everybody's going to tell you...

But I remember in Detroit, Michigan, I'm playing with Cab Calloway's band at the Michigan Theater and I look out in the audience in the front row and there's Jimmy Allen. I raised my eyes to him and he raised his eyes at me and I'm saying, "Hey man, he's a white man". I expected him to come back.

**TAYLOR:** Him to come back.

**HINTON:** No dice. He never came backstage to say hello. Now we'd be all over the place.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, sure, yeah.

**HINTON:** But he didn't want to be labeled [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Economically with everything else, socially and everything else.

**HINTON:** Yeah. And there he sit in the first row so he could let me know that he was there. I'm working my eyes and everything, come on back. No good [laugh]. So it was that kind of thing [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Well listen, thank you very much.

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**HINTON:** Yeah, we'll do some more.

**TAYLOR:** Okay, we'll do some more tomorrow.

**HINTON:** See that takeover and the band that I joined, Cab Calloway of 1936, the last of '35, was the nucleus, was the Missourians. All those guys were still there. Leroy Maxie who was the drummer, was still there and Foots Thomas was also... was there. Andrew Brown was still there. Depris Wheeler, a trombone player was there, was still in the band then... and I'm missing Lemar Wright.

**TAYLOR:** Who else was in the trumpet section, do you remember?

**HINTON:** Well later Mouse Randolph, Irving Randolph was... trumpet, and Doc Cheetum. he came in there, not too... he came in there. Because Doc stayed... let's see it was Lemar Wright, Irving Randolph, and Doc Cheetum. Then we added... there was three trumpets at first when I came in about that time. Then they added a fourth trumpet and I think it was Chet Collins. Then Doc Cheetum got sick and went home to recuperate and someone recommended Dizzy and Dizzy came in and Doc never came back until years later in his '70s or something. We went down to South America.

**TAYLOR:** Were you in the band when Dizzy was in the band?

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, sure. I was in there when he came in the band.

**TAYLOR:** Was Mario in that band, Mario Obosser?

**HINTON:** Mario Obosser came in later, yeah, about '39 or something like that. I think... I can't remember who... I've got a book downstairs with exactly... with all our itinerary and who left and who was in their place.

**TAYLOR:** Really, no kidding.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Some guy followed... Cab Calloway always said, "Well if you want to know anything about me, see Milt because he's got all the [laughter]... I even know the numbers of all the music that was in his book. Well you don't stay in a band 16 years without...

**TAYLOR:** Knowing that.

**HINTON:** [Unintelligible] that way about it. It was a career for me. I thought it would last forever.

**TAYLOR:** What was it like when you... prior to going with... what were you doing

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just prior to going with...

**HINTON:** I was gigging. I was down at the Three Deuces with Zooty Singleton and [unintelligible]. That's where Cab came down and hired me, that night from there.

**TAYLOR:** Okay. So then when you went with the band, what did you do?

**HINTON:** Well it was great for me because Kay Johnson had recommended me and I was about the youngest guy in the band. Benny Payton liked me and I was replacing this very great Al Morgan, who was photogenic and he was just magnificent on the stage. The funny thing about it was he was about a foot and half taller than I and they hadn't had a chance to change the...

**TAYLOR:** The uniform?

**HINTON:** The uniform. I had to put on his clothes and you couldn't see my hands through his coat it was so long. I went the first night on the gig and I want to say... I don't think Al Morgan was much of a reader. He memorized all of his things. There was no book, there was no bass book. Anyway he'd say, there's no bass book and here I'm depending on reading [unintelligible] on violin.

I got no problem reading a bass part so here I'm... I asked Benny Payton, I said, "Where's the music", and Benny Payton said, "There's no bass music". He said, "Stand right here by the piano and I'll call the changes to you". Well that was cool. So Benny called the changes and I was blowing...

**TAYLOR:** He was a fine musician.

**HINTON:** Yeah, Benny was a very fine musician. I'm doing very well and all the guys in my corner. Claude Jones and Kay Johnson are smiling, acquiescing and if they say it's all right, it's okay with Cab because that's one great thing I always respected him for.

He was not the musician that we were but he would let the musicians in the band decide what musician would come in the band, somebody that would be compatible with them. So he would look around to see... if they said it was okay, it was okay. So they said okay. I remember that night he said, "Okay, let's give him a blood test". Al Morgan had this great feature number called the *Reefer Man* and it was an all-bass feature. He said, "All right, the *Reefer Man*", and he pointed to me. I looked at Benny Payton.

**TAYLOR:** Said what is that [laughter].

**HINTON:** Benny Payton, it's an F. He said you start it. Just get an F and play it until the band comes in. Well man I grabbed F, I squared F [laughter]. I cubed F, [laughter]. I [unintelligible] F. I was playing it and the band was falling out. The guys  
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were laughing. In those days I wore my hair... we had pompadours. You remember seeing all the pompadours?

**TAYLOR:** Right, oh, yeah.

**HINTON:** Where you had the hair long and put that nice grease and got it all down nice and easy. I played those Fs until the grease ran out [laughter] and the hat stood straight up on the head [laughter] and the band... Cab Calloway was holding his sides playing this.

When the band came in... when they came I was scared to death. I never heard so much noise in all my life. Then when the band left, Benny Payton said, "Keep on. You've got it again". He said, "You just do that until I come over... act like you're tired and fall out and I'll catch you". Well that was my entrée. I did that and we got a big hand out of it and a big laugh and then that's what kept me really in the band.

**TAYLOR:** But Cab was very show... he was very wise in the show business sense.

**HINTON:** Yeah, very show... Cab was maybe just two or three years older than I but it was... the difference in him being the leader and in charge of the band and me being a bass player was like a 100 years difference, you know?

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**HINTON:** He was a great disciplinarian. He insisted on time... everybody be on time and of course he said, "I've got to be here. You'd better be here". He always had the same... lay dead 'til Thursday because Thursday was when he paid off so you just keep cool until Thursday.

I never... I don't know of anybody that ever worked for him that was ever missing one dime of their money and every dime you got was on the doings you got. He was a great disciplinarian. He insisted on punctuality. He also insisted [unintelligible]. He made a lot of money for that era because Cab was in the same bracket with Bing Crosby and Cantor, and all those big guys.

**TAYLOR:** Right, because of his singing.

**HINTON:** Singing, yeah, in his band. He bought all the uniforms. We had black... we had four or five sets of uniforms. All he insisted is, you keep them clean. Even down to the shoes he used to buy, and shirts, and you keep them clean.

He was born on Christmas day, December 25th. He never worked for anybody December 25th. So you could be in Tulsa, Oklahoma on December 23rd, he shut down. He'd come in and give everybody... pay the money, their salary and give everybody in the band \$100 and your ticket home to wherever you lived, to go home for Christmas. We had a standing engagement. Every New Year's Eve we opened at the College Inn in  
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Chicago... and your ticket back to Chicago. He'd tell you, "You just better be back there New Year's Eve". That went on for many, many years. So he was just magnificent along those lines. A great disciplinarian.

**TAYLOR:** You guys used to broadcast from there.

**HINTON:** Yeah, sure.

**TAYLOR:** I heard the broadcasts from there.

**HINTON:** Yeah. He had a great tour and he was a great man to work for disciplinarian wise, you know.

**TAYLOR:** He really was one of the leaders in those days who would really pay for an arrangement. He wanted good arrangements and he wanted guys who could write for Chew Barry, whoever would happen to be in the band.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Well I've got to tell you a story about that. Chew Barry, I'm glad you mentioned the name because Chew Barry is responsible for that.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yes, he was... because before that we had band arrangements and some of the guys in the band, including Benny Payton were making arrangements and they wasn't quite up to what Chick Webb was playing and Chick was swinging.

**TAYLOR:** Yes, he was.

**HINTON:** And Chick was also a lovely little guy and loved his band, talked about his band. Chew Barry's a swing saver, a swapper. So he would meet Chick Webb up on the corner and say, "Chick, I heard that arrangement you made last night", and Chick could sing the whole arrangement. Now I played [musical sounds] and the saxophone comes in [musical sounds], then the trumpets, and he'd keep him right on the corner explaining this.

Then Chew Barry would say, "Look, I'll tell you what you do. If you give me an arrangement for Cab's band, I'll give you that arrangement of Cab's on *Hideho Soul* or something", and they would switch arrangements. So Chew Barry finally got to Benny Carter, who was the epitome of an arranger.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**HINTON:** He got to Cab and said, "We've got this"... "Can Benny Carter make you some arrangements"? So Cab said, okay, have him make them. Well Cab had been  
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paying \$25... \$10, \$25, \$30 for an arrangement. So Benny Carter made four arrangements for us and he came down to rehearsal and we were delighted. Man, the king has got the arrangements.

When he walked in with these arrangements Cab said, "Let me have the score", and our feathers fell. He's going to take Benny Carter's score and [unintelligible]. Somebody taught him how to read a little music but he didn't know the bass and a treble clef, he didn't know the difference. So he's looking at this music and we're all... we said, "Okay, stop". We said, "Cab, Benny can handle that for us". So finally Benny...

**TAYLOR:** Rehearsed the band.

**HINTON:** Rehearsed the band and it was magnificent. So when it was over Benny sent him a bill for \$400, a \$100 an arrangement and he was furious because he hadn't been paying that kind of money for arrangements. So he... like I say, he paid every dime of it, he paid that off.

So to get back at Chew and us for having it, he wouldn't call him [laughter]. He wouldn't call the arrangement. At the Cotton Club after the second show we played a dance set. Well after the second show Cab would leave and let us play the dance set. Well as soon as he was out the door we grabbed these Benny Carter arrangements [laughter] and started to play them and enjoy it. Then he got accustomed to hearing these great arrangements and then he got [unintelligible] and then he got all those guys to come in, Chappy Willard and all those good arrangements.

**TAYLOR:** Well tell me about some of those guys. Who was Andy Gibson?

**HINTON:** Andy Gibson was a great arranger. I think he's from Cleveland, Ohio. I don't know what he played except it was trumpet. But he was the kind of arranger of the old school. He wrote every part. He didn't write a score. He sat down and [unintelligible] write a second or third alto and [unintelligible] it would be right.

**TAYLOR:** That's some kind of mind, man [laugh].

**HINTON:** That's right, he had that kind of mind. He was beautiful, very quiet little guy and Charlie Bonnet and everybody used him because he was a magnificent arranger. In fact he did [unintelligible] for me.

**TAYLOR:** And Chappy Willard.

**HINTON:** Chappy Willard was our show business arranger. His music was flair. He had big introductions and some semi-classical thing like *Holiday For Strings* was a big deal. He wrote us an arrangement of *Holiday For Strings* that just tore the house down.

**TAYLOR:** Did he do those arrangements for, what was the name, Avas Andrews.

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**HINTON:** Avas Andrews. I think he did some but I think most of those were done by Will Votry.

**TAYLOR:** Really, by Will Votry? Because they were beautiful, they were beautiful.

**HINTON:** Yeah, they were gorgeous. She was in the first Cotton Club show.

**TAYLOR:** Because I saw you guys at the Howard Theater and she sang... I never will forget it, *If This Is But A Dream*. Man, but I mean wow.

**HINTON:** Yeah, she... I'm sure Chappy must have done it later but she was in the first Cotton Club show downtown at 48th Street.

**TAYLOR:** Downtown, right. She had a gorgeous voice, a lovely lady.

**HINTON:** Oh, it's beautiful. Lovely lady, absolutely lovely lady. Will Votry, he wrote that show, orchestrated the show and I'm sure the arrangements... she had been downtown at a theater that was down near Radio City... another theater was there. Not where Radio City is but across the street from Radio City and she had done some kind of an off Broadway show in there and that's how they got her. So she had those beautiful songs and I'm sure Will Votry did those things.

**TAYLOR:** Cab had... in addition to being a show stopper with his own singing, and I mean in his prime, the kinds of things that he sang is much more than *Hideho*.

**HINTON:** That's right, oh, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** I mean he was a big singer.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah. I'm always after him as much as I can... I love him and he loves me. I think he's forgotten about some of those things. I know he's doing great as a performer now but this guy sings some very beautiful ballads.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**HINTON:** That thing he did on *Give Me One For My Baby And One More For The Road* were beautiful, and so many wonderful things that he did like that. That book I was telling you about, I'll show you when we take intermission, it shows you exactly who came in the band, and the flavor of the band as it changed, and also the tunes we were playing.

When Mario Obosser came in the band, Mario had played saxophone in [Unintelligible]

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once and so when he joined Cab Calloway's band and came in there, immediately he started having us... the second side of [Unintelligible] was always a Latin song so you could just look that Mario was in Cab Calloway and what tunes we recorded. It's very interesting to go through there.

**TAYLOR:** Well in that band you did an enormous amount of traveling. What was travel like with the band?

**HINTON:** It was as best it possibly could be at that time. He was insisting... Cab Calloway... first we do six months in the Cotton Club, which is a long time.

**TAYLOR:** To just sit down and just play.

**HINTON:** Just sit down [unintelligible] and this is when we got a chance to make some records with whoever was in town, Billie Holiday or whatnot. Teddy Wilson and I were friends from Chicago.

**TAYLOR:** Just on that point now, making records was different somewhat.

**HINTON:** Oh, absolutely.

**TAYLOR:** How was it different?

**HINTON:** Well it was different because they were singles, you just made a single side. It was a single side. But Cab Calloway didn't want anybody in his band to be making records with other people.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Ben Wilson was in the band then and Ben... Teddy Wilson and Ben were friends and we were friends, so if there's a recording session with Billie Holiday, Teddy Wilson calls Ben and I to make it.

Well Cab heard about it and he performed. He said, "I am not going to have the guys in my band making somebody else great". So Ben had a lot of clout because he was a star budding, getting bigger all the time. Ben said, "Well if I can't make records with other people I might as well leave this band and get out of here". Cab didn't want that. The next thing I hear, he said, "I'm glad we've got guys in our band that everybody else wants" [laughter].

So then we would get kind [unintelligible] record and make records. But it was good. There were just a few things like that. We made records on the side with Ben or with Billie Holiday, another lady, I can't... the name escapes me now. And of course Lionel Hampton, [unintelligible] go to school. Now the days with Benny Goodman, we made recordings down at RCA. He had [unintelligible] Dizzy, and Al Core, and Hawkins.

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Some of those are really big standards now.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**HINTON:** *One Sweet* [Unintelligible], all those great things. So that was the era. Traveling is what I want to get back to. We had six months in the Cotton Club, then we started... after the Cotton Club the next group would come in, Duke Ellington and Ethel Waters would be next, something like that. And we would start on theaters, theater tunes. We got a chorus girl, he's got dancers and...

**TAYLOR:** Like Vaudeville.

**HINTON:** Yeah, like Vaudeville. We started booking at the Brooklyn Theater and we'd go to Newark, and we'd go to Philadelphia, and we'd go to Pittsburgh, and right across the country, Ohio, Akron, Ohio, Youngstown, Ohio, some place in Indiana, Chicago, Chicago Theater, Omaha, Nebraska, right on out to the coast, week by week. So it took you three months to do that. See that's three months of theaters. Now we traveled by train. You get Pullman cars and everything is great. Cab had a baggage car, the biggest one that you'd ever want to see. He had a green Lincoln in there. He had them put a green Lincoln car in there and he had a chauffeur. The baggage car was right next to our Pullman so if you were sleeping in your pajamas, you get up and go into the baggage car. We had those H&M theatrical trunks; open the truck up, put your fresh clothes on and put your other stuff in there and when we stepped off the train, we stepped off...

**TAYLOR:** Looking good.

**HINTON:** Yeah, looking good, really together. We traveled right across the country like that on the way to California. We got to California. We played the theater out there, we played the Million Dollar [Unintelligible].

Now we've got to come back. Now we've played everything in California, now we've got to come back to one-nighters. That's where it gets tough, coming back to one-nighters because you can't take... the trains don't go to all those little one [unintelligible] so we've got to take the bus. Now that's kind of rough.

The band sounded terrible because for three months we've been playing the same music like a Broadway show. Everybody knows their part. Now we're over in the book and started to read, and for the first one it's horrible but then after we get together out there on the road, the band really started to be really beating, we sounded really great. We're really going back across the country like that, one-nighters.

Going down through the south was really very difficult. There was one particular place, Longview Texas. I'll never forget it as long as I live. Cab... he knew that that was bad because he had a [unintelligible] manager. His manager was from Texas, Jack Boyd.

He got a Pullman car to come pull us up and got us to some place, put the car on the side  
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track and kept the Pullman for like two or three months, same guy and he [unintelligible] the car. Then we got cabs and we went into a roadhouse, it was like a nightclub. Nowadays we'd call them the roadhouses, way out in the country, some big place. This town Longview, Texas at that time was a town that was... they discovered oil. Everybody was poor, blacks and whites, everybody was poor, had nothing, just nothing. The white people who owned most of the property were getting disgusted because there was so much oil that it was seeping up out of the ground. They didn't know anything about what oil meant.

**TAYLOR:** What to do.

**HINTON:** It was making the cows sick so they started selling the land to the blacks for 50 cents an acre. So when they found out oil was there, everybody got rich. Oh, right, I can tell you the names of some black guys that are filthy rich on their families on account of that right today.

Well these people got money like you wouldn't believe and they never had anything before so now they want to spend it on anything. People from New York are coming down, salesmen, selling Palm Beach suits for \$700, you know, charging them a \$1,000 for some cheap watch and they was buying it.

So now they want to invest in entertainment, so get this boy, Cab Calloway to come down. So we came down, parked the car, parked the Pullman car, get in these cabs and go way out in the country to nowhere to this dancehall to play the dance. And they are there and they are really celebrating. They're drinking like you wouldn't believe. Benny Payne is a very nice looking guy from Philadelphia. He's playing the piano. He's right on the side and some lady there, this white lady says, she says, "Why won't you have a drink?" Benny said, "No, thank you. She said "You mean you're not going to take a drink with me"? He said, "Of course, yes", and he takes a drink and he drinks it. And her boyfriend said, "You're drinking out of my girl's glass", and a big argument... we've got this kind of thing going on.

Then they had some kind of rule that said if you pay \$300... you can hit a black man and pay a \$300 fine and it's all over. Now the guy's lined up. Now they've got money. They hit Cab Calloway... they're going pay \$300 a piece to hit Cab Calloway. This is the God's honest truth. And the people are drunk and they're not even listening to the music. They're just drinking and carrying on.

So the man that gave the dance, the promoter, came over to the agent and says, "I'll try to save these niggers if I can". That's what he said.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, my.

**HINTON:** We had to get off the bandstand and go down underneath the bandstand. There was only one way down there. Under the bandstand was a little cellar, no outdoor exit at all. And he said, "Stop playing and go down there". We're all down there and we can hear all this stomping and fighting. Well they didn't see us or fight with us, so they

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started fighting amongst themselves and you'd hear the bottles breaking and everything. We stayed down there until they wore themselves out and all left. The guy got us up, got the cabs and got us back to the train. And that began Cab Calloway of not wanting to do a lot of traveling down there.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, right in the south.

**HINTON:** We had quite a problem sometimes traveling like that in the south, especially the big places. Cab had a class show, especially... like we went to Memphis, Tennessee with a very classy show, with [Unintelligible], *Copper Color Gal Of Mine*, and he got the Cotton Club boys, all these great dancers.

We mentioned a singer and the powers to be... everything was in the race records. I'm going to cut your head, I'm going to cut your... and I'm going to beat you to death. This is what they wanted to keep the music like. For a black group to come down with all this sophistication, they didn't like too very much. We were beginning to have quite a bit of problems like that and I think that's one of the reason Cab started the cutting out. He really didn't need that kind of thing.

**TAYLOR:** Well it must have been a unique experience for many of the guys in the band who had traveled with other bands and realized that this is not the normal way. I mean that was really the top of the line.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** That was really the top of the line when it came traveling.

**HINTON:** Yeah, sure.

**TAYLOR:** Because I mean no... most black bands of that day had to do just that all the time. They didn't have the...

**HINTON:** Oh, that's true. We were really the top of the line. That's what I said. He did everything possible to keep down that thing. And having that Pullman... we'd keep a Pullman car for three months and whatever he would do... like we'd play towns, like even Atlanta... I've got some great shots of Atlanta from 50 years ago that it was really tough.

And we played Atlanta and all these nice looking guys in this band... all these nice looking girls, the local guys didn't like that either and so they were laying for us. So Cab said, "Well look fellows, you got to keep this thing cool „cause these guys see you coming down here all sharp, New York slickers going to come out here and take their ladies and they're going to take you so watch yourself". So he said, "If you're going to hang out with anybody after the dance is over, invite her to come over to the Pullman and have a drink in the train or something like that".

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**TAYLOR:** Right, so at least you get some kind of protection.

**HINTON:** Protection, yes. Because I remember one night we stayed in Atlanta and I stayed... a lady's name, I'm working on a book about all this and places where we had to sleep and where we had to eat. The eating houses and where the whole family stayed because nobody's touched... we had certain places we had to eat, you know. You couldn't just go anywhere.

**TAYLOR:** You couldn't go into a white restaurant?

**HINTON:** No, indeed. So there were these wonderful places. I mentioned this lady in Atlanta, Mom Sutton. She had a great restaurant, open kitchen. She had her tables all set. She'd put all the food out and every dish was in a separate dish. You could see her back there cooking and everybody... she had some little rooms in the back.

I remember Lemar Wright and I got one of these rooms in the back of her restaurant and this lady was... she would be cooking and everybody would be eating. She had a bottle of gin up on the stove. She said, "You've got to fight fire with fire" [laughter]. She's drinking and she's cooking.

So Lemar and I got this room and we go to the dance that night. It was cold down in Atlanta, I'll never forget. So we got some local guy in town who has a fireplace there. So we give this guy a dollar to keep the fire going. We had some wood to keep the fire going so it would be nice and warm when we got home. And I'd left a bottle of booze in the room, which as a big mistake.

So when we got off of the dance that night, I came home first, the guy was asleep, the booze was gone, the fire was out. Lemar Wright had found a lady or something that he was going to bring out of the dance and when he stepped through the door, some guy stepped right in front of him and he had to run [laugh]. I heard him running down the street and I tried to open the door so he get in. The guy was so close to him he had to go around the block one more time before he got in the house and we shut the door [laughter]. So it was kind hectic for us but we survived it.

**TAYLOR:** Speaking of places where you ate, in almost every area there were specific places where you could stay, people's homes.

**HINTON:** Sure, people's homes.

**TAYLOR:** And then other places where the whole band or part of the band could eat.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** What was that...

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**HINTON:** Well that was like this. If you had... back when I joined Cab's band I didn't know anybody [unintelligible]. Lemar Wright had been with the Missourians. He had names of every lady... where he could get a nice room, every restaurant where you could eat in and every conceivable thing, and beside that he carried a gross of nylon stockings in his [laughter] back seat, always have something to lay on one of these ladies. So that was the kind of things you had to do.

So I finally worked my way in with Lamar Wright who was a straw boss, and Footh Thomas. These are original Missourians and when I got with them I was secure and I followed them to get the knack of where to go. So there were places... in each town you had certain people or restaurants. Certain people where you can stay, certain restaurants, or some places where you could stay and eat. It was just marvelous that these places were clean. The bad thing was, the black hotels and I have to say this, they were just terrible. They were atrocious.

**TAYLOR:** Very badly kept.

**HINTON:** Very badly kept because they knew we had no place to go except there. They charged us the same rent that they was charging the other white guys downtown because they know we had no place to stay.

**TAYLOR:** The accommodations were terrible.

**HINTON:** One bathroom would be right down the... about a half a block down the hallway. Accommodations were terrible and we just had to survive it, or if you were a veteran then you know somebody's home where you could go and stay there.

I remember one place... one guy had a hotel and his name was Jones. He would charge you two sleeps. Like if the band got in town at noon and checked in the hotel, well we didn't have to play 'til eight o'clock at night. We took a nap and went to the dancehall. When we come back and went to bed to leave the next morning, he said you had sleeps so he charged you [laughter] two prices. So we named him "Two Sleep Jones".

**TAYLOR:** They really got you going and coming in those days.

**HINTON:** And there were some wonderful places that I'm really, really trying to recall. Like Philadelphia had a lady named Mother Havlow. This lady had a brownstone there, whatever you call it. It must have been about four stories because on the first floor was like a nice living room for the piano in there, and a sitting room and a bedroom. This was where all the bandleaders... Duke, Basie stayed there. Her kitchen and her dining room where we ate was in a basement and after the meal... she loved to play pinochle so if you played pinochle with her you're in good shape.

But this room on the first floor was for the bandleaders. Now the band's [unintelligible] would go up. I was always up on the top floor [laughter] there some place. But there's no telling how many songs and tunes and things that were written in Mother Haylow's

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house there in Philadelphia. It was a mainstay of the places for the bandleaders to stay. I was talking to Basie about it many times.

**TAYLOR:** Well John Collins tells the story about Truck Param. He said that he was on the road with Truck and he said they were in some place in Ohio, Mr. Henry's is the name of the guy's place and at Mr. Henry's you pitch „til you win.

**HINTON:** That's Uncle Henry's.

**TAYLOR:** Uncle Henry, sure.

**HINTON:** I know it.

**TAYLOR:** And he said that everybody in the band would go in and guys would be eating and everything. He said Truck ate so much that Uncle Henry gave him his money back, said "I don't want your business" [laughter].

**HINTON:** That's right, Uncle Henry.

**TAYLOR:** He said, "You put me out of business".

**HINTON:** Yeah, Uncle Henry, that's in Cincinnati.

**TAYLOR:** In Cincinnati, okay.

**HINTON:** Yeah, great eating place there. Big dining room with a big round table and [unintelligible] full of starches; rice, sweet potatoes [laughter] mashed potatoes and greens. It was great.

And the Sterling Hotel; now that was a black hotel there with a nightclub on the front going to the dance floor on the ground floor. Man, what a joint that was, flea bag. There was a rat there, and if could find somebody of my vintage, they'll tell you, his name was Jerry. This rat killed several cats [laughter]. You had to go upstairs to get to the hotel desk. You'd go upstairs. If that rat was coming downstairs, you just stepped aside. He kept right on. He wasn't afraid of anybody. And anybody of that era would tell you about Jerry the rat in the Sterling Hotel there.

**TAYLOR:** Those conditions though, it's amazing how musicians worked. I mean it really brought you together because you had to go through all of these things as a group.

**HINTON:** Sure, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** But in those days to play the kind of music that musicians played, one of the things that many musicians have played is a lot of head arrangements. Did Cab

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Calloway do much of that?

**HINTON:** Yeah, quite a bit of that. Yeah, quite a bit. Chew Barry, and Dizzy, and Chad Collins who had been in Basie's band, those kind of guys knew about heads and [unintelligible], things like that. They did that. Now Missourians were not... they were organized and they had arrangements, and then Cab came in with the arrangements. Then when we played the Cotton Club of course we had to play...

**TAYLOR:** What was written, yes.

**HINTON:** What was written, like *Don't Worry About Me*, beautiful song, but you should have seen the setting in the Cotton Club for that.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Oh, it was just great. Bill Robinson's got a little cottage on the stage, a little cottage on the stage with a picket fence around it. Bill Austin is standing at the gate with a valise, his bag. Katherine Perry, who's the lady that used to be Earl Hines wife, Katherine Perry is inside the picket gate by the house and she's singing *Don't Worry About Me, I'll Get Along*.

**TAYLOR:** *I'll Get Along*.

**HINTON:** Billy, he's going out of town. Beautiful setting. When I hear the song... I love the song but when I hear it I'm seeing that setting. What a beautiful setting it was there.

**TAYLOR:** Well in those days the music that was written for many of those people, people like Harold Aland and many of those people that wrote for the Cotton Club, they really assimilated the jazz. I mean, they knew the kind of voices they were writing for, the kind of dances they were scoring, and so they really had a much closer or I should say much more accurate concept.

**HINTON:** They had a relationship there and we don't give credit to, credence to it now. But I know Harold Aland, I knew him very well. In fact I made a record with him singing. He was a marvelous singer.

**TAYLOR:** And pianist.

**HINTON:** And pianist, yeah. We did an album that I've got downstairs where he's singing this song and man, you want to hear *Stormy Weather* you should hear him sing *Stormy Weather*.

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**TAYLOR:** Really, that's right.

**HINTON:** He can really sing it. But when you find out, like at my age I know how to... he was... Fletcher Henderson... was a rehearsal pianist.

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know that.

**HINTON:** That's right. He used to sit around and rehearse for Fletcher because Fletcher would have a rehearsal and he'd be making another arrangement. So he was in Harlem and involved in it. The same thing with Gershwin see... how can you write about people like Catfish [unintelligible] unless you had some really contact. And of course nobody mentions this nowadays but if you know somebody like I know, like I mentioned to you when he was still living, Will Foger... see he was just copying. He was sitting in that orchestra under Will Foger. Well that don't sit too good for us to be mentioned in that line.

And then there's a lady from Chicago that just passed a couple of years ago, black lady, a beautiful singer. I'll ask Mona to tell you her name. She came to New York and did that show at Town Hall. Gershwin took her to Paris with him because he was having a lot [unintelligible]. I've got some tapes down there of the songs that he wrote for her in Paris.

**TAYLOR:** Was that Brown, Ann Brown?

**HINTON:** No, her name was...

**TAYLOR:** Wasn't Ann Brown.

**HINTON:** You want to stop the tape just a second?

**TAYLOR:** So you were saying...

**HINTON:** Yeah, so it's not too chic to mention that kind of thing in particulars circles, although Gershwin...

**TAYLOR:** But it's true.

**HINTON:** It's the truth and in Gershwin's book there's a picture... I think I have one of his books downstairs, a book of his life with a picture of Venus Wilson in his book. It doesn't say what that close connection...

**TAYLOR:** I had no idea. I know she was close to Hubby Blake. She and many of those ladies that were really the top singers for the shows and all that stuff, they were wonderful.

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**HINTON:** Absolutely.

**TAYLOR:** Like everybody wanted to write for them because of the manner in which they projected the song.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Well I was so thrilled to be in that show down there, to get a chance to interview Edith Wilson. She was kind of ill then and Mona was trying to be very nice to her and take care of her. Atley Hall and that lady was in good spirits and I got to talk to them. I got to talk to her about her trip to Paris with George Gershwin and she sang a couple of songs for me that he wrote for her. I haven't heard any of these particular songs lately.  
And then this other lady that... *Love For Sale*, I don't even know who wrote *Love For Sale*.

**TAYLOR:** Cole Porter.

**HINTON:** It was written for this lady and she was there too. It's amazing to find out [unintelligible] check these things out. I'm not talking about sending somebody a ghostly whisper but I talked to Harold Aland and I talked to Will Foger.

**TAYLOR:** Right, and they say that, sure.

**HINTON:** Sure.

**TAYLOR:** Aland, he really was a very special person for me because not only did he write beautiful music but he lived through so much of that history.

**HINTON:** Absolutely.

**TAYLOR:** I got a chance to just sit and talk with him. He would just off the top of the head say, "Oh, yeah, when I was at the Cotton Club, so and so was happening and so and so was there and all that". I mean it was just history.

**HINTON:** That's right. That's the reason I happen to know about him being with Fletcher Henderson. One of his songs, I can't... something like *Strike Up The Band*, but he wrote some songs that [unintelligible] like *Strike Up The Band*, *I Got Rhythm*.

**TAYLOR:** *Get Happy*.

**HINTON:** He wrote that. The way he formed that was every time they would stop the band to do something and start it again, he made that like a signature [musical sounds] to get the band back together again. That's how that was  
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written, to make sure...

**TAYLOR:** Really? The form of that tune is interesting. The first eight bars if you're playing an F, is an F. The second eight bars in B flat. Then it goes back to F... it's a different kind of piece and it's a very interesting layout for the piece. Harmonically he was so sophisticated. He incorporated all of that in the kind of thing that came out of the black vocal, the way people talked and the way they sang and you could hear that in his melodies.

**HINTON:** That's right. He was a very special person.

**TAYLOR:** He was.

**HINTON:** One of the people I'm very glad that I had the chance to know close.

**TAYLOR:** Well you've mentioned a couple of times being able to take pictures. When did you start to take photographs?

**HINTON:** In the '30s I think somebody gave me a camera, [Unintelligible] 33 for my birthday. It was being introduced on the market for \$25. It's a 35 millimeter range finder camera. I still have one downstairs. It still works, a 35 lens and it was great.

The thing that I felt about it was, it was something easy to do with my music. I could stick this on my shoulder and then every picture I saw of a musician, all those all pictures of musicians with the horns all up in the air, this is Louis Armstrong and all that, and I wanted to... I said, "I'd like to take pictures of musicians like they are, the way they sit around and catch them in a good mood or in a bad mood, whatever they're doing, without noticing".

They didn't pay any attention to me. If a cameraman comes in here, everybody starts sprucing up. But that's old Milt so I can pull out my camera and nobody stops their conversation or poses for me. I wasn't even thinking along those lines then, I just wanted to take pictures like that.

**TAYLOR:** For yourself.

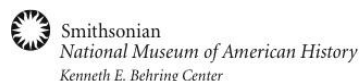
**HINTON:** Yeah, I never thought that they'd amount to what they've been for me, especially with the calendars, and books, and things.

**TAYLOR:** [Unintelligible] a great photographer.

**HINTON:** But it's really interesting to see then when I look back at it, to see Dizzy asleep, and Chew Barry... if you see the hot sun on him in Texas, and he's got this nice water running in front of him there trying to cool it down.

Some of the things like the pictures from Atlanta 50 years ago. We were walking

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through this... Mario Obosser's in that picture also, walking through the railroad station, "Colored Entrance", big sign. We are hip New York dudes. We weren't really resenting this and being angry. We were laughing, what [unintelligible] really and we would look at that thing. I said, "Hold it, before you guys go in the door", and I grabbed my camera and I got a picture. Atlanta is one of the most modern cities in the United States today so 50 years ago... will show some of the great changes that have happened in our country.

**TAYLOR:** Now over the years you had several nicknames. What was the first one?

**HINTON:** [Laugh] My first one was Sporty. I guess my mother dressed me in Little Lord Fauntleroy suits and things. Then they called me... I started playing violin, they called me Black [Unintelligible] in school because I'm playing violin. I had a tough time. I wore glasses, 13 years old with a violin and then those cats were playing basketball and football and they didn't want no time for me. I always had a tough time getting home without somebody beating me up some kind of way. So I finally found a way to beat it. I belonged to the Math Club. You got to be crazy to be in high school in the Math Club. I'm in the Math Club, I mean everything music wise. There was a guy on the football team that delivered... his paper route was right next to mine, Robert Rivers. He was a big dude on the football team but his grades were atrocious and he got thrown off the team because he couldn't make his grades. So I said, "Robert, I'll do your homework. You just walk me home for school every day" [laughter]. So that's how I survived. I did Robert Rivers homework and he walked me home from school [laugh].

**TAYLOR:** What were your other nicknames?

**HINTON:** Then I got Thump. They called me Thump when I got in Cab Calloway's band and started thumping the bass. So some guys say Thump, some guys say Funk. That was it. Then that stayed until the recording era came along and they starting calling me Judge. I was just telling [Unintelligible] before you came, that's an old joke that has no relativity at all.

But in Mississippi, in my hometown of Vicksburg, there was a guy that used to get drunk every Saturday night. He was out of it and he would lay out in the street on Sunday morning. It's a small town. People coming down the street, coming to church, the ladies, and here he's laying in the street. It didn't look nice.

So they went to the police and said, "Look, the guy's going to get drunk every Saturday night, just lock him up. We're on our way to church, we'll bring some food by for him. Leave him locked up, he won't look too bad on the street, and let him out Monday morning".

So they did that and every Monday morning they'd opened... court would open and they'd let him out. He thought he'd been busted for something. He'd come through there, he'd say, "Good morning, judge". The judge would say, "Case dismissed".

So I told this on a recording session and I always... from Cab Calloway's band I  
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mentioned, punctuality has been one of my long suits. I always try to be on the job first, early, to get my bass set up, get everything set so when the conductor and the arrangers come in I'm straight. So when the guys would come in I'd be all set. They'd say, "Well the judge is here, we can start the session now" [laughter] and the thing just [unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** That's really I think one of the things about the music fraternity, they really give pet names to the people that they have the most affection for.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**TAYLOR:** People like Lefty Young, and Joe Jones, and everybody, they had special names for people that they really like.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah. And they had that lingo. I'll never forget the language those guys used to use. Like Ben Webster was a master at this, the languages. His vocabulary... automobile was a short, and let's see, \$100 was cow and \$50 was a calf. He'd say, "You see that dude going on out with"... he's got that"... he had another thing for suit, I forget, "It cost a cow and calf, man" [laughter]. A [unintelligible] was a quarter. He had sorts of things like that, a whole vocabulary. Cab Calloway put out *Hipsters Dictionary* once.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, many years ago. Yeah, that's right.

**HINTON:** Yeah. I have a copy, a little small copy but that was a complete different one from the lingo that Ben Webster was using with this.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, actually a lot of times guys would use that kind of language just to be able to talk to one another.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** When you're surrounded by people that you don't know, so you want to say something privately... you have no privacy.

**HINTON:** That's right. Just leave these names on so and so. They had all kinds of things to saying that.

**TAYLOR:** Sure. Now you spent 16 years with Cab Calloway. You went through a lot of rhythm sections. Now who were some of the drummers you worked with? Was Benny Payne always the piano player?

**HINTON:** Benny Payne was the piano player until the war. During the war he had to  
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go to the army and...

**TAYLOR:** Dave Rivera?

**HINTON:** Dave Rivera came in on piano and he stayed. Danny Block was the guitar player. When I joined the band Morris White was the guitarist. He married one of the Hanley girls and lives in St. Louis. Morris White was the guitarist. Then Danny Block had came in on the guitar. Leroy Maxie was the drummer from the original Missourians. His wife was a chorus girl. She used to dance in the Cotton Club. He was an excellent show drummer.

But the Missourian band was not really a soft jazz band. They played shows and things like dances but not really into jazz. That's the reason for the change when Cab Calloway sort of took over on his own. I remember he stayed until Benny Goodman came to the Pennsylvania Hotel. Gene Cupra started to making those big drum breaks and Cab Calloway asked Leroy Maxie to make a drum break and he couldn't make it. He jumped up and started singing and the next thing we know Cozy Cole was our drummer [laughter]. So then Cozy came in and stayed. That was a great time.

**TAYLOR:** Cozy was a wonderful man. I played with man.

**HINTON:** Oh, a beautiful...

**TAYLOR:** With that gum chewing and that [unintelligible].

**HINTON:** Yeah, and just a very beautiful human being in any kind of way you want to take it.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**HINTON:** He was the epitome. Cozy stayed there. He was energetic and he liked to study. That was a period of my life that I was very grateful to it, during all that Cab Calloway thing, for the Missourians. I'm glad I got in when the Missourians was there because there's a lot of dignity to them, class.

So I had no class. I didn't have any clothes or anything. I got a couple of dollars together so when... I'm trying to get the class and dignity that these guys have. So when the band became a little raucous, I was the guy that was trying to hold up for the dignity. Then I was still concerned with really studying my bass. I found out... I'd studied with Demetrius [Unintelligible], that's in Chicago, and he told me if I was coming to New York to study with Zimmerman but don't let him change my bow.

**TAYLOR:** That's Fred Zimmerman?

**HINTON:** Yeah. Oscar was in Rochester. Oscar was done there.

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**TAYLOR:** Was Oscar on the faculty up there?

**HINTON:** Yes, Oscar was on the faculty. Ron Carter studied with him.

**TAYLOR:** Did he really?

**HINTON:** Yeah, sure.

**TAYLOR:** Fred is the one that wrote the book though?

**HINTON:** Yes, he was the one. Yeah, he's [unintelligible] with all those guys. Omar Mentz is the other one.

**TAYLOR:** Everybody, yeah.

**HINTON:** Phil [Unintelligible] is another big teacher from Detroit. I knew him too.

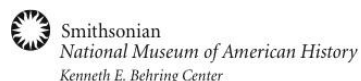
**TAYLOR:** I've got to ask about... just to deviate for a minute, I've got to ask you about a story. When Mingus worked with me, he told me a story and I'd like to hear your version of it. He said that he came... he had heard so much about you that he came down to the theater in Los Angeles to see you. You tell me...

**HINTON:** [Laugh]. That's true he did. He was big, and bass players, we always kind of got along together. Slam Stewart, we're all hanging out together and Mingus come in with his arrogant self, big with a bass under his arm...

**TAYLOR:** Like a kid.

**HINTON:** Yeah, a kid, like a toothpick. I'm pretty good. I just got to talking about [Unintelligible] and Zimmerman and all these guys. I'm really serious about my bass and Mingus comes in backstage, "okay, I heard about you, you play bass". He said, "I've got this book here I've been studying out of. I memorized that book, you know [laughter]. So he opened that book up and I went through it like a dose of salt [laughter]. He pulled out something else. I said, "Okay let's read this one together". He got a little disgusted so he finally said man. That's when I said, "Look Mingus, you're beautiful", I said, "But we don't challenge one another. Just come and learn. I said Slam and I get together and Slam would show me something or we try to learn... but you don't come up, come on, get your horn out. That's not the way". From that we've been the dearest friends from that day on. In fact I've got his book downstairs. He's got in there written, "To my teacher". Every time he had a record date where he used more than one bass, he'd always ask me to be there and I was very proud because what a tremendous talent he was.

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**TAYLOR:** He was wonderfully talented man.

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was fantastic but he had that challenge and he kept that challenge.

**TAYLOR:** All of his life.

**HINTON:** All of his life he kept it.

**TAYLOR:** What he said about it cracked me up because he had been working with my trio for a while. I don't know how your name came up. We were talking about you. We were talking about great bass players I guess. Anyway so he said, "Oh, yeah, I remember learning the best lesson I ever learned". I said well what was that? He said, "Well, you know, I went to... all the bass players were talking about Milt Hinton and how well he played and I went to see Cab Calloway with him and he's just slapping the bass" and I said, "Well hey, anybody can do that". So he said I went backstage with my bass. He said I went all the way back to Watts, got my bass and the book and went backstage and challenged him. He said, "Man you're supposed to be so bad, play this". He said, "Man, this cat turned to the back of the book and played stuff I hadn't even gotten to yet" [laughter].

**HINTON:** Yeah, well I've got to play my gig on the stage. But he was beautiful. That's really so.

**TAYLOR:** But that was a lesson he never forgot.

**HINTON:** Well it was wonderful just to know him and see the wonderful things... even when he would do something that he knew wouldn't be... I would approve of, he would call me up. First he overate. He just ate himself to death.

**TAYLOR:** He really did.

**HINTON:** I've seen him eat a whole cabbage. I've seen him eat 23 ice cones, honest. He called me and he said, "I know I'm wrong, I know I shouldn't do this". I said, "Well yeah man, you're too beautiful and you don't have to eat all that stuff. You're gaining all the weight and things". He said, "Yeah I'm going to do better". But that was his style.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, actually he was such an unhappy guy, so many things that bothered him that it really contributed to his physical illness.

**HINTON:** That's right, that's true.

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**TAYLOR:** It's too bad because he's such a wonderful guy.

**HINTON:** That's right, that's true.

**TAYLOR:** You met a lot of people during your travels with Cab Calloway. Now you were with him for 16 years. What happened when you left... why did you leave the band.

**HINTON:** I didn't leave the band [laugh]. The band broke up, it disintegrated.

**TAYLOR:** What happened?

**HINTON:** I stayed... we went to the...as I said in traveling down South, things got a little bad because they didn't like us coming down with all those beautiful shows, *Gal Of Mine*, and great dancers, comedians and things. So that stopped, got cut out, and finances got small.

So we come down to seven pieces where we could do small clubs in towns like Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago. Went down to seven pieces; Sam The Man Taylor, Panama Francis had come in the band then, Kay Johnson, trombone was still there, David Rivera was on piano, Joey Jones was on trumpet and I was on bass, and Cab singing.

**TAYLOR:** The first time I ever played with you I filled in for Dave. Dave was a neighbor of mine. We live in Riverton and he was a neighbor of mine and I don't know, somebody, I guess his wife... something happened suddenly and he called me, he said, "Look, bail me out. I can't do"... whatever it was, and I went down and played the show. It's the first time I played with you. Man, it's like riding in a Rolls Royce, I said all right [laugh].

**HINTON:** I can remember one time playing with you. I bet you've forgotten. You had a gig out of here on Marion Boulevard. That's a number still there now, in a little club. There must have been conflict about the bass player, they didn't get the message, and you called me because I can walk over there from here and we did one night in there.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**HINTON:** I got to be sort of a relief bass player if somebody doesn't hang out... doesn't show up out here in Long Island. Tiddle [Unintelligible] called me one night. I said, "Well man, I don't play that loud music. If you've got some music I'll play". He said, "Come on over man, you play" [laughter]. And I survived it, bruised completely. But another night Mo Wexler called me, Mo Wexler the piano player called. He had a gig out by LaGuardia Airport with a [Unintelligible] band with the seven/four and five/four music. I said, "Mo, I never played that kind of music. He said just watch my left hand and come on over here". But I got beat to death again that night [laughter] but I  
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survived. So that's nice.

**TAYLOR:** See one reason that people call you with such regularity is because you're so adaptable. I mean in the first place you come to play. Whatever the gig is you come to play that and that's really... it's a lesson that so many bass players and other musicians need to learn.

**HINTON:** Well the happiest times of my recording was based around that when we got the New York Rhythm Section.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah. Who was in the New York Rhythm Section?

**HINTON:** Hank Jones was the piano player, Barry Gells was the guitarist, O.C. Johnson drums and yours truly bass. And what it was about, we came to do the gig. Whatever you wanted we would do it. We could all read well, we could all play well, we could improvise, and we were disciplined enough to do whatever you wanted to do. This is the ability that most people didn't have at that time.

They wanted to come on your record date and play the way they want to play and it's your date. So I had learned that from a long time ago. Play the man's music, what he's got first. I know more about the bass than maybe the guy that wrote the... but if he wants that, let's give it to him. We got a lot of work from that because of the fact, we would do that.

We would play the music and it would be pretty bland. After we run it over two or three times, then, "Well I don't know, what do you think we should do with this? What do you think Hank, we should do", that's the great Hank Jones. He's magnificent. He'd play all these beautiful chords on the piano or something. He said, "Well I think we should do this". He would say, "Okay, we'll put this in there and we'd come up with a great arrangement.

**TAYLOR:** Something special.

**HINTON:** We didn't get any extra money for this but we got the \$41.25 and a lot more record dates, a lot more records because we wanted really... what reminds me of that was Bobby Darin's *Mack The Knife*. Smash record, smash hit. We came in the studio and they had an arranger who I wouldn't name if I could, but he wasn't really a top-drawer arranger. He had nothing there. We tried what he had and *Mack The Knife* wasn't working any place.

**TAYLOR:** Didn't work.

**HINTON:** Finally Bobby said, "Guys, why don't you just... what do you think you want to do with it? Why don't you all play with that a little bit"? Al Johnson said, "Okay". Hank Jones said, "Let's go up for half a tone after each chord or tone",

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whatever it was, and we did that and it was a smash hit record. I mean, a million seller. We got \$41.25.

But the payoff was this arranger took all the credit for this arrangement [laugh] and Marris was giving out an award that year for the best arranger and...

**TAYLOR:** And he got the award.

**HINTON:** No, Duke Ellington got that award and he got mad because they didn't give it to him [laughter]. This guy, he was really something. But behind that we got... the people know to get these guys because they really do the best they can for you.

**TAYLOR:** O.C. Johnson, we grew up together in Washington, D.C. As a matter of fact, he was the original drummer... just before the taping we were looking at something from *The Subject Is Jazz*. O.C. was the original drummer on that show.

**HINTON:** Is that so.

**TAYLOR:** Because as you say, he could do anything.

**HINTON:** Anything.

**TAYLOR:** I mean whatever you needed, he could do it.

**HINTON:** He was there. [Unintelligible]. He was so beautiful about friendship. I was already in the business, recording and Joe Jones was [unintelligible]. We had gotten to the New York Rhythm Section but we were doing things, but Joe didn't have the charisma to conform to all the different things.

We did a date for somebody and O.C. came in town with Earl Hines and we invited him down to the date to see it and he [unintelligible] and when we finished the date just as that's noted, O.C. said, "Oh, yeah". We said, "Oh, man, don't do that, you've got to wait". He said, "oh, I'm sorry". The producers, they said keep that in [laughter]. It sounded great on there and they passed him a withholding slip so he got paid for it [laughter].

**TAYLOR:** That's funny.

**HINTON:** And from then on O.C. had the dates and he was just wonderful. We had just gotten our first Chevrolet. Mona had gotten a Chevrolet to haul me back and forth for the record dates and when Joe said go and just take O.C., so we brought O.C. in the car to take him where we were going because our dates were more or less the same. And O.C. told Mona, he said Mona, I see Mr. [Unintelligible] give me some money. You ain't going to have to come get Milt anymore, I'll take him home.

So a little time later somebody... O.C. bought a Cadillac for \$300 [laughter] and we were  
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[unintelligible] and O.C.... we get in his car coming down Queens Boulevard, we pushed it more then we rode it [laughter]. That thing kept stopping. We had to push to the next station.

One of the first things... O.C. got a good car, got him a real Cadillac and sure enough she didn't have to come for me anymore. He took me and brought me home. In fact we were so close, he bought his house right out here near me on the next block and his wife is still there.

**TAYLOR:** That's wonderful.

**HINTON:** His wife is still there.

**TAYLOR:** Let's talk about your private life for just a minute. You mentioned earlier that you met Mona when you were with Cab Calloway.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** When did you have children? When did you have a kid first?

**HINTON:** My first child?

**TAYLOR:** Yeah.

**HINTON:** My first child was born in 1947.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah?

**HINTON:** Uh-huh.

**TAYLOR:** Tell me about your family.

**HINTON:** Well we married. We married after that escapade I told you about with Cab Calloway and my mother coming down to Indianapolis, Indiana. We got married in Cincinnati. The same minister that George Wilson went to church with married us. We were deeply in love. It was amazingly. Mona was so... I can't tell you too much about her... I can't tell you enough.

**TAYLOR:** I mean she's a pretty lady but other then that, what attracted her to you?

**HINTON:** Well she was smart. She was smart. She was a secretary to Mrs. Malone, I told you this lady that had all this money and doing hairdressing thing. So she was smart. What really, I'll tell you the truth, I finally fell in love with her. This girl came out and she hung out with me on the road for a couple... so we get to Youngstown...

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Columbus, Ohio and I'm... I was hanging out with Mona and I was really happy. So Youngstown, Ohio... and she's from Ohio so I said to come out and hang out with me and she came back to the theater. It was a Thursday and Cab Calloway paid off on Thursday. Now I'm an insatiable gambler. I'm the worse gambler in the whole world. I lost every time... I never won and if I did win I feel sorry for you because I didn't want to take anybody's money or anything. I always lost.

I'd won the *Downbeat* pool or *Esquire* pool or something, 1944, and I'm in good shape music wise and Cab is very happy with me so even though I'm broke and I got no money... I was three weeks behind in my salary. He'd just give me another week's salary and I'd lose it. Guys like Illinois Jacket and all those really hard-nosed gamblers, they beat me out of all my money. I never had anything.

So Mona came out with me and she was sitting up in the dressing room and Illinois Jacket and a bunch of guys started gambling. I lost all my money so I went downstairs and did the show and Mr. Wright paid us off. I'm making about \$150 bucks now. Paid us off.

I go back upstairs and in ten minutes I'd lost every dime I had. Mona's sitting there watching this. So I go back downstairs to Mr. Wright, the manager, and said, "Can I have some money"? He said, "Son, I just paid you". I said, "I don't want to hear that man. I need some money now". So he said, "Well no I won't give it to you".

So I'm tight with Cab so I go up to Cab's dressing room and I started hitting him in his chest. His valet is still taking his clothes off. I said, "How long do I have to be in this band before I can get what I want"? He said to his valet, "Rudolph, get him out of here before I kill him". He said, "I don't care what you want, just get out of here".

So I go back downstairs to the manager. He's still backstage. I said, "Cab said I can have anything I want". So he says, "Okay, son, what do you want"? Now I'm angry. I said, "Give me a \$10000". So Mr. Wright peels out ten \$100 bills and gives me an IOU and I sign it.

In the meantime while he's still doing that, Cab goes up to the dressing room where the guys are gambling. Mona's up there. He says, "Fellows, you know Milt's a damn fool". He says, "He can't gamble and he loses all his money and then he gets mad". He said, "He's a great bass player and I'm going to keep him so the gambling is off. Anybody gambling with Milt Hinton is fired immediately. The game is over". Now I get the \$1000 and I walk upstairs, shoot the hundred and it's like church [laughter]. Nobody would say a word so the game is over.

So now I go back to the hotel with Mona and I'm sitting there and she says... she starts packing her bag. I said, "What's happening"? She said, "Milt I'm going". She says, "I just come down here but I'm going back home". I said, "Wait a minute, well just tell me... she said, "No", she said "Milt, you're a nice guy, everybody likes you and you don't have a thing".

She said, "You don't have a thing and you should have everything you want. You like to play, you like to work, people like to hire you". She said, "I can't deal with anybody like this and I just don't understand that kind of thing". She said, "But it's your money". I remember those words. She said, "It's your money, you do what you want to do with it,

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you know, but I won't be around".

So I begged and I pleaded and she said... I said, "Well then give me another chance or try it and see if I can do better". She said, "I don't think you can". I said, "Will you try me"? She said, "Okay". I haven't gambled from that day to this.

**TAYLOR:** How about that.

**HINTON:** I haven't gambled five cents. She handles all the bills and all that kind of stuff. So I change my complete thing. Then I begin to psych myself out. Anybody that gambles and feels sorry for someone and just wants to give them their money back, you've got no business gambling. I'm not the type of person... I don't want anything belongs to anybody else. You know, I don't want your money. I'm not angry because you've got more. It's yours. So I feel like that about it so I finally I really didn't want to gamble. And then....Cookie Mueller, Cookie Brown, the dancer?

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, sure.

**HINTON:** Number 24, 47th Avenue, I run into an old man up there who ran a gambling game. He said, "Son, gamblers don't work". He said, "They sit around and wait for you guys that work to come up and they practice so they can beat you out of your money. Now if you want to gamble quit playing the bass and gamble", he said, "But you're crazy, don't do them both" [laugh]. So I continued to play the bass.

We got married after that. In 1947 I was speaking to Cab. I said you know my wife is pregnant. He said mine too. He says have this one on me. He said that. That's the kind of guy he was. I said okay and paid no attention.

So Charlotte was born and we were on our way to California. Mona was sick, she was not feeling well and the baby was a couple months old and I'm trying to travel on a train. We had no air conditioning back in those days on the train. Every time it stopped some place I had to get out and try to get some ice. Had to walk two miles to get the bottle warm for the baby and I'm going crazy myself. I get out to California. I'm working and Hilton Jefferson my dear friend is helping me with the two o'clock feeding. I was getting sick and Mona is not feeling well at all.

Cab Calloway said to me, "You know, I asked you to have that baby on me". He says, "I wasn't kidding". He says, "Now give me a bill for all the prenatal care and the whole thing and I'll pay you for it". I was short of money because of the doctor bills. In those days it only cost about \$300, \$400 but it was like manna from heaven. He give me the whole amount of money for it and he was right there when my daughter got married. He said, "That's my girl [laughter]. That's my girl". So that's the kind of relationship we had and that's the kind of a guy...

So Charlotte was born in Chicago because my mother was there. We were on the road, still on the road and we decided to go to Chicago where I met her to have the baby because my mother was there. Her mother was in Ohio and her mother came over so she had a lot of help there.

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**TAYLOR:** Oh, that's nice.

**HINTON:** That's how we got that going. Then when we came back to New York and the band started to break up... well we got the seven piece band, then it went down to four pieces, just Jonah Jones, David Rivera, Panama Francis and myself. We were at the [Unintelligible] and Jamaica, places like that as an act, you know. And that went on until that broke up and that really just died. Cab didn't have anymore work. There's a really funny story about that. He didn't have any work and I ran into Phil Moore, wonderful pianist, arranger, a dear friend, and he's got a job over on the east side. And he said, "Well come on and go ahead and work with me. I'm going to be here for two weeks". Well Cab didn't have any work. So I go in this place to work. It was called La Vivan Rose.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, I remember that.

**HINTON:** La Vivan Rose. So I go... now I didn't know this was gangster... this is where Papa Costello... it's Papa Costello's place. So I'm over there playing with Phil Moore, with Dorothy Danvers. We're playing and she was a great success, [unintelligible] and we're playing. I think Johnny [Unintelligible] was playing trumpet, Kenny Watt was on drums. We had a wonderful relationship. Instead of two weeks, the thing was going on into more weeks.

Now Cab Calloway gets a job and he comes down there one night. He said, "Kid, I got a job, you've got to come on and go with me". I guess he figured like he owned me all these years. I said, "Well Cab, I can't leave, I'm working. He said, "You've got to go. I've got this job. You've got to go. Get somebody to come in here and do this job". I said, "I can't do that". So I told Phil Moore, "I said Cab Calloway's asking me to leave and go with him". "Do you know who you're working for"? I said, "No". He said you're working for Costello, the biggest gangster in New York. You can't leave here.

**TAYLOR:** Just go off and leave.

**HINTON:** So Cab is sitting there waiting for his answer and somebody tells Costello and he goes over and told Cab, he says, "Look if Milt leaves here he'll never work again and neither will you" [laugh]. Cab Calloway walked out of there very [unintelligible] as far as... he took Ted Sturgis and he went on tour. I stayed in there with Phil Moore for a few weeks and then I had no work at all. Then Cab didn't have any work.

I'm walking down the street one day down Broadway and I see Jackie Gleason. He said, "Milt Hinton". I know this guy from years ago.

**TAYLOR:** He was a comic.

**HINTON:** Yeah. So I used to buy him a drink. I was making more in tips then he

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was making. He always told funny stories even when it didn't get over to the people, the...

**TAYLOR:** The band...

**HINTON:** The band always laughed at it, you know. So he said, "Where you been"? I said, "No place". I didn't have a job or anything. And he said to his manager, "Bullets, we're doing this recording tomorrow with Buddy [Unintelligible]". He says, "I want Milt on the date". His manager said, "Jackie, we've got a bass player". He said, "Good, we've got two now".

So the next day I showed up at RCA down in Webster Hall down there, 65 [unintelligible] and the musicians were marvelous. It was just the powers that be that never let us get into those kinds of things. The musicians... a couple of guys were there that heard me play and they're just playing their Arco parts in a train station.

I had a wonderful bass and Ray came over and started talking to me and several contractors were there, [Unintelligible], Mac Simples. You know, I was amazed they were there at the train station. Took my name and it was like a miracle. From then on it just started to work and then when we did get to the [unintelligible] New York Rhythm Section, it was sheer happiness just to play with those guys.

I'm still... it always amazes me, it's musical just to play with Hank Jones. Every time I played with him it's... I'll tell you a funny thing about him. He's so creative and he's so original. They had written out a part... he had a book of arrangements with the bass parts written and some of them were a little difficult to play but I wanted to play them. I said, "Well gee I think I'd better take this book upstairs and practice on this book". So I found a place where you could copy and I copied the whole arrangement, this whole book. I take it upstairs and learned it. I come downstairs to play and he didn't play anything like that at all [laughter]. He didn't play any of that at all so it was like a total loss to me but I had his music. But it was just a great experience to play with him and O.C. [Unintelligible], he was the mainstay of Claude Thunhill's band. A great guitarist and a great human being.

**TAYLOR:** Barry was my first guitarist in the band I had him on the *David Frost* show. He was my first choice because he's just a wonderful musician.

**HINTON:** Yeah, wasn't he?

**TAYLOR:** I had always wanted to work with him and I had never worked with him. I had such great admiration for him. He was a wonderful teacher and a phenomenal player. He did beautiful things.

**HINTON:** Absolutely. He was way ahead of the guys as far as reading [unintelligible] written parts. He could play anything. Then the next thing that happened to us, we got to George Russell. Now that was really For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

like a mind blowing. George Russell was drinking sodas down in the Village. He tried to make some arrangements and tried to sell them to bands but they were too hard and the bands at that time were not into reading. Basic's band was into reading that kind of music on the Lady in [Unintelligible].

**TAYLOR:** Right. He had just come up with that... he had worked for a long time on that system, the Lydian system that he invented.

**HINTON:** The Lydian System, yeah. So nobody would buy his arrangements so he was having a tough time. A saxophone player at CBS, Hal Macussi came up and he said, "Look this guy is a great musician. He's got some hard music". He said, "It's a shame that nobody plays it". He said, "Would you mind just running it over sometime"? I said, "Sure".

So we made a date at my house in the basement. Every weekend we'd come to my basement, Hal Macussi, O.C. Johnson, Al Cohen, and Art Farmer. We'd come down there and we had this very hard music. He's a very cold guy. If you'd almost make it you'd feel good but that don't mean a thing, he'd say, "No, you didn't do it". I just missed too notes that time. I felt good [laughter], you know, but not for him, no. He didn't even say like thank you. But that was great because it made me say, "Well I'd better go ahead and do this right".

So we kept doing it and finally we got Jack Lewis at RCA to make some records with us. We had Bill Evans to come play. My daughter had a piano but we're in the basement and my piano was on the enclosed backyard porch so we had to put Bill Evans up on the backyard on the porch and play the music because he could hear us down in the basement. That's the way we rehearsed.

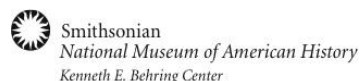
I think I've got some pictures of Bill Evans up there. That's where he did the arrangements George Russell wrote, an arrangement called *Billy The Kid*. I remember *April* with Billy Evans. He wrote so many other things, *The Night John Brown Was Hanged*. I've got one piece downstairs that I haven't gotten anybody to play with me yet. We commissioned George Russell to write a piece for guitar and bass, Barry and I. We commissioned him \$75 a piece [laughter]. He wrote this piece and of course it was hot. I think I have one tape of it where Barry and I almost made it. I don't think we ever really made it but that was all. But I showed it to several other guitars later and nobody had time to...

**TAYLOR:** I know, you really...

**HINTON:** Yeah. But I got it in his handwriting, which is a joy to me.

**TAYLOR:** That's great.

**HINTON:** And just recently, 30 years later, I'm talking 30 years already, 30 years later with the CDs coming out, he sent me a CD that we'd done putting that stuff on CD. For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**TAYLOR:** Oh, good, I'm glad it's coming out.

**HINTON:** This is a thing we did 30 years ago.

**TAYLOR:** I was a disc jockey then and I used to play those records on the radio. The last show in the series that we were looking at early, *The Subject Is Jazz*, was called *The Future Of Jazz*, and in *The Future Of Jazz* or in that series, we had Bill. Hal wasn't available. I don't think you were available.

We tried to get the whole group to come because I told CBS, I said, "Look this is very hard music and if you guys want to pay for the rehearsal, fine, we'll play the music but I would suggest that you bring the guys in and record it because they've already done that, they could do it like this". They said, "Fine, it's the last show, we've got some money, fine, we'll do that".

So they brought as many of the guys that were available on that particular date in to play and it was Bill Evans first... they played *Billy The Kid* and a couple of other things, *The Stratus Funk*.

**HINTON:** *Stratus Funk*, right, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** It was Bill's major television show.

**HINTON:** That's right, that's [unintelligible]. He did *Stratus Funk* and some wonderful things he did. I wish they would reissue the thing we did on New York, called *New York, New York*.

**TAYLOR:** *New York, New York*, right. That was a great... it was a big band, right.

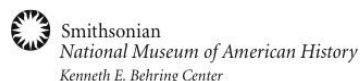
**HINTON:** Big band, yeah with... Max Roach starts it with his tempo and John Henry puts words to Frank Foster's [musical sounds], Think you can make it, go to the wicket, buy you a ticket and go, New York, New York [unintelligible]. So great you had a neighbor". Then the band comes in [musical sounds]. Great record, great. Something like... it was a very good jazz record. Cannonball is on that... not Cannonball, Coltrane with Bill Evans is on that record and the trumpets read like Who's Who. [Unintelligible] all those great guys.

**TAYLOR:** Well tell me, you recorded with a lot of groups and earlier you alluded to the fact that one of the things that you always wanted to do was to put bass players together...

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** When did you do that or how did you do... how did that come about.

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**HINTON:** Well we kept dreaming about it. Pops Foster's really dreaming like I mentioned. He always wanted to do it. Pops Foster died. We had this... we still have a mutual admiration society among bass players. We are really pretty close because we come one to a customer in jazz, only one bass player.

It's like your momma is your momma. If you've got a brother, that's still your mom. You know, that's your mom. It's his mom too but that's your mom. Well that's the way bass players feel. I'm the best bass player in the band I'm in because there ain't no other bass player there. The saxophone player, some guy wants to play first, he wants to play third, it makes a difference.

So for some particular reason we seem to have this mutual admiration society. It's always been that thing with George [unintelligible] and yours truly, and Eddie Sepraski, and [Unintelligible] Carter, Richard Davis, Rufus Reed, we were all concerned with each other's being and there's enough work going around for a good guy so we try to pass it on, and me being the oldest I guess it sort of started from that.

When Richard Davis came in town... so I said, "Well you're going to check with the judge and let him know you're in town". Even Buddy Richard called me up, he called me Old Man. He calls, "Hey Old Man, you got a nice young bass player for me? I said, "You Killed the last two I sent you, take it easy with them", you know, something like that.

So it's that kind of reason that we had these admirations for each other. We try to keep the thing together and we wanted to do something with more than one bass. Jimmy Jones wrote a piece for Sarah Vaughn using Richard Davis and yours truly on it. We had a couple of things like that. Of course Quincy came up years later with the *Whiz* with eight or ten basses. But then Bill Lee is really responsible for that, Bill Lee.

**TAYLOR:** How did he get...

**HINTON:** Well he's a very brilliant man, a "Flower Girl" as we always said but a very brilliant man and a wonderful composer, pianist, bassist, a great guy. He decided to write some music for a bass and he wrote it. We all love him. He was getting less work than anybody. At that time Ron Carter, Richard Davis, and yours truly, and Sam Jones, we were doing...

**TAYLOR:** Just about every day.

**HINTON:** Yeah, we were doing a good share of our work. So we wanted to see Bill Lee get a chance to [unintelligible] his music. So Richard Davis lives in the center of town, he lives in Manhattan. Sam Jones would come from New Jersey, I'd come from out here. Ten o'clock in the morning, nine o'clock in the morning we'd be standing outside Richard Davis' door with our basses and we'd come in.

Bill Lee had written this music and it was beautiful because he knew how to write for basses. We never got a chance to play... we played down at the Vanguard one night. We  
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got \$17 a piece but we were happy because it was marvelous. We sounded great. I got some tape or something from that. Bill Lee didn't have any money [unintelligible] had all those little kids running around. I've got pictures from his last movie with him when he was about this size, him and his sister playing around.

But Bill Lee, he had a pair pliers. He had to tune his bass with a pair of pliers [laughter]. But he knew what he was doing and we really loved him. He had his way... his social life was completely different from ours but that's his problem. We were concerned with his genius, which was music and to show him... that he's gotten that.

**TAYLOR:** Well in terms of... are there any records of the bass choir other than tapes that you might have?

**HINTON:** There's one we tried over in New Jersey some place but the guy didn't get a good sound at all. We have a record of it but it was just terrible. But one of my young men studying bass with me, his mother lives across the street, Chuck Maxwell came to all our rehearsals and he brought my old tape recorder. He's a bass player studying bass. He got the right sound so I've got all the rehearsals with the right sounds on. We never finished any particular song but the sound is absolutely beautiful.

**TAYLOR:** The sound is the way it's supposed to be.

**HINTON:** Yeah, the way bass is supposed to sound.

**TAYLOR:** That would be interesting to hear.

**HINTON:** Yeah, it would be.

**TAYLOR:** Because bass, especially acoustic bass is a very difficult instrument for many recording people to get right.

**HINTON:** That's right. Well it's right on this recording. I would love for you to hear it sometime. Bill wrote some beautiful things on that. It's like a huge string quartet. Sam Jones is the only man that did the [unintelligible] work because Sam was the greatest rhythm player I think I ever heard.

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yeah, he was fabulous.

**HINTON:** He was the only one that really... Richard Davis was our [unintelligible], Ron Carter was next, Michael Flibin, fine bassist, Lyle Atkinson, an excellent bassist. Lyle was the least known...

**TAYLOR:** At that time, yeah.

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**HINTON:** At that time, but he knew more about bass than all of us and he's got perfect pitch. Anytime we've got a problem about our fingering, if we got hung up about our fingering, we reported to Lyle Atkinson and he would straighten it out. "Well I think you could try it this way", and it would work. So even though he wasn't as popular, known, we had to rely on him. I was the judge because I was the senior... keep peace with things. So it was great organization to keep together. We loved it, and then everybody got busy and went our respective ways and never and we never had a chance to really do anything with it.

**TAYLOR:** Just a couple of years ago you were honored by the Association of Bass Players.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, the National Society of Bases.

**TAYLOR:** That must have been a thrill for you.

**HINTON:** Oh, I can't tell you how much of a thrill that was. To have all these wonderful bassists from all over the world honor me for my... it was my 81st birthday I guess it was.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** The payoff was down at Lincoln Center. They had a 100 bass players out there in Lincoln Center playing happy birthday to me. Little bass players, seven or eight year kids and they all... John Clayton and all these magnificent basses. I tell you it was just great. I really appreciated that.

Then the concert at Town Hall, it was really a culmination. We did a piece that I wrote for bass called *The Judge Meets The Section* and Dick Hyman orchestrated me... for the symphony orchestra for eight basses and we did it with a lot of basses. All the name bassists who were in town at any particular time was down at Town Hall that night. I couldn't believe myself when I looked at all these guys. Rufus Reed said, "They won't let me play, I'm conducting", and he conducted us. It was just beautiful. That was a lifetime thing. I'll never forget them. I'm most grateful for that.

**TAYLOR:** Well you certainly earned it. With a lot of the freelance things that you were discussing earlier, who were some of the people that you recorded with over the years, some that just jump out? I mean it would be impossible to name everybody.

**HINTON:** Well some of them that were really important that I did quite a bit with... most of Dinah Washington's stuff with Mercury, most of that stuff. Quincy Jones first dates. I've got some of them. If you have a moment I'd like you to see. Quincy sent me for my birthday when he couldn't come to Town Hall... he sent something that... you know what we were about.

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But I did the first Johnny Mathis dates, the first Mahalia Jackson dates, the first Aretha Franklin dates, Barbra Streisand's *Funny Girl*. The *Record Of The Year*, what's the name...

**TAYLOR:** By Natalie Cole?

**HINTON:** No, not Natalie Cole. What's the great white singer, a woman singer, her daughter's a singer now. Liza Minnelli.

**TAYLOR:** Liza Minnelli.

**HINTON:** I did her mother's *Record Of The Year* at Carnegie Hall.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, Judy.

**HINTON:** Yeah, Judy. One of my great joys was playing the [Unintelligible] with Percy Faith. That was my first big job in the studios. I had a tough time getting in the studios. They didn't want us too much in the studios.

**TAYLOR:** Tell me about that, how did you get into the studios?

**HINTON:** Well Jack Lesburg, a dear friend, you know Jack Lesburg.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, very well. A wonderful bass player.

**HINTON:** Wonderful bass player, wonderful bassist. He was a hot bass player. He was working [Unintelligible]. He was doing the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* with Mark Warner and he was doing a radio show at CBS on Saturday mornings called *Kaylon Drake Housewives Protected League*. A radio show and they've got music. They don't have a drum... they got... Bernie Layton was the pianist and they had Al Kiler on the guitar, [Unintelligible] on the trombone, and Jack Lesburg on bass. They didn't have a drummer. So they've got a good strong bass player and they've got a couple of singers on the show.

So they changed rehearsal time on the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade*, which was a plum. That was a television show because that one... was radio. So they changed the time of the rehearsal time so he couldn't do the nine o'clock Saturday morning show and he was kind enough to recommend me. There wasn't no brothers over there. Stretch Pile was over there.

**TAYLOR:** Right, at CBS.

**HINTON:** Yeah, CBS. So he recommended me and I came really late and accepted  
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it. He didn't know me when I came in and I got that job with this thing. [Unintelligible] was a contractor and there was another bass player, I forgot what the name is, that didn't seem to be quite up to par with some of the academic things but he had been there a long time and there was no reason to let him go. So he was on staff there but for the heavy things they needed Arco, and big band things, and some little instant creativity. Percy Faith was very much into... he had the Woolworth's Hour on Sunday and this show in town was a 65 piece band. They'd have guests like Ella Fitzgerald or Peggy Lee, some opera singer, so he had to have a bass player that was able to complete some of that. After he heard me over in the morning show he asked [Unintelligible] to let me make that show.

Well now they don't.... I'm [unintelligible] staff and the show in the morning made \$90, which was like manna from heaven to me. Now I'm sure I've got \$90 bucks a week, I can eat. The Woolworth's Hour is a top radio show and it's on Sunday so it pays about \$175 a week, a Friday rehearsal and a Sunday show.

So Percy Faith asked me to do that show. Well that was really a plum because now I got to really play with... Stretch Powell was there. He was there on percussion on that show. Marty Gruft was also there. Marty Gruft was there and an entourage, all of the named players, George [Unintelligible], the great violin player. All those guys were there and it worked out very well. Schuby liked it because Percy Faith was... and Percy really was my friend. He said, "Milt I don't want to change anything". He says, "When's your vacation due"? I said, "Well I don't have a vacation".

I was outside, I wasn't even on staff. Schuby was paying me outside, which made you a little more money, a little more money, and because he had this other guy on staff and didn't want to fire him...

So now I only got two shows, I got this \$175 show and a \$90 show, which is almost as much as staff right there. Then Patti Page came along with the big record and I get that show. Then Mitch Miller got a show Sunday evening, a great talk show Sunday evening, [Unintelligible] and we get that show. So now I'm really cleaning up [unintelligible] I'm getting paid for each one of these shows separate.

**TAYLOR:** Individually, right.

**HINTON:** Individually, and Schuby was delighted to see me make the money, to get it and bring it home to Mona. Everything is working out great but the efficiency [unintelligible] over to CBS.

A guy, I forget his name now, he looked at the books and he says, "Wait a minute, staff job pays \$220 a week. You use a guy for five days in a week, two hours a day. Milt Hinton is making \$750 a week and he's only working three days a week. Put him on staff". So then Schuby came to me and said, "I've got to put you on staff. I said, "Well I can't accept it because now I'm really busy with records during the day. We're cooking during the day with record dates. So I said thank you very much but I can't accept.

Well they can't fire you unless you've done something wrong but each show was by contract in those days so it's a 13 week contract, when the 13 weeks was up then you're

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out. So I was dropped out of each show gradually. As each contract closed I dropped out because I wouldn't go on staff. But it worked out very well. A great experience to play with some wonderful players, to play with [Unintelligible] and to play with Hugo Winterhalter.

We didn't mention those wonderful records I made with Eddie Hayward, *Canadian Sunset*. He made a bunch of wonderful things. A great pianist Eddie was, a quiet southern man. He did some great things with Billie Holiday too. His father was a great pianist out of Atlanta.

**TAYLOR:** Out of Atlanta, yeah. Well the thing about Eddie Hayward, I lived... at the same time that Dave Rivera lived in Riverton, we were all living there. There's was nothing but piano players over there. Ram Ramirez lived over there and a whole bunch of guys.

Anyway, I lived on the 12th floor in one building and Eddie lived on the 11th floor. So one day I came down on the elevator and one of my neighbors was downstairs and said, "Man, I'm a jazz fan but you've got to do something about that piano playing". So I said, "What do you mean"? He said, "You play all day and all night". I said, "No, no, no". I said, "I practice in the day but I'm working at night". He said, "Oh, no, no, I hear you playing at night. I come home from my job and the piano's just going and when I get up in the morning the piano is just going". And what he was hearing was that Eddie was under me. I'm practicing in the daytime, Eddie practices at night [laughter] so he's right.

**HINTON:** He hears it all the way around.

**TAYLOR:** So for him... he was evidentially living under us and so what he was hearing was 24 hour piano [laugh].  
But he was a really talented writer as well as playing.

**HINTON:** Excellent composer. He wrote some beautiful things. That *Canadian Sunset*... he had a knack for those songs, which had a little lilt to them.

**TAYLOR:** Right, yeah. He played little catchy, little melodies and catchy little rhythms and stuff like that.

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

**TAYLOR:** His *Begin The Begine*, his record of that was really a classic and to take... I used to kid him about it all the time because Art Tatum made a record of that that all the piano players listened to and so many of us tried to build something on what Tatum had done, a little pedal point on the D natural but Eddie was smarter than that, he put it in C, which I think was original anyway, but instead of doing what Tatum did, he just made a nice little [musical sounds] almost a pedal point but not quite. It was very danceable and it really worked.

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**HINTON:** Sure was. Let me ask you, what was the guy's name that had that hit... not a hit record but *Stardust*.

**TAYLOR:** Edgar Hayes.

**HINTON:** Edgar Hayes.

**TAYLOR:** Edgar Hayes, yeah.

**HINTON:** *Stardust*, I remember. Those were very popular piano records.

**TAYLOR:** Sure was. Well in those days, and you can speak better to the point than I can, but all you guys if you had a spot in the show in one of those when the band was traveling, you had to hold that spot. If the house didn't come down you might lose that spot.

**HINTON:** That's right, you had to do that. That's what saved us with Cab Calloway's band. We had... after Cab decided that it was great to have the type of musicians that were winning polls and being demanded by other people to make record dates, then he began to feature us, Chew Barry, Dan Barker, Cozy Cole and myself. That's where the scene with Dizzy and spitball...

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, right, and the spitball. Who threw the spitball?

**HINTON:** Chelner threw the spitball. It was not known „til [unintelligible] years later. Even in Cab Calloway's book, which really broke my heart, and Cab's book was... we're talking and discussing like we're having this interview now, right downstairs in my basement. He had this ghost writer, he had a ghost writer with him and this guy is taking down all these stories. But I know... and Benny Payne was still living and we talked about these things.

But the music wasn't as important to Cab as the show business was so he don't remember all these wonderful things like we remember. I remember because it was very much an important part of my life, not a dancer... but the arrangements that Benny Carter made, *Ebony Silhouette* that Andy Gibson did, all this was very important but to Cab... every record date I was on, it was very important.

Example, not to digress, I was just in Switzerland and MacDonald's has got a TV commercial playing the music, *The Chicken Ain't Nothing But A Bird* with Cab Calloway singing it.

**TAYLOR:** Really.

**HINTON:** The *Chicken Ain't Nothing But A Bird*. I came home... because I was on  
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the record, I called the Federation and asked about it, inquired about this. He said, "Well MacDonald's has got a different agreement with different countries. They don't play it here in the United States. So they've got a different agreement over there". I don't know what [unintelligible] and didn't know what the agreement was but Cab didn't even know they were playing it and I can tell you the exact day that we made the record date and who was on it because I've got that book downstairs as I said. So those kind of things were...

**TAYLOR:** Well you've added so much to a lot of different peoples music. As you pointed out with the New York Rhythm Section, you bring your own creativity as an artist to that job and so therefore if I'm the featured person and I'm doing something, what you add could contribute to whatever the record sales are because that's a very special quality.

**HINTON:** Well it's a hidden quality if you want to call it that. That's grateful and kind of you to say that but in my classes, my clinics and my classes of talking to young bass players, my first thing is that the bass is... the prime requisite of a bass is support. I break it right down to the word base, which... and it means bottom. Musically, it's the lowest musical instrument, architecturally it's the lowest part of a building and in order for the building to survive you must have a strong base. You must have a steady base. Well so your prime requisite as a bass player in any sense of the word is to support. Now you must have... it's necessary that you have the humility enough to want to make somebody else sound good, to really support other people and do whatever you can. You as a soloist, I must try to do what I can to stay out of your way and enhance you. This is primarily what bass is about. Very few bass players have ever become leaders because it's a subservient job but we can feel like [unintelligible]. I'm holding the band up. I do some examples in my clinics where I'll take a visual example as a Basie tune. Take a Basie tune with just Basie playing the piano with the rhythm section and drop out the bass and it goes right up in the air you see. It goes right up in the air. So I wanted to show that that's really what bass is about. Now because young people have gotten such great chances and great opportunities of so many different things, adjustable bridges, beautiful strings, amplification, we can do things that have never been done before. So sometimes we've abdicated our prime requisite, which is playing bass and you're playing... and it's good to do that but you must always remember what you were. That's where we have such great people like Ray Brown, and John Clayton, and Ron Carter... can do that because they forget their place as a bass player and then they can do whatever extracurricular...

**TAYLOR:** Can build on that.

**HINTON:** Can build on that. So it's like the story that Barney Kensler tells about going to Europe and he gets... he's going to play a gig and he gets his bass player to For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



rehearse with him. The bass player was all over the bass. He was just going... he got to the rehearsal and the bass player asked Barney Kensler, he says, "How did we do"? Barney says, "Great. Now we get a bass player to play for us" [laughter]. I make an analogy of it like, we have our children and they get two, three, four years old, you say, Go on say Daddy, come on say Mommy, say hello". You keep begging and finally they learn to talk. By the time they're six years old they drive you crazy, "Daddy, Mommy, what is this"? You say, "My God, I wish this kid would stop talking". Well I find this to be a thing with young bass players, young musicians and you're trying to get them.... Okay, here's first position, this is second position. You're getting them where they can play and when they get this thing down, they're going to play every note in the world, all at once. You've got to tell them well first you've got to make... write words and words make sentences, sentences make paragraphs and paragraphs make chapters, chapters makes book. So you've got to say something. All of our great bass players are doing this kind of thing and our youngsters have got such a great advantage because if they learn to do these things and learn a repertoire... I find most of them don't have a repertoire. They don't want to learn all the songs.

**TAYLOR:** And it's important, absolutely.

**HINTON:** It's very important and they lose a lot of work on account of this.

**TAYLOR:** That's right. There's nothing worse then being a pianist and having someone who really doesn't understand what you just said about the bass. For instance, when Mingus was my bass player we used to have violent arguments because he was harmonically very sophisticated.

**HINTON:** That's right, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** And so he would hit a note and I'd say, "Mingus, don't hit that note when I hit this chord because you change the chord". He said, "No, it's in the chord. That's the third of the cord or that's whatever it... the seventh of the chord, whatever it is". I said, "I know but the way I'm voicing it, when you hit that it becomes this". I was playing open voice chords for him and I said, "Now play"... you know, it would be let's say a D chord, D minor, a ninth chord, something like that. I said, "Now play a D". He'd play D. I said, "Now play G" and he played G. I said, "See that changes the whole context of the thing". And then I'm hitting the same chord, I said, "Now Play D flat" and he played it.

And really with the kind of voicing that Hank and I and many other players do where there is no room in the chord, then he could see the value of that. But so many bass players just don't see that.

**HINTON:** They don't see that and it's important. But a lot of people don't know the bass is a [unintelligible] instrument. So it's that kind of thing that you see... I see where  
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the young bass players... I'll try to learn them... help them to understand, not learn them because they do that, but help them to understand the reliability of identifying the chord. This is your duty.

As the great Phil Woods said, "You play me the [unintelligible] fifths, I'll play the elevenths and the thirteenths [laughter]. Give you something to build on".

I learned so much back in those days, especially from watching people like Ben Webster. I can never forget him. When I joined Cab's band... and Ben was such a stalwart man and a very popular guy. He was good looking and he dressed well. He was interested in... in those days if we hit Pittsburgh playing at gig at the Standard Theater, when the gig was over we would gather... went up on that hill on Waller Avenue to see what's happening up there.

We went by the Crawford's Grill and we went to a little hole in the wall where I first started at Earl Donna, kind of a hole in the wall up there. And we went around to several places.

So Ben would carry me with him. I'm the bass player and I'm very mobile. I can play anybody's bass when he'd go with the club, but I can go with him and I can identify his chords. So he knows he's going to be invited to play and I can remember some beautiful things about... we'd walk in a place... after Cab Calloway's show is over, Ben would clean and shave. I even got all of his antics. He always washed his face down, just washed it down. He'd washed his moustache down, shave and clean up.

He'd take me with him. I'm straggling along. We get to the club. As soon as he got to the door he would light a cigarette, it was like a spotlight, everybody's going to say, that's Ben [laughter]. Then before he steps inside... everybody knows him there. I would always... so we sit down and the waiters come over and serve us a drink and in a few minutes they're going to ask you to play something. "Hey, Ben, you want to play something"? "Okay".

He'd play with the bass player. He'd say, "Do we have to use the bass? I want Milt to play with me". Of course [unintelligible] and I'd play. I've already rehearsed the things between the shows at the theater so I've got his side. He likes sitting and rocking, that's rocking a tight bass, rocking like a bass player [musical sounds]. I learned that from Ben. I learned that... you research a bass player, it says research the artist he's playing with just like to make a study of all his antics, what he likes, the type of rhythm he likes. I learned this with Ben. For instance if you're playing for this guy and he liked that kind of thing, you can hear that in his playing.

**TAYLOR:** In his playing, absolutely.

**HINTON:** You can hear it in his playing. Then you give him that. See I played that in the [Unintelligible] with Charlie Savers and this great musician, he could take a pedal point, F chord, you take an F for eight bars and still had F and he'd run you all kinds of [unintelligible]. It was very interesting.

That was one of John Kirby's. If you notice on John Kirby's records he uses a lot of pedal points, a lot of pedal notes. I tried to observe that, to learn... you know who you're For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

going to play with.

I make an analogy of it with my students like if you've got a girlfriend and you touch her hand, if she pulls back don't do that no more [laughter]. Or if you lean on and put your hand against her cheek and she stays there then you work from that end of the thing. Well that's what a bass player must do if he wants to service an instrumentalist or somebody he's playing with. "Well get Milt because he's going to try to give me what he wants", and that's very important.

**TAYLOR:** Who were some of the other bass players in that period in the '30s and '40s that... this is before amplification became what it is today and musicians first of all had to have stand around power. They had to play in tune and they had to do a lot of things with drummers. So who were some of the bass players that you admired?

**HINTON:** First it was Carl Pruitt. A very strong bass player. He was a happy guy. Blanton of course destroyed all that.

**TAYLOR:** Jimmy Blanton, of yeah.

**HINTON:** He destroyed all of us but he came out and we got [unintelligible] threatened to burn up my bass but he came from violinist standpoint like me but he developed it a thousand times more than I had with his wonderful long fingers that he had.

To speak of that, when he first came on, Avan Anderson discovered him down in St. Louis and Avan told Duke about it. Duke was always looking for something interesting and they brought him up and they played together and it was a great success. But Leonard Feather wrote and I quote, in *Downbeat*, I don't know what Duke is thinking about with these bass duets. I call them bass boots". I have the tape right here. So it shows what timing is like, what time will do when people say things. This tape became one of the biggest things in...

**TAYLOR:** He revolutionized the styles of bass players, right, sure.

**HINTON:** Style playing. He revolutionized that.

**TAYLOR:** Who replaced him in the Ellington band, do you remember?

**HINTON:** Junior Ragland.

**TAYLOR:** Junior Ragland, right.

**HINTON:** Junior Ragland. Yeah, Junior Ragland.

**TAYLOR:** He was an interesting bass player I never heard anymore about him.

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**HINTON:** Yeah, he was guitar... he died... he was a guitar player really, [unintelligible]. He really wasn't what...

**TAYLOR:** What he might have been.

**HINTON:** Yeah, but he didn't read that much in Duke's band because he would tell you what to do anyway. But he wasn't able to get out and get into other things as much. A sweetheart of a guy. He had that very sad looking face like one of those that carried the wine around. He had that sad look but he was so kind. He didn't make much money in Duke's band. Duke wasn't paying much money and Junior drank quite a bit. He was very... and a lovable guy. I can remember one incident that's just beautiful. He went in the Zanzibar, which was in the Drill building.

**TAYLOR:** Right, 49th and Broadway, yeah right.

**HINTON:** Yeah, 49th and Broadway. We're working at the Parks... Cab Calloway's working in the Roof Garden on the Park Central Hotel, big high class place. We're up there on the roof [unintelligible] Central Park playing. Junior is a good friend of mine. I love his playing and on all my intermissions I'd come down to hear Junior play. But it wasn't easy to come up to the roof. Well Junior Ragland drank. Jimmy Ragland drank something called the Junior Flip. He used to get gin and cherry juice and put it in a big pitcher. So I'm working in the Park Central Hotel, Junior's with the Duke in the Zanzibar. He makes a whole pitcher full of gin with cherry juice in it and walks all the way up from...

**TAYLOR:** 49th Street.

**HINTON:** 49th Street up to... what was that?

**TAYLOR:** 57th.

**HINTON:** 57th Street, with a towel over this pitcher of gin. He had bad feet and he had house shoes on. He played in the house shoes in Duke's band. And he walks [laugh] up there. He walks up there. Even the band in those days had to go on the elevator to get up to the... he goes up the front elevator [laugh] with this pitcher of gin. He gets off the elevator and the maitre d' sees him and says... and he's a big guy. He says, "That's all right".

He walks right through the club and comes up to the bandstand and sets a pitcher up there for me to walk out. Well I thought Cab Calloway would die [laughter]. I thought he would die. But Junior was just lovely. He wanted me to have a nice taste.

But he was a very wonderful bass player. He didn't last too long around New York. He For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

was from Omaha, Nebraska but he wound up in Mona's hometown, Sandusky, Ohio, played in little places like that. I think he passed away down that way.

**TAYLOR:** I see. Well at one point we were talking... we kind of got away from your family life. You were talking about having your daughter and the trials of traveling with her on the road. But what happened as she got a little older and you were going through these changes that you just described in terms of staying in New York and being a musician and so forth?

**HINTON:** Well by the time I got to that... I was getting to Gleason, she's about... Charlotte was two years old I guess by then. It looked like she was my luck piece. All of my luck seemed to get better after Charlotte was born.

**TAYLOR:** How about that.

**HINTON:** That's when I met Gleason and now she's two or three, getting to three or four, or five, getting ready to go to preschool. Mona is working too, into little things, and the people in our community they weren't interested in the Parent Teachers Association. Mona's always been in early childhood education.

**TAYLOR:** Right, absolutely.

**HINTON:** We had no way to... couldn't find any place where... in our neighborhood the teachers who are here are all tenure and they can decide where they want to teach and so good teachers didn't want to come in our neighborhood to teach because they feared that something would happen to them or whatever. They didn't choose to come in our community.

So we in our community, we always got second rate teachers, beginning teachers, and our children really needed top drawer teachers because the conditions [unintelligible] coming from under.

So Mona decided that she had to try to find some place to get Charlotte into school where it would be advantageous. She was eight years old. Dr. Ralph Brunch was at the United Nations and we had some contact with Dr. Ralph Bunch and we asked him to get Charlotte into the International School of the United Nations. It's one of the greatest schools I've ever heard of in my life. When she was eight years old we got her registered in there.

It was a school for the Secretary's children. There were very few Americans in there. They weren't interested in Americans per se. They wanted it to be an international school, children from all over and most of the Secretary's children. The faculty, the teachers were from every country in the world. I don't think there was even one American teacher there. So Charlotte was there. The language of the school is French.

**TAYLOR:** French, right.

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**HINTON:** So eight years old we got Charlotte... Dr. Ralph Bunch made the contact for us and we got in there. It cost... believe me I had to pay for it because I wasn't a Secretary but it was a fine requisite for us to get her started properly. Then we had to go down to the United Nations because if you've got a shot in this school they have time set to explain to you how your home must be run. If you have more than one child, this particular child must have space...

**TAYLOR:** To do what's necessary, right, sure.

**HINTON:** To do what's necessary. Any homework given them must be done in an hour or stop them, don't let them drag anything out. Any assignment they're giving them could be done in an hour. There could be no television in your house until after dinner. All sorts of things like that.

They made... they had to read that summary in [unintelligible]. The children had read that [unintelligible] and then as I said, the language is in French so there she was in this neighborhood speaking French and going to school. It was a great experience for us because we got to meet a lot of wonderful people. This lady from British Vanguard...[unintelligible] wife.

**TAYLOR:** Lorraine Gordon.

**HINTON:** Lorraine. Her children were there at the same time. Her children were in the United school at the same time Charlotte was there. It was quite interesting to have her there and the learning is... there were nine in my daughter's graduating class from high school.

**TAYLOR:** That's wonderful.

**HINTON:** [Unintelligible] gave her, her diploma. But there's never over 13 in the class.

**TAYLOR:** As a parent, what did that do for you? I mean how did you relate to your daughter being at the UN?

**HINTON:** I liked it very much. I didn't know very much about it because I was busy working but Mona was concerned because she was making all of the...

**TAYLOR:** She would go to the Parent Teachers...

**HINTON:** To the meetings and all that sort of stuff. She was very much into it and had to go. But the children up to 13 years... girls have parties. It's all girls. I can remember when Charlotte was 13 years old we were here and for her birthday all the little  
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girls from her class came by.

The father's brought them out and the fathers were from every country in the world and it was... only one or two of them could speak English. We sit here in this dining room and all I could say to them was, Scotch, Bourbon? The kids were in the basement playing some music and having a wonderful time because they knew one another and we were up there... couldn't find a conversation...

**TAYLOR:** A common language.

**HINTON:** Limousines were lined outside. People thought it was a funeral or something going on in my house. The relationship was wonderful. As I say she graduated.

There was a drawback I very seldom mention that I didn't realize until it hit me in the head. You know the kids you went to school with, all her companions that she went to school with went back to their respective countries and so you don't have... I just got through talking about Winter Phillips High School and all that. She can't do that because these kids went back to Saigon...

**TAYLOR:** All over the world.

**HINTON:** All over the world. There's a few of them we used to correspond with every now and then. They have a reunion at the school but mostly that's for the kids that are going there now. So I found that that was kind of funny that she didn't have the relationship with the school... where I could school her.

The next thing was when she got to be a teenager now, the boys started to come around. She was so much smarter than the boys in this neighborhood that the guy would be embarrassed and he would split. To this day she's an avid sports fan. She knew the batting average of everybody. She knew the yardage of the football field. The poor guy would sit here and there was no way academically he could approach her and the guy would split.

I would say, "Now wait a minute now Charlotte, you've got to be cool here. These guys are coming in and going out of here". I said, "You've got to be nice to the guy. No matter what he does, if he's a sanitation worker, tell him it must be wonderful to work out in that fresh air all day. You've got to always find something good to say about a guy to sort of get"... so I kind of felt that [unintelligible] that she didn't have the companionship in coming up that we had fraternal wise, of knowing all the years...

But it stood her in great stead because she came back... she went to the University [Unintelligible] in France, came back to Hobster here and she graduated from Hobster. Wall Street was all go... graduates [unintelligible] and chose people that speak more than one language. Well Charlotte could speak four or five. She spoke [Unintelligible] French and all that sort of stuff and she was doing very well with it.

So coming out of the school there, all these guys, scouts from Wall Street were there and they got her right away. They got her right away and they sent her, her first job. My first

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job paid about 35 cents. Her first job paid her \$175 a week.

E.F. Hutton or somebody give her... because they have their own lingo, she come down there and watched what they were doing. Then they sent her to Chicago to the Chicago Board of Trade to get her license from the Chicago Board of Trade. Then she came back here and got her license on the New York Stock Exchange and these are forever, your license, so you can do whatever you want to.

She got into commodities here and then did very well at commodities. It's a very tense market and exciting. And she got kind of nervous and upset and things like that because she wasn't trading, she was on the [unintelligible] paper that said [unintelligible] this year, or some crap like that.

After she finally got a [unintelligible] she decided she didn't want to stay on Wall Street anymore so she went to Atlanta. She's in real estate down there now. So it wasn't all...

**TAYLOR:** Oh, great. As you pointed out earlier, Atlanta today is a great city to be in.

**HINTON:** It's a great city, that's right.

**TAYLOR:** I mean with the kinds of opportunities for a smart black lady, it's unique.

**HINTON:** She went down there the first time when she was down there to Martin Luther King's funeral. We sent her down to the funeral and that hit her. She fell in love with Atlanta so after she got married... she's always had her eye on it so that's where they are now, in that vicinity.

**TAYLOR:** That's great.

**HINTON:** But that school, the United Nations school, it's [unintelligible] that all of our schools shouldn't be [unintelligible] after something like that while these young people have such a great chance at learning, to meet other peoples of other worlds. They had a rule there, if you spoke three times out of turn, you were out of the class. Never mind what you paid, what I pay you. When a child sees that they make a friendship with another child and they know that if they do something they're going to lose that friendship they won't do it. It's a learning incentive. It was great, great school. I can't think enough of how great it is and wish more schools were like that.

**TAYLOR:** It's really an interesting thing when you consider the responsibility of a working musician in terms of what you as a family, a person responsible for a family, and the way you were brought up and the things that you feel about the love and affection that you have within your family, and to do what you have to do to survive and prosper in the field and yet maintain a family, it's wonderful.

**HINTON:** That's the reason the few of us, like you and I are lucky to be able to maintain a family and a wife for a number of years because it's a difficult thing. It's not  
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easy.

**TAYLOR:** It really is... knowing that you and Mona have been married all these years, so few of my friends still have the same wife.

**HINTON:** Yeah, that's right, that's true.

**TAYLOR:** I mean they're married [laugh] but they're married to somebody else [laugh].

**HINTON:** Somebody else, sure.

**TAYLOR:** And as you point out, you are lucky man, and I am too in that regard, to have the same person that you can share all of the good and bad things with over the years. It does something for you as a human being and it reflects in your music.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** It reflects in your music.

**HINTON:** That's so very, very true. I know in my point of view from family life was in my way of doing things, everything [unintelligible] opposite from me. If you tell me I can't do anything, that I'm not qualified to do it, I'm going to prove to you I can do it. I'm going to really, really zero in on that and that's when things happen to people like us.

**HINTON:** Point of view from family life was, in my way of doing things, everything seemed to work the opposite for me. If you tell me I can't do anything, you know that I am not qualified to do that, I am going to prove to you I can do it. I am going to really zero in on that. And that's was happening to people like us, tell you, you can't do that. I am going to surely do that.

**TAYLOR:** Watch me.

**HINTON:** Yeah watch me. And I felt that way having grown up without a father. I didn't have a father, you know since the time I was three months old. And I always said if I have a wife man, I am going to stick with her because I want them to have two parents. I am going to make that thing work, you know. And I feel very strongly about that because everybody has times when you want to say oh Jesus, I can't handle this. But I was there.

Now I know that there were things that I really missed but having or not having a father, things that my mother and them just couldn't do for, you know, a man could do. There was no man around the house. My two uncles, god bless them, both of them, my mother's two brothers, they were so wonderful. Getting back to the Mississippi thing, the

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five of them, my mother, her two sisters, and two brothers, moved to Chicago and they sent for me. They sent for my grandmother and I and we came. Now the guys, my two uncles are really doing great. They were porters in those hotels. He was waiting at his hotel as a [unintelligible] and the sporting girl tells the porter, you get me a good job and I'll give you a tip. The minute a salesman come into the hotel and sets his bag down with a porter, he wants to know where you can get me a good girl. He puts them together, as soon as they get together they need something to drink, can get you get us some drinks? He got some bathtubs of gin he just made down in the basement of the hotel. He sells them for five dollars, and back in those old days he was making \$25, \$35, \$40 a day.

**TAYLOR:** That was a lot of money.

**HINTON:** Sure. They contributed to this five room apartment house for their two sisters and their mother and me and they shacked up with their ladies. They shacked up with their ladies [unintelligible] and then they got to pay over here and pay over there. And it was my duty until I was 12 or 13 years old, every Sunday I had to go wherever they were to get some money for the house. They would...

**TAYLOR:** Their portion.

**HINTON:** Yeah they would give me their portion. They would give me so much money for the rent. They would give me so much money for the house. And they would give me a few dollars for my mother to help with me. And they were kind of enough to say, "Hey Milt, here is a dollar. You don't have to tell nobody you have this." Because if I told my momma I had that dollar she would take it, you know. So you know, right after I left Sunday school, I am cool. I have a whole buck. Well here I am talking about it a hundred years from then but it stood me in great stance. These beautiful guys saved my life, you know with that kind of thing. You know I would go to the other one and he would do the same thing.

The unity of keeping that family together, how these guys did that. And one uncle never married. He got engaged to marry and something happened. He bought the furniture and he never married. He was my last uncle to die. He used to come here and he was in charge of, after everybody died, except my mother and her sister and him, he stayed there with them. And they wanted to come to New York. And I saved up enough money to buy another house across the street over here and I never wanted to sell because I figured if my parents come I would have some place for them, you know?

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** But my mother didn't like New York. She didn't want to come. And naturally her sister and her brother wouldn't come because I am her child. And it was kind of sad to me except Uncle said to me one day, he says, "Milt I want to thank so  
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much for being so nice to my sisters. I said Uncle Bob one of your sisters is my mother.” He was such a dear man. He would come and he was really... no father could have been anymore prouder of me then he was you know, he would see me come up and try and behave myself. And I would really give him a bad time. I did everything, every other kid did but I didn’t get into any dire trouble.

**TAYLOR:** But you know, once again, you should that that kind of environment with the extended family and with the immediate family as well did work and it worked because it prepared you to be the kind of person that you are now.

**HINTON:** Sure. It sure helped. And my wife is from the staff...there are clans of them...there are hosts of them. They go on forever. I am the only living member of my family, you know from my mother’s side. But Mona’s has got, she had seven or eight brothers and sisters. Six or seven are still alive. And we have got one daughter. All of them have three or four kids that are in college or professors, or surgeons, nurses and they are a clan. But they are all there, except the young ones always leave.

**TAYLOR:** Well sure.

**HINTON:** All of her sisters and brothers are there and it does go higher.

**TAYLOR:** It’s like Pigmy Markman’s old joke, I have cousins I haven’t even used yet.

**HINTON:** That’s right. All kinds of cousins down there, a few brother-in laws and we hang out together. To me it’s nice to have that kind of family because now I don’t have it. Now I have hers.

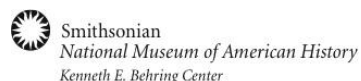
**TAYLOR:** That’s beautiful.

**HINTON:** And they are just wonderful to me.

**TAYLOR:** You do have...you have had over the years a wonderful relationship with other, you talked about Cab Calloway and you had a wonderful relationship with Louis Armstrong. Tell me about that.

**HINTON:** Well Louie was the trinity of my life. When I was 15 and delivering newspapers at 5:30 in the morning, I would go by there, peeping in the window with my paper sack on my back, seeing the waiters putting the chairs up on the tables and the black musicians with the tuxedo on and a nice cold glass in his hand. And the lady waiting for him you know. I would say hey this is it. And then I would go by [unintelligible] rehearsal and it was on my paper route right there on the boulevard, there was the Grand Terrace and I would go by the rehearsal...

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**TAYLOR:** Where was the Grand Terrace?

**HINTON:** It was South Parkway and Oakwood Boulevard. It's 39th Street, right there.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** Yeah. It was an old theatre, it was the Peerless Theatre, that was the name of it. And I would go by the rehearsals. One of the things that I am very proud of, remember the name Reginald Forthsyte?

**TAYLOR:** Sure, an English composer.

**HINTON:** Right. He wrote a theme song called Deep Forest.

**TAYLOR:** He wrote that?

**HINTON:** Yes he did.

**TAYLOR:** My goodness.

**HINTON:** He wrote that. This is the era that I am talking about. When I was a kid I wanted to be around everybody that was musical and the place was the Ritz Hotel. He stayed in the Ritz Hotel and he needed somebody... he was writing this theme song and some things for Paul Whiteman. He asked me, "Can you copy?" And I said, "Yes sir." And so I copied some of the scores for him. And it was amazing to me because here was guy, he was a Black Englishman with a handkerchief in his sleeve. That's how I got to know Reginald Forthsyte. But to get back to Louis Armstrong...

**TAYLOR:** Before you get to Louie, Reginald Forthsyte, you said he was Black?

**HINTON:** Yeah he was Black. He was a Black Englishman.

**TAYLOR:** I didn't know that.

**HINTON:** He studied under [unintelligible] and under [unintelligible] too.

**TAYLOR:** Did he really?

**HINTON:** That's right.

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**TAYLOR:** Oh boy that's wonderful. Because he is a wonderful musician, very respectful here as well as over there.

**HINTON:** Yes he was. He wrote Serenade for Paul Whiteman's band. I had the pleasure in my youth...and it was through these rehearsals that I got a chance to sit there and be delighted to make the...copy the score for Deep Forest.

**TAYLOR:** Is this when you met Louie? When did you meet Louie?

**HINTON:** I didn't really meet him. He saw me there, there was a few of us kids wrapped up in music.

**TAYLOR:** Sure.

**HINTON:** And he saw us. We were always in the way. And Bud Johnson came in and those guys, but I was still on that violin thing. And [unintelligible] Brown had his saxophone and Bud Johnson had come in from Texas with a tenor. And the next thing I knew they were playing with Louis Armstrong, a bunch of wonderful brothers named Oldham brothers. One played bass horn and one played saxophone. And they were doing it with [unintelligible] Randolph a trumpet player that was around Chicago. And that era, I was still hanging with this bass... with this violin until Jolson came through with the thing. So then I don't see Louie much at all until 1953 and I am working with Basie. I'm playing out here and met Katherine and Basie are very dear friends and we live here. And Basie would come over here and hang out with me.

**TAYLOR:** Wait a minute now. I missed something here. Did you... Basie is after Cab Calloway? You worked with Basie after Cab Calloway?

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Okay.

**HINTON:** Yeah Cab Calloway is over.

**TAYLOR:** It's over so now you're...

**HINTON:** Yeah after Cab Calloway, I bought a house out here.

**TAYLOR:** Okay. All right.

**HINTON:** So now I am living out here and Basie is out here. Katherine is a very social lady and I am just a bass player. In fact to this very day she always calls me

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[Unintelligible] Hilton's husband. I wasn't into this society at all and Basie wasn't either because he was like the salt to the earth. He just wanted cool it.

**TAYLOR:** One of the guys in the band.

**HINTON:** Yeah and it made it wonderful for us because I'm here and he is over there and Katherine has got this big Olympic swimming pool and a cabana and all that and she would invite all these big clubs and National Conference of Christians and Jews and she had [unintelligible] donors of Africa to have their fashion shows over there. Basie, if he is home, he don't want to be bothered with that.

So Mona is over there helping Katherine and Basie would come over here and he and I would sit down in the basement and we would have a little taste. He loved Charlie Chaplain movies and I had some of the Charlie Chaplain silent movies so I would put them on. I had an upright piano that Teddy Wilson had gotten for me and it was down in the basement. Basie would sit there and look at those films for a little while and pretty soon he would sit down at the piano, da, da, da. He would play it a little faster to go with the movie. And we would sit there and have a great time like that.

Our relationship was warm and so when he asked me to come and work with him, I said, "Well look I just come off the road and I don't want to go on the road. I am trying to get me some gigs in town." He said, "I think I am going to be in town, why don't you come and play with me while I'm around town. I said, "Well I will do that as long as you pick me up since you are right here and take me to work with you and when we get through, you bring home. And if you get a chick, you better get through because if I go home without you we are both in trouble."

So it was a really wonderful relationship. We would get through at night and he would drive us home. We would stop on Queen's Boulevard and he would say, "Let's stop at the Steak House." It was in White Tower.

**TAYLOR:** Right, hamburgers.

**HINTON:** Yeah six hamburgers a piece. And I stayed there until the Band Box, it was next to [unintelligible] on Broadway. There was on occasion where they had Duke Ellington's band and Basie's band and the gig went for two weeks. I was the bass player. I was there then. You couldn't get near the place because it was jammed. Basie's band was playing and Duke's band was playing.

Louis was changing... [unintelligible] got some problems and Louis said, "Get Milton." So he came down, Louie came down there and asked me to come with the band but I would have to see Mr. Glazier, Joe Glazier. So I called Joe Glazier up and he said, "Well Louie wants you." I called Cozio was in the band already and Cozio was my friend from Cab Calloway band. Now I got to find out what the bread is like.

**TAYLOR:** So if you even wanted to make the call.

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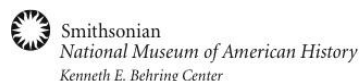
**HINTON:** So I was like what is it like? So Cozio said, "Milt they need you." He said, "I'm leaving." Cozio was just organizing his own band. He was organizing his own band and he said, "I'm leaving with my own band but I have been making a \$125 a night." That was super, you know. I think it was a \$125 a night. He said, "I have been making a \$125 a night. You have got to get that." I said, "Okay that is what I will ask for."

So when Joe Glazier called I told him, I said...it was \$150 because \$75 and \$75 was a \$150. So I told Joe Glazier, "I'll do it for \$150. And he screamed at me over the telephone, "You little so and so. I'll give you \$75 and see if you are going to work out." But Cozio told me already what to do so I said, "No, I ain't going to do that. Louie wants me." And if Louie wants you, you have got the job. I didn't know that then but no matter how much the money was, if Louie wants you Joe Glazier has got to pay you. So I kept arguing saying no. So then he said, "Okay I'll give you a \$150 a night and we're going to Japan." So I made them make me out a contract. It said \$150 a night and when we go outside the United States, for him to pay all hotel expenses and I wanted all of my money in American money when I got back in the United States. I made an agreement in the contract to give Mona, mail Mona \$350 every week and keep the rest of my money and pay me in American money when I got back from Japan. That was my big mistake because [unintelligible] is worth more then it is now. So we get to Japan and it was fantastic. We played everything. My agreement was \$150 a night for any two shows in the theatre. The War hadn't just been over... [unintelligible] but they had to stop to rebuild Tokyo. Some of the theatres were torn down. So we get there and we're still playing two shows in this theatre, then we play six shows in this theater. Then they cleared out the house...

**TAYLOR:** It's like the Apollo.

**HINTON:** Yeah, and I am keeping track of this stuff. Then we leave there about 10:30 at night, go to the [Unintelligible] Theatre and do a television show. So I would put that down. Then we would leave there at 12:00 at night and go to a club called the Florida club and do a show there. I got that down. We're doing everything, just every conceivable thing. People were coming out of the woodworks to see this man. I am amazed at this playing because he likes me, but he is playing so great... it looks like with Louie this was some place he hadn't been before and this was his first trip. He was out there doing it himself. I caught myself standing there playing with him and he is playing so good I am listening. Oh man I'm supposed to be playing. So after about a week I said to Mr. Glazier, I said, "Mr. Glazier I would like to check with you on my account there. We did six shows in that theatre and my contract..." and I had a contract. I says, "My contract says I get \$150 for any two shows. We did six shows, that is three times \$150." He said, "Oh no." He cussed me out. He told me he would buy me two or three homes out here in Long Island. I said, "Mr. Glazier if you just pay me what you promised to pay me, I will buy for myself."

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So he was taking care of Louie. I never would have believed what happened but I wasn't going to let that happen with me, you know. I am a different breed. He says, "If you don't like it quit." Well I can't quit. I would still be walking home now trying to get from Japan. I stayed there and we did all the engagements. We got back to the United States and he paid me very dime of that money.

**TAYLOR:** My goodness.

**HINTON:** Paid every dime of it. It was a tremendous experience working with him. And then he took a liking to me and he told me I could come see [unintelligible]. And that really did it. I wanted to leave. I was coming home. Charlotte is growing up and calling everybody dad but me because I am gone. So Louie says, "You want some more money?" Louie only thought it was money. He asked if I wanted more money. I said, "No Pops I just got to go home. I just got to go home." He said, "Okay." Then he called up Joe Glazier and Joe told me he would send for my wife and he would get a tutor to come on the road. I said, "That's not going to work Mr. Glazier. You can't do it like that." So he says, "If you leave Louie, you are leaving the greatest name in show business." I said, "I know that." He said, "You will never work again." I told him that I had to take that chance. I knew he wasn't going to mess with CBS and that's when I went to work at CBS for the Robbie Q. Louie show with the Ray [unintelligible] orchestra.

I kept my relationship [unintelligible] really meant what I said and he was most kind to me all the way because he was always getting somebody to go...he always had all those acts. And he would always say get Milt to go and do this gig.

**TAYLOR:** Because he knew you could do the job.

**HINTON:** I remember he had Della Reese, she came to make a recording session at Captain 46 Street. And she is a sharp looking little girl and I wasn't looking too bad for a cat in them days. And I was making all these dates and so she said, "I like this one. Can you get him to go on the road with me?" He said, "That's Milt. That guy makes all the records downstairs. He wouldn't go across the street with you."

So she kind of look kind of funny and she said something to me. And later she became a big star and was doing the Sullivan show. She was doing the Sullivan show with Ed Sullivan and I am the bass player. So I wrote a note and sent it up to her and said, "I'll go now." And she laughed about that. She told that story to everybody all over the country. So I had wonderful experiences with people like that, running into them.

**TAYLOR:** So you worked...you went with Louie and then you...no you were with Basie and then you went with Louie and then came back to CBS.

**HINTON:** Then Joe Glazier put me in the...Louie was coming in Basie Street West and he didn't want them coming there. He knew he had another bass player on the road For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

with him, he didn't want to come to New York with a strange bass player. So he told me, "You go on to Basie Street with Louie for two weeks and I will take care of you." I said, "What are you going to do? Give me the same money you gave me on the road? I want a \$150 a night." But he didn't want to pay that in New York but he agreed to pay me that.

So I went in Basie Street with Louie and I convinced him, I talked to him, and convinced him to take Arvel [Unintelligible] because Arvel was a good friend of mine. And he agreed to take him on the road. And I had done my time doing the two weeks at Basie Street West. And he gave me the gig in the Relief Band Trio. The first time I ever had a trio in my whole life. I saved a clipping of it and a picture. I went out and took a picture because it said, "Milt Hilton Trio, Hank Jones, piano, Kenny Martin, drums" and up above it in little fine letters is said Al Garner.

So I saved that thing. I stayed there and then Joe Glazier got me the job, after Louie went back on the road, he got me the job in the Metropoll. And that was a good job because he got it for us and we got a decent salary. I didn't get anything like \$150 a night but it was a good job, good salary. I was in there with Butch Freeman and Jimmy Mcpartlin and Charlie Queen. So that was a nice engagement and it went on for quite some time.

**TAYLOR:** Babyface?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he was something else. One of the great eating places we're talking about right across the street from the Metropoll was a place called the Copperwayo.

**TAYLOR:** Oh yeah, it's good.

**HINTON:** There was a lady... there was so many brothers working in the Metropoll, this lady was cooking soul food. She had the best collard greens in town. You could step right out of the Metropoll and go across the street. Della was her name at the Copperwayo and eat you some good soul food dinner.

**TAYLOR:** That was, the Metropoll was a strange place to play because everybody was across the scene. I mean you were spread out. There was no...you were all right over the bar.

**HINTON:** Right over the bar.

**TAYLOR:** And it was a long...

**HINTON:** And going up against the wall over there. And people standing down at the bar, you were blowing over the heads and people sitting at the tables are back there. But people came in there didn't just see the jazz, they would see the kind of musician. I mean Jean Cooper played there.

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**TAYLOR:** That's right.

**HINTON:** Everybody played there.

**TAYLOR:** The whole Woody Herman's band played there.

**HINTON:** We would line up along that bar like it was a prisoner's... and played. It was quite interesting. But I will tell you the contact was wonderful. I got a lot of gigs, a lot of record dates out of that. Contractors would come by there and...

**TAYLOR:** And look in.

**HINTON:** They would say, "That's Milt over there." The guy would come in and have a beer and wait until the break and would say, "What are you doing tomorrow?" He would make a record date.

One day I saw Lou [unintelligible] and [unintelligible] sitting in there having a beer.

**TAYLOR:** In the Metropoll?

**HINTON:** In the Metropoll. They were sitting right by the door. I couldn't believe it. He couldn't hardly speak English.

**TAYLOR:** Well you know the whole...that period that you are describing was a unique period, both in the recording business and it was the embryo time of television. In those days they had staff bands at CBS and NBC and places like that.

**HINTON:** Yeah 66 men there was. And it was...time is completely different now. But you see during those times we were making 75 percent of all the recording music made in America. It was made right here in New York City. It practically invented the TV jingle. The jingle was really an invention that came out of New York. Bob Howard and some of those guys were doing it on those local stations. So there was a lot of work. Then we had the three networks each using 66 musicians each and we still had all of the hotels in the world, more than anyplace else.

**TAYLOR:** With live music?

**HINTON:** Yeah. So it was a couple of thousand musicians that were needed for gigs. So we had all of these things to work from and we had Local 82 then. We had 37,000 musicians in Local 82. And all of this work was done by like 300 musicians.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

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**HINTON:** All of that studio work. So if you were lucky enough to get into that 300, you were pretty cool.

**TAYLOR:** That's right.

**HINTON:** And it hadn't gotten to let any black guys in until the later half of the 40's and the 50's because all the great song players were Benny Goodman, Charlie Margus, Vanny Kline and Bob Bitty Butterfield. Bitty Butterfield was seen as a more modern guy, helping out to do things. I remember Billy Hacket also, he was with the guys that kind of helped get some guys into the studios.

**TAYLOR:** Was Billy Taylor the bass player, the first black musician on CBS, do you know?

**HINTON:** I think Stretch Paylor was the first black musician at CBS.

**TAYLOR:** I know Billy was on staff there for a while.

**HINTON:** Billy was on staff. Well that is another story. I was supposed to get that job. When Cozy Cole and I were with Cab Calloway, the time we went [unintelligible] was out in California...

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** And when Charlotte was born and we were in California, that era...

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** John Hammond went to the CBS people, he was connected with Columbia being at Vanderbilt and he was on the Board of Directors of the NAACP. And he went to the powers at CBS and said, "We have got to get some black musicians in here." And whatever happened, they said, well they have got to be some good ones." Cab Calloway was playing the Strand Theatre. Now this I have never told anybody before. I don't remember. We was playing the Strand Theatre. John Hammond came down to the Strand Theatre, came up to Cab's dressing room and says, "Look I am trying to get some musicians into CBS but I have got to have guys that are good disciplinarians and guys that can read music and know how to handle themselves. And if I can get them in there, these are the kinds of guys I have got to offer. I need Milt and I need Cozy." He said he had gone to Duke and asked Duke for some musicians. He said, "If I can get Milt and I can get Cozy I am sure it will work out. Cab says, "Okay." We close the Strand Theatre. Our next engagement was the Chicago Theatre in Chicago. That's my hometown.

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I go tell my momma about it, that I think I am going to get a job on staff at CBS. And I am telling my friends goodbye. I never heard one word about that. The next thing I know Cozy and I...the next engagement from Chicago Theatre was the Million Dollar Ballroom in California, Los Angeles. We are on the train and we go out there and we get out to the Million Dollar Ballroom, Cozy and I are still in Cab's band.

Cab gets a message that they are not going to use anybody because he is not keeping his word that he is not letting the guys go. So they discuss it with Cozy. He is the star and I was nobody. So he said, "Okay if you give us Cozy we will let the things go." So Cab gave Cozy Cole up and we got JC Hurt from Detroit that came into the band. John Simmons got the job, Sue Simmons father.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** John Simmons got the job in there. My heart was broken because I didn't get the gig. Now Billy Taylor came...

**TAYLOR:** Maybe he came later.

**HINTON:** He came later but in '39 he was with Duke because [unintelligible] was there.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** Because he just walked away.

**TAYLOR:** That's right he just walked away from the job.

**HINTON:** He went to Washington and worked in the Post Office for quite some time.

**TAYLOR:** But he worked, both he and his son, he had a son named Billy Jr. that played. And they both, I don't know it was kind of tragic because I thought they both were excellent players.

**HINTON:** Absolutely they were.

**TAYLOR:** People never really...I played with Billy Senior. As a matter of fact he is the reason that people call me Billy instead of Bill. I mean I was always called Bill until I came to New York. And when I got the job with Ben Webster they asked me what my name was I said Bill Taylor. So when I went to work they put everybody's name outside. So when I went to work it said, Billy. I went in and I said, "Is Billy Taylor here?" The guy looked at me and said, "You told me that was your name." I said oh okay.

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**HINTON:** That's right. Yeah they were...that was the main bass players that were around. Beverly Pier was a good...

**TAYLOR:** Beverly Pier yeah.

**HINTON:** Beverly Pier was a bass player with Chick Webb.

**TAYLOR:** And he now works with Bobby Short.

**HINTON:** Bobby Short, yeah. I vote for him every year.

**TAYLOR:** There was a guy with Chick Webb's band who was a wonderful pianist and I have been trying to thin of his name, Tommy Something.

**HINTON:** I don't know.

**TAYLOR:** See every time I see Ella I mean to ask her because she would know. But I was so impressed by this guy's playing. Chick had a small group called, I forget what he called them but they used to play in a Spanish town, the small band things, Chancy Horton and some of the other guys.

**HINTON:** Oh yeah.

**TAYLOR:** And this guy, I just loved the way he played piano. He was one of those younger guys that didn't sound like anybody that I had heard.

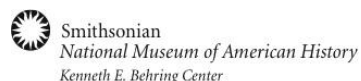
**HINTON:** There were some great musicians in those days.

**TAYLOR:** But to get back to Basie and Louis Armstrong, now Louie when he passed away, you and Mona had a great relationship both with him and his wife.

**HINTON:** Oh yeah. Well we were always close. He loved me because he had seen me grow up, you know. In fact when I came the first day he said when I played with him the first night, he didn't want anybody to tell you how to play, the chords of a tune. If we were playing, and you didn't know the chords, he didn't want anybody to tell you, he would say [music sounds].

And the first thing he said to me when I got up, he said when I got up, "I'm proud of you. I never heard a bad word about you." So he had been following this career, from Cab Calloway's band to this guy, to Basie's band and around, so he kind of knew what I was like and he wanted me. So it was very important to me to be there and I just worshipped him. We maintained that relationship for the whole time. I would talk to him and call him and I think that is what made Joe Glazier be so kind to us. Even after I left the band

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Joe at Christmas would send me some wonderful gifts because I think he knew that Louie liked me.

One of the things I want to say about that financial thing, Joe Glazier said that Louie didn't have to worry about a thing. He never paid income tax. He never paid a hotel bill, anything. Joe Glazier told him, I will take care of you. Well naturally who would believe that. But do you know Joe Glazier died first. Do you know he left money to Louie and left it so that Louie could never... nobody else could ever book him except Louie himself? Louie didn't live but a year or two after that. And Lucille, she passed recently and I don't know where that money is except in trust funds and school funds, which I really don't know much about. But Joe Glazier left it to Louie.

**TAYLOR:** There is a Louie Armstrong foundation or something but I worry about that in terms of what I hope they will do. I know Phoebe Jacobs who runs it, is someone who cared a lot about making sure that his name is maintained. But I hope that they will really begin to do things...

**HINTON:** They should do monumental things.

**TAYLOR:** Sure. That are in keeping with his contribution.

**HINTON:** That's right because they are spending an astronomical amount of money...and Queen's College has got something to do with it now.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

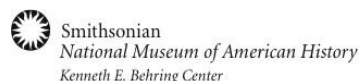
**HINTON:** Yeah. They are custodians of it. But I don't know where all that money went because I do know that... this guy that we all disliked because he was a terror was Joe Glazier. I knew his... [unintelligible]. And Joe Glazier was a pimp, one of the pimps that hung around there. And there were stories that he went to jail about that. When he came out his mother told him, take this boy and work with him. And that's how he got with Louie. They never had a contract. And he died, he really did what he said he was going to do about that. It is amazing you don't hear too much... do you know Allan McMillan the great...

**TAYLOR:** Right, the writer.

**HINTON:** Well he just passed away but Joe Glazier left him something in his will. He left him \$250 a week for the rest of his life. He did that. Yes he sure did.

**TAYLOR:** Glazier was an interesting man. I mean I had a very...had a couple of interesting experiences with him. The first was when I was working with Eddie South. I got Eddie a job in Washington D.C. because I happened to know the guy that... or had worked for the guy that owned the Bangazie.

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So I came home, you know local boy makes good. I am working with the great Eddie South and we're touring all over the place. He said, "Gee I would like to have Eddie come in here." I said, "Well it will cost you a lot of money." So I set up for what was probably twice what we were making as a trio and called Joe Glazier and said you know I got this. And Joe took the gig for less money and I never understood this. I said, "Why would you do that?" So many years later he said, "Look you are too inexperience in the business. You don't understand. This guy had a tiny little place that didn't hold but 50 or 60 people anyway. He couldn't afford to pay Eddie that kind of money. And I would rather him pay Eddie what he said he was going to pay Eddie then to charge him the kind of money that Eddie was going to deserve and not pay him. Now if he didn't make the money I would get a bouncing check. I know what I am doing." Now he didn't have to explain this to me. I mean this was many years later and he is booking my trio. And I called him on it. I said you know I remember back in those days. He said let me tell you why I did that. I always found him very gruff, and very...

**HINTON:** But you could always see him.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, you could walk in his office.

**HINTON:** That's right he was always there.

**TAYLOR:** And not only that but he did, he and Billy Shore did something for me that no other agencies did. They told me the truth you know each one in his won way. They said listen this is what the business is about, you know each told me from his perspective. And boy that is really something when a guy is handling people like Louie Armstrong or in Billy Shore's case it was Buddy Rich he was talking about."

He told me something...I said, "Billy I come up here all the time to see you. You say you like me. You never get me a job. What is that?" He said, "Listen I tried. It is not that you don't deserve it but let me tell you I sit here and as we're talking this phone is jumping off the hook. People are asking me for Buddy Rich. They ask me for Charlie Parker and a whole list of people. Nobody is calling for you." I said, "Yeah but you know I play very well." He said, "That doesn't have anything to do with."

**HINTON:** Do you know what Joe Glazier would do? I would see him do... he would use Louie as a hammer. And the one thing about him that I was mentioning, the smallest musician could see him. He would ball you out and throw you out of the office but you could see him. Most of those other guys you would go to their office and you never got to see him. But you could get to see Joe Glazier.

I remember this one time, somebody called him for Louie Armstrong. He gave them a big price. They said they couldn't pay that. He said, "Well I tell you what you do. If you take Milt Hilton and his trio for two weeks I'll give you Louie Armstrong July 4th. The guy will take me for two weeks because he can make his money off of Louie Armstrong on the 4th of July. So if he had some little small act he would throw them in For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

and say give this guy a job for two weeks and then I will bring Louie Armstrong in for three days. He did that.

**TAYLOR:** He was so funny though. The way I got him to book my trio was that I had been working at the Hickory House and I had gotten myself that job. But you know in those days I stayed on the job. I would go in for two weeks and stay for two years. So I was doing all right and John Popkin didn't care as long the people came in and bought some drinks, he was cool. So Joe Glazier sent a couple of his guys in to see me and say look we want to book you. So they got me a tour. So I am in Detroit and I am in Cleveland and in Chicago and everything. They have got a little circle for me, just to get me out of that room.

**HINTON:** That was a great room there.

**TAYLOR:** That was a wonderful room.

**HINTON:** Joe Marcellus played there and Adele Jarod.

**TAYLOR:** What was her name?

**HINTON:** Adele.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, that was a great room to play.

**HINTON:** Yeah the bandstand was up over the bar.

**TAYLOR:** Now were you working with Louie when he played the original Basin Street? Marty Kay opened up Basin Street, before Basin Street East. It was down on 50th Street.

**HINTON:** It was 51st Street.

**TAYLOR:** Oh 51st Street

**HINTON:** Yeah 51st Street, downstairs. That was Basin Street West, yeah I was there.

**TAYLOR:** And they had, if I remember correctly it was Louie and a woman who danced with a snake, or something, Soretta or something.

**HINTON:** No.

**TAYLOR:** It was a funny bill.

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**HINTON:** No I don't remember that. But I played that in 1954.

**TAYLOR:** Now did they have one or two rooms?

**HINTON:** They had one room.

**TAYLOR:** Then that was later. We opened a room and the first concept of Basin Street was that the room was supposed to look like Basin Street. So you come downstairs and they have got a lamp post and a guy walking around with a guitar. But then they had a room off to the side and they had trios in there. And they had [Unintelligible] and my trio. And it was the weirdest bill I have ever been on. These cats in the trio, they were reading music and I am saying what is he reading. So I looked at his book between sets and it was lead sheets and stuff.

Anyway, in the other room was Louie and he was...I never enjoyed Louie more because it was a night club and he would play like two or three shows a night. And man Louie was burning.

**HINTON:** He was some player. I was there in '54 when I played there with him and one of the idiosyncrasies, I don't know if you happened to notice it about him, he never ever came out in the audience and sat down in a club where he played because in his young days that was not possible. He maintained that tradition. And most pictures that people see are pictures of Louie [unintelligible]. The world could come to his dressing room to see him. So if you wanted to see him you could go back to his dressing room but never would he come out.

Now if I was working there and he would come to see me as a customer. He would come there then.

**TAYLOR:** Right as a customer.

**HINTON:** As a customer. Never...he maintained that dignity, maybe you wouldn't call it dignity but the tradition of his day.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah he was very special in terms of the things that he did and the decorum that he maintained.

**HINTON:** And from what...think about what his education was like and what his mother was like and to live the kind of life that he lived, he never knew how much money he had. It never occurred to him. Nobody who ever worked for Louie could ever say that he was concerned with how much money they made. The only thing we was concerned with was did Louie like you, could you get a long with Louie, and if you did you could negotiate your own salary.

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It is amazing to see how he maintained, in that neighborhood that you mentioned before, that neighborhood and that little house. He could have bought ten of those things. He would sit there and say, "My little ice cream eaters." The ice cream truck would come through there and he would load them up.

He was really and truly a gem. When you consider a man born at least by 1900 in Louisiana and then spent a great deal of his time in an orphanage home, his chances of ever becoming anything...there is not a place on the face of this earth that they don't know the name Louie Armstrong.

**TAYLOR:** Today. I mean you hear him singing on commercials. They are still using his voice.

**HINTON:** That's right. It's amazing.

**TAYLOR:** Well you know you have talked about three people that you were very close to in this area, Cab Calloway, Count Basie and Louie Armstrong, three of the greatest band leaders in the field of jazz. Did you ever work with Duke?

**HINTON:** One night. It is a funny story and beautiful. One night, we were friends, you know I went to places with him. But Cab Calloway's band and Duke Ellington's band were brother bands, out of the same office, Milt's office. And he would not take anybody from one band to the other. I will tell you later how Ben made the switch. It was very difficult but Ben did it himself.

So it was never a time where he was trying to get me in his band. He knew me as a brother band and he like me but he had all the great names. Whenever he came in town or if they got an award at the French Embassy, I was there, Mona and I. So he was playing at the Rainbow Grill one night and Joe Bismal was the bass player there and Joe had an automobile accident or something.

**TAYLOR:** Oh that's right.

**HINTON:** They called me, I was at home. They said, "Well Joe had an accident. Can you come down to the Rainbow Grill." So I jumped in the car and came down to the Rainbow Grill. And it was a strange band. The guys in Duke's band were strange. Everybody had their own personalities and their own ways. Now they all knew me and I am friends with all of them. So when I walked in, hey Milton how is going. I told them I just got a call to come down and play with the band. They said okay.

Now Rufus Jones, I think was the drummer there. I said to Rufus, "How is the music?" He said, "Joe ain't got no book. Joe knows all the things." I said, "Well how does it start?" Rufus said to me, "The tempo is about here." And then the guy said 15 minutes. So I said, "Well who starts it?" He said, "It starts with the bass."

Now I know the tempo and it starts with the bass. I don't know what key it is in. So I said to [Unintelligible], "What key is this in?" He said, "My note is D." I start up to the

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bandstand to start this thing. I know the tempo, his note is D and I don't know...had no faintest idea what it is. And Duke was at the head all majesty and he kissed me three times. I said, "Duke baby, what key, what is this thing?" He said, "F scale baby. Just start playing F."

So the guy says, "Ladies and gentleman, Duke Ellington." And I start playing this F. And I am playing it, I'm walking you know the tempo that Rufus gave me. And Rufus starts playing. Then Duke steps out on the stage and threw his hand up and hit the most god awful chord I had ever heard. I thought I was going to faint. I don't know what's going on. And Duke is standing up there as his majesty hitting this fantastic chord and Duke looks at me and says, "You'll hear it."

That was my only night with Duke. It was beautiful. We played all night. He said, "You are wonderful." I didn't know what I was doing half of the time but I was so happy to be there.

I just got a letter from some priest who is a friend of Duke's and he was there that night. He said, I should never forget that night when you were up there with Duke and duke came over to the table and told me "Look at him standing up there like he is majesty already." I was scared to death. But it was beautiful.

You know when I joined Cab Calloway's band, Ben [Unintelligible] was the saxophone player in the band. And they had just finished making that picture with Al Johnson. And there wasn't very much solo work. Ben had been with Andy Currick and he had been with all the bands. There wasn't enough solos for a tenor saxophone. Everything was heidi ho. And Ben was there because the money was good. And Cab liked him because he was popular.

So Ben is trying to get out here, the eight bars in this picture with Al Johnson, *Save Me Sister* was the name of the song. So Ben is trying to get out of the band and he walks into Duke one day...now Johnny [Unintelligible] aren't speaking. They work in the same band and they don't even talk. They don't speak towards one another. So Ben walks up to Duke one day and says, "I sure would like to be in your band." Duke says, "I loved to have you but Cab is my brother band. I can't take anyone from Cab." But Duke with his very clever self added, "But if you didn't have a job, I would have to give you one."

Well Ben light up as bright as sunshine. Ben came back and said to me, "Duke said if I didn't have a job he would give me one." He saved up his money started to buy two or three new suits and he is keeping track of where Duke is all the time. We're traveling. So we get to Cleveland, Ohio and Ben has got his clothes together and he sees where Duke is going to be in Chicago. So he gives Cab Calloway his notice. And Cab was distraught because he really like Ben a lot. He called him a nickname. He called Ben Twist. That was his nickname.

So Cab says, "Well what am I going to do for a tenor saxophone?" [Unintelligible]. And Fletcher was making \$35 a week. That is the god's honest truth. That is what they were making. And [Unintelligible] was in there and Roy and all these guys.

**TAYLOR:** In Fletcher's band at that time?

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**HINTON:** Fletcher Harrison's band.

**TAYLOR:** Yeah they are a great band.

**HINTON:** Yeah, \$35 a week. And we're making a \$150 with Cab.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** [Unintelligible], I am sure you can get [Unintelligible]. So he said check him out. So Ben called him up and told him what we were making and of course he said, "I'll do it." Now Can don't remember this and neither did [Unintelligible] Thomas, we sat right here in my basement and write in his book. And he never...they may have forgotten that Ben was there before [Unintelligible]. So Ben called up him and he said, "Yeah I'll be right there." And he came over and they sat side by side and Ben showed [Unintelligible] the book. They sat right there side by side. Then Ben left and went on to Chicago. The next week Duke came to town and Ben said, "I ain't got no job." That's how he made the switch. It was like a nip and tuck. [Unintelligible] owned both of them. It was like the same thing that happened to me with CBS. It was a nip and tuck thing. But that's how Ben...and that 1938 or 1939.

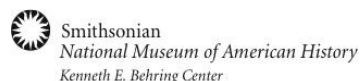
**TAYLOR:** You know it was so amazing to me when I worked with Ben, you know several years later, he had left the band was working on 52 Street. He still had this...almost everybody that ever worked with Duke or Cab or any of those bands, I mean they had a different kind of relationship with that band leader then they had with almost anybody else.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** And really I guess, you say hey I did some of my best work with this guy, you know so you have got to have a special affection for him.

**HINTON:** That's right. I think another thing Billy that I really researched, I could be wrong but I wanted to see it that way and I researched it [unintelligible] beautiful things with Duke's band and he is not making much money. Duke was not known for paying big salaries. Johnny Hodges maybe and [Unintelligible] got it but he wasn't known to pay big salaries. So Ben wasn't getting what he thought he just deserved. Now this is again at the Zanzibar [unintelligible], it's the same place. Ben is getting very upset because he is not making much money. I don't know what much money was but it wasn't what he thought he should make. And the only way I can preface it is by saying somebody on 52nd Street offered Ben \$315 a week if he would come over to 52nd Street. So he is thinking about quitting Duke to come over there so that means he wasn't making \$315 a week with Duke. So he said, "Man I am going over there. I am just sick of this." I said, "Well Ben if you think so, okay."

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So he goes over to 52nd Street and he gets the job. Now he gets \$315 a week but he has got to get a \$50 bass player and a \$50 piano player. He is not going to have Duke and is not going to have Jimmy [Unintelligible] or [Unintelligible] there to play them kind of notes for him and know what he is doing. And this I always hold as responsible for the extra ordinary drinking that he did. He got over there and he got these tunes together and you have got to stop and show the bass players what his notes are and tell the drummer where to go and the piano player how the changes go. And the people sitting there waiting to hear the great Ben Webster from Duke Ellington's band, so you would go to the bar and get you a couple of snacks.

And I really saw this happen to a lot of great... they would begin to go out on the road and get local players. There was nothing wrong with local players except they wouldn't be local if they were qualified to be what these guys are. They were growing like we all grew. And it was just sad that they would get in these places and they would play and they can't get the response that they want and then they start drinking.

**TAYLOR:** One of the things that seem to contribute to that was that drinks were cheap. You could get drunk for a dollar.

**HINTON:** Oh yeah three for a dollar.

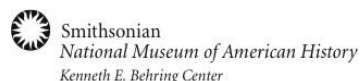
**TAYLOR:** And most of the guys that played in those, like on 52nd Street, there was...it was boring. I mean you played your set and then if there was nobody that you really wanted to hear, you went to the bar and did what you wanted to do. And many of the guys that...it was exciting if you were a part of that but you know you were laid off a lot too. I mean you had two weeks and then you were laid off. It used to crack me up because the only thing that they would change...the band would be the same. They would just change the name of the leader, you know Charlie Parker then Benny Gillespie, it was the same band.

**HINTON:** That's true. But it was sad to see that these guys would go around and play with these...and not get the kind of popularity and success that they could grow on when they were with the bands. Most of them...not many of them were very successful after they left those big bands.

**TAYLOR:** Well one of the things in addition to the lifestyle thing, was that most of the guys had a sideman's attitude. So they wanted to be one of the guys and at some point you have to be the leader, you have to say you have to be here on time. You can't get drunk on my job or whatever it is that is going to hold the job for you.

**HINTON:** I really wish they would look at this thing very closely and saw some of the sadness of it, of guys that thought... Charlie Hodges left Duke's band after a couple of years and [Unintelligible] left and come back. But it was like you would have all these great surroundings.

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**TAYLOR:** Well the thing that I think bothered most of the guys that worked with Duke was that like all of the band leaders in his generation, he took credit for everything the man did. Well it was his band, it was his concept and that was the conditions under which you worked.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** But you know that rankled a lot of guys. Like a lot of guys didn't know that [Unintelligible] was Ben Webster's tune. But you know Duke structured those tunes.

**HINTON:** I know one time we were going someplace and the two bands were going the same place. The trains hooked our two cars together, from Chicago to Omaha. What a great time we had, you know with the two cars together, the two bands sitting around drinking and talking and riding the train.

And Ben had just joined Duke's band and he and I were talking. And he said to me, "I just wrote this tune and Duke is going to record it, [music sounds]." He says, "I call it *Shucking and Stiffing*." Now that is the name that Ben gave *Cottontail* but when it came out it was *Cottontail*. Nobody knows about the other name. And *Recourse* is really Ben's *Recourse*.

**TAYLOR:** Oh yeah.

**HINTON:** That is really Ben's. But it is just as you said, it's like working for IBM. If you invent something, and you work for IBM it belongs to them. So in Duke's band if you thought up a tune...

**TAYLOR:** But you know on Duke's side, I know Tyre Glenn for instance [music sounds], that is his tune.

**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** Because he wrote it when we were both with Don [Unintelligible]. But when he came to Duke and Duke called it *Sultry Serenade* or whatever he called it, it became a different tune. I mean it was a whole other thing from what we used to play. The melody was the same but Duke put it into context which I am sure made a whole lot more money for Tyre then the record we made in France.

**HINTON:** Yeah that is very true.

**TAYLOR:** So who am I to say whether it's fair or not but I do know that it is one hand washing the other. It works to some extent for both parties.

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**HINTON:** That's right.

**TAYLOR:** We're going to break now because I want to set up another tape because I really want to spend the last half of an hour or so just going over anything that you would like to talk about. The whole purpose of this session, these sessions, is to sort of document Milt Hilton both as a man and as an artist. So if there are any aspects of either side that you want me to talk about, let's talk about it. So think about it for a minute.

**HINTON:** All right.

**TAYLOR:** I wanted to ask you basically about things that I hadn't touched on. For instance there are some things that may have been important to you. I know at one point I was very close to Art Tatum and I remember that you were one of the people that was involved in those esquire...the short lived esquire awards. Do you remember that?

**HINTON:** Sure.

**TAYLOR:** What do you remember about that?

**HINTON:** The esquire?

**TAYLOR:** The esquire and they gave you the little statue you have there.

**HINTON:** Oh yeah.

**TAYLOR:** They had a bunch of critics who voted on the best players on various instruments and so forth. And it really was a very nice and I thought a very timely recognition of people who in those days weren't getting the kind of recognition outside of the field, that they were getting in the field.

**HINTON:** I think I got one when I was in second place with [unintelligible] that was 1944. I appreciated that a lot. There have been a lot of beautiful things that I appreciate. You asked me to talk about some of the things that I haven't talked about. I had mentioned my daughter Charlotte, when she was two years old we had a little girl in our neighborhood who was 11 and we asked her to baby-sit for us. And she was from a broken home. So we loved her so much and our daughter Charlotte seemed to love her we asked if we could adopt her. And we did. So they grew up together. They grew up together and it was like a wonderful family. And she was from a broken home so she married a young fellow from a broken home. I thought it would be the proper thing. But it didn't work out that way. He left her. So Mona made her go back to school to get a Master's and she got a job with the Board of Education [unintelligible] boy by this guy, Tommy. And he was a fine young man.

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They grew up and Tommy was 19 years old and we were here together. So both of my daughters, I am talking about Elizabeth, this girl and my natural daughter Charlotte [unintelligible]. I never came around I just helped to keep them straight but I was never around my children much. And they were happy and they were there and they were just so very close.

Well my grandson Tommy, met some guy about something and he had just bought a car. And he and this guy had an argument or something about the car [unintelligible]. And Tommy was a huge young man, my grandson and he was a guy who didn't like to argue. He would walk away if anyone started an argument because he was really big and he could really defend himself. And he would just walk away. And this guy turned around and hit him in the head and killed him. And it was just terrible.

And he put him in the trunk of a car, of his own car and this guy evidently knew that the keys to the house and the keys to the car were on the same ring. So he figured he could go to the house and knowing that my daughter would be going to school at a certain time, he ripped the house off. So my daughter went to school in carpool, who picked her up every morning, so this guy figured she was gone and he would go into the house and rip the house off. And when he opened the door, she was still there, she thought it was her son coming in. So she screamed and this guy killed her. So I lost my daughter and my grandson. I don't think I will ever get over that.

**TAYLOR:** Sure.

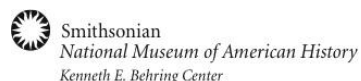
**HINTON:** So it is one of sad parts of our life. Nobody can go through life without having...it was so useless because we never knew what happened.

Now on the high point I have always been lucky with young people around here, especially young boys. Young girls too. My daughter's girlfriends are all nice. The ones that live here in New York City we can go away and give them the keys to our home and they would look out for us just like they were our own children. And the boys in the neighborhood have all been the same with me. They have come by. If they like music I'd find some way...if they didn't like to play it I would get them wrapped up in jazz so they knew what to listen too.

Like [unintelligible] and some of the others have went into electronics and they always put together the nicest equipment for me so I know what to listen too. I don't know how to push the buttons even half the time. But they have all been nice. Especially one young boy came to me when he was 15 years old. He kept calling to study with me. And I don't really teach I try to help and encourage but I don't call it per say teaching. I want to inspire and encourage.

And I was pretty busy and I didn't have much time but I said if you want to come by one Saturday I'll help you. So the kid showed up Saturday, big tall lanky kid and he played something for me and of course he sounded bad but he had time. And I figured that time is something that you can't get out of a book at all. You either have it or you don't have it, but there is no book written that is going to tell you exactly how to keep time.

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So I said if this kid wants to play and he has got time maybe I can show him where to put his fingers. So I began to work with him for about an hour. And after about an hour he asked me, "How much do I owe you?" I said, "Well you are 15 years old, how much do you have?" And he had \$5. So I said, "Well how did you get the \$5?" He said, "Well I help my father and mother on weekends after school and in my biased mind I figured that perhaps his dad had a delicatessen or something in the neighborhood. But he had \$5 and he was 15 years old. I thought I can't take a whole \$5 from a kid on Saturday. So I took \$3 and gave him \$2 back.

So he came back for another lesson in a week or so and he said, "My father told me to ask Mrs. Hilton what size sweater she wore and what size sweater Charlotte wears." I said, "Go up and asked them." He did and a couple of weeks later two big boxes of sweaters come. His father was the biggest garment man in New York City. He had factories in Spain and in Italy and he was not as old as I.

And he came to me to thank me for how his son got along with me. And he said he could never get him motivated. I said, "Well you are a businessman and you have got enough money for the next five generations of kids. I said why don't you let this guy try and see what he wants to do. So he said he would. So David went to the University of Wisconsin on a bass scholarship and did not use any of his father's money. And he got his Master's from the University of Wisconsin. He wrote for...what is it a thesis for your Master's?

**TAYLOR:** Yes.

**HINTON:** For his thesis he wrote, he researched music to find out... all the radio stations to find out if they didn't use live music why not and under what conditions would it be necessary for them if they did live music. He did such a wonderful job The American Federation of Musicians wanted to use it for a promo. He graduated and then went to the University of...Vanderbilt and got his doctorate from Vanderbilt. He then came back to Philadelphia and he has been a sociologist. He is not playing anymore but wrapped up in bass and the life of musicians. He researches the life of musicians. He doesn't play note. His father bought a beautiful instrument and gave it to him. He gave it back to me and I have got one of the young kids now on the road and I let him use it because he is trying to buy a home and I want to see that he gets the chance to...as long as he takes good care of it. So the bass is still working.

David got his doctorate in sociology and became the chairman of the sociology department at Temple University. And all these years and all these times he has been like the only son I never had. He has been with me. He came to this house. He browsed around my basement and he would look at those pictures...I had pictures in boxes all stashed every where. One good flood and they would have all been gone. And he would look at them and say," Milt who is this?" I would say, "Oh that is Chu Berry. I took that in St Louis." And he made notations of it.

And that is the guy that wrote my bass lines with me. [Unintelligible]. I have over 70,000 photos all indexed and cross indexed. Even the newspapers call me now when For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



somebody passes away to find out if I have the proper pictures. And David is responsible for all of that. He has been like a son I have never had.

**TAYLOR:** That's wonderful.

**HINTON:** So we are really close. And his father is still living and he has got more money than I have ever heard of. And he is not as old as I am but one of the nicest man. He is so wrapped up in jazz he goes every place now with David. He is retired but the money still goes on. But he is retired and he goes on the cruises and he goes to Europe and listens to the jazz. So it has been a marvelous relationship for us to have. He has got a sister that is married to a TV producer in California. It is a wonderful family. But David has been like the son I never had. Anything I wanted done he has always been there.

So it is nice to know these kind of people and have them. It is like that thing I just wanted to show you about Quincy. I have seen so many wonderful young people. I saw Quincy the first time when he was a young trumpet player with Lionel Hampton's band in Seattle, Washington. I was with Can Calloway's band. Sammy Davis was with [Unintelligible] Trio and I was up there with Cab. We were still big dogs then. And Quincy was a young kid. [Unintelligible] was in that band.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

**HINTON:** She was in Lionel Hampton's band and I saw her with Quincy. He has still got her with him. She was doing some work with him over there. But I saw them young guys and I took them down to the place and got some sandwiches and sat down and talked to them. And it is nice to know...and with you, you have been so extremely kind to me and so beautiful down to the years, to know you and hear you play and see the great accomplishments that you have done. This is like a milestone.

See people like you, you talked about a few things on this interview but you were doing the same things that every other bright young person was doing, researching and digging. And then you have been fortunate enough and wise enough and great enough to carry it to the complete tops. And you really have no idea how proud we are of you.

**TAYLOR:** Thank you. You know it is really people like yourself, I have told you this but people like you and others that I have had the good fortune to meet that serve as examples. I mean I watched you, you were one of the people that really impressed me in terms of your scholarship. I mean when you decided just like you said earlier, when somebody says you can't do that then you immediately look at it and say no, yes I can. You know to see someone who had gone through the kind of on the job training that you had gone through and then go back to school. And just say hey not only am I going to have that natural thing that I get from my friends but I am going to really get the traditional thing so I can do what I need to do. And it was really for you. It wasn't for

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somebody else because you needed to do that. That is an excellent model for any young person.

I think Bradford Marsalis expressed that as well as anyone else. He was saying that the reason he wanted to perform with you was because of what you did with that instrument. He said you know this guy brings a quality that I just don't hear in anybody else. I want to play with that.

**HINTON:** It is so rewarding. Nobody can deserve that much richness to have the rewards that I have received from people like you and people like Bradford and [Unintelligible]. Not in our wildest dreams...and Quincy... not in my wildest dreams did I ever dream that these kinds of things would happen to me. It was like we were talking about the humility of wanting to be a bass player, wanting to support, which is what it is, but to receive the rewards from this is really just mind boggling. I go places and people and people say well who is that guy. I am the bass player, that's just the bass player. I am so grateful for that.

**TAYLOR:** The recent thing we did up in Terrytown and some of the early things that we did down in Florida just serve as reminders to me of what a joy it is to perform with you because like I was saying early, it is just like riding in a Rolls Royce.

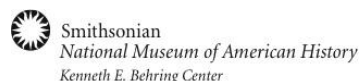
**HINTON:** I am grateful to be able to be accepted at this stage in the game. I went to the doctor for a check up yesterday and he asked me my birthday and I said 6/23/10. And he looked up at me and I said 1910, you know. He says, "You don't look it." I said, "I try not to." I try not to look 82 and I try not to think 82. I want to keep my ears open and listen and evaluate and try to listen to what is happening today. And it works very well. The next thing that will happen...I wish the whole world can be opened up and see how musicians can live together and perform together. It's like in the Masonary we sing 133 songs [unintelligible] brother and dwell together in unity. It is an auditory art. It has nothing to do with ethnicity, it is how you sound that makes me be interesting to you. And we wouldn't know one another if it hadn't been for sound, just musical sound. And to think from that standpoint and to go around the world like we have and see people in their own habitat it's like the first chapter Genesis, getting biblically speaking. Everything God made was good. We were the ones that screwed it up.

**TAYLOR:** That's right.

**HINTON:** All these guys are good. All these different things are good if you can just see the good in them. So I really in my old age, I'm really seeing that and enjoying it. And my wife has been a great recipient of that. We talked a little bit about Mona.

**TAYLOR:** Right.

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**HINTON:** But I am so happy for her. I mentioned before that when I was coming up I always wanted to be like [unintelligible] because I think they were a great couple. Mona has certainly done her share, or more than her share of doing that. And I don't know if I mentioned it to you but years ago when we were in Cab Calloway's band...did I mention when we were traveling that Mona would be the only girl on the bus with us?

**TAYLOR:** No tell me about that.

**HINTON:** She would be the only girl on the bus with us and the bus would be down South some God forbidden place. And we would pull town just to get to the Armory in time to play. We would set up the bandstand and start playing. No hotels, nobody had anything to eat, no hotels or anything and no rooms.

So we would start playing and Mona would go through the colored neighborhood and make friends with the ladies in the neighborhood. And she would say the fellows are playing, they have just got in town and they are playing and don't have any place to stay and don't have nothing to eat. So the ladies would say, "Ms. Jones will take two over here and we will call up Ms. Smith over here and she will take two."

And Mona would say, "Well the guys haven't had a thing to eat. If I go out and get five or six chickens and some stuff will you help me fix it up? I'll pay you." And they would say of course. And by intermission time Mona would come down to the Armory where we were playing with a big basket of chicken and potato salad and a whole list, Dizzy you and [unintelligible] are over at Ms. Jones' house. And this is the way we survived. And a lady that has gone through that kind of thing to me deserves anything else good that can happen to her now. And most of the guys remember that she is that kind of lady, that she has gone through all those dues things of finding places for us to stay and making friends.

Just recently Clark Terry got married again and we went down to his wedding in Texas and we rented a car. And on the way back to the airport I said, "Mona I used to stay with a lady in Cab Calloway's band in 1936." Her name was Ms. [Unintelligible]. She was an old lady. She had a husband who was a [unintelligible] a very light complexion man. He looked Indian like but he was very white and she was almost my color. And they had no children. And she was just delighted to have somebody come and stay with her for a while.

So Walter [Unintelligible] and Lamar Wright... she used to let us stay at her house. She had a front porch with a swing on it. Texas was just beautiful. And this lady could burn. She could cook some. And she made iced tea, big gallon of iced tea and put a nice half of a lemon in there and I would sit on that front porch and drink that iced tea and she would fix us a nice meal. And she could never get our names correct. She would say, "How would you like some Mr. Hinsely." Every time she called my name, she called it differently. And Lamar Wright would always kid me, Mr. Hinsely how are you today? But she was such a darling and her husband was so proud of her and loved her so much. And the reason he was living better then most black people in this neighborhood was because he was a contractor, a carpenter. He hired a lot of black people to work for him.

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He being white was asked why he hired all the black people? He would tell them, "They give me better work." They didn't know he was married, that he was black. It was so great.

So coming back from Clark Terry's wedding, I asked Mona, "Let's see if we can find that street 2312 Hugo Street." I have got a dumb memory in my mind for telephone numbers and addresses. She said, "Okay." Bless her heart. And we get in the car and drive and try to find Hugo Street. It was a big highway.

And I looked down on the little corner and I saw a little shack. I said, "Honey come around and go around there. This is where Hugo is." I went down there and there was their building still sitting there. And one guy was sitting out front, cooling it, you know. I said, "Look where was 2312 Hugo Street?" He said, "Oh it was right down there but there ain't nothing down there now. That's all gone." I said, "Was there [unintelligible] down here on the corner?" He said, "Yeah this is it. We have... what do you call it when you play records?"

**TAYLOR:** Disco?

**HINTON:** Yeah, disco. He said, "We have a disco every Saturday" [laughter]. Now this is in 1936. We were down there when the World's Fair... when Texas had the World's Fair. That's when Joe Lewis fought Smelly, and Smelly almost killed him. We were there at this Fair, playing for the World's Fair, stayed at Ms. Thurston house and we wanted to hear the fight. There was no television. We wanted to hear the fight so Cab messed his program up so that we would be off at the time the fight was going to go on.

We ended in a complex in the World's Fair. We had to go outside and go across the street to find a little cheap bar where they had a radio. We all got out and went across the street to hear this fight. Joe Lewis gets creamed to death and that broke our hearts. Joe Lewis got beat and we come back with our heads all down.

The guy made us pay. We're working there, they made us pay to get back in to finish our gig [laughter]. Besides having Joe Lewis get beaten we had to pay.

And then the climax of the thing was when the night was over somebody said, "Man it's a guitar player around there in Thomas Hall around the corner there, it's Charlie [Unintelligible], he's from Oklahoma, some [unintelligible]."

So we all went around there. That's the first time I heard Charlie [Unintelligible]. He was there with... he had a little guitar, no amplification and we took one of those spider microphones and held it down to the guitar and we all surrounded him. This is way before he came to New York or anything like that.

It was amazing that we found the place, this corner. Ms. Stacy is long gone, nothing there.

But we spent a couple hours and I offered this gentleman a drink and he wasn't in too good a shape but I offered it, and come to find out the guy was from Chicago and knew me in school. Didn't know me but he went to the same school I went to and there he was down there in Texas in this god-forsaken little place. So you never know when you're

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going to run into things.

**TAYLOR:** You really don't.

**HINTON:** So we found at least the neighborhood where Ms. Stacy lives. She was one of the wonderful ladies of the houses that we lived in and where we ate.

**TAYLOR:** Do you have any memories of Washington, D.C. in terms of playing there?

**HINTON:** Yeah, I played at the Howard Theater there. I always played the Howard. I never played any places but the Howard or a dance, and I...

**TAYLOR:** Where did you play the dances, do you remember? Was it the Colonnade, did you play there or the Masonic...

**HINTON:** It sounds like the Masonic place. And there was a place across [unintelligible] where the Howard Theater was.

**TAYLOR:** The Howard Theater was 7th and T.

**HINTON:** 7th and T. Across the street from the Howard Theater was some kind of little nightclub upstairs.

**TAYLOR:** Right, right. And that was right around the corner of 7th and T.

**HINTON:** There was guy named Jerome who sang.

**TAYLOR:** Sang and played the piano.

**HINTON:** We used to go up there to hear him. And the restaurant around the corner was great. I really enjoyed that [unintelligible]. We stayed... I can't remember the lady's name where we stayed, because we stayed at somebody's house and we stayed there every time we came to Washington, D.C.

I was back in those days somewhat of a gambler and I remember coming out of the theater one day... numbers was a big thing down there. And I played... it was Paul Webster, my dear friend Paul [unintelligible]. I played a number... my mother's address in Chicago, 403. I played it and Paul... I was going to put a quarter on it, Paul said, "Put a dollar on it, here". I said, "No, I've got a dollar", so I put a dollar on it, the number came up and it played something like 800 to 1, \$800 bucks.

Well \$800 bucks was... we had a party in the basement of the Howard Theater. I bought booze, I gave to Hilton Jefferson, my friend, \$50, and Kay Johnson \$50, and Paul Webster \$50. Paul said to me... I've got all this money. I sent my mother some money

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and everything... drank as much as we possibly could.

Paul said to me, "You know, why don't you put a dollar on that number for tomorrow". I said, "You're crazy. We won the money. I ain't going to put no dollar". He said, "You never can tell". I didn't put a dollar. The number came back the next day the same way. I didn't have five cents on it [laughter]. I think I'd better give up numbers.

**TAYLOR:** The Howard Theater, it was really a special place.

**HINTON:** Oh, that was really some place. Johnson Hefti.

**TAYLOR:** Donna Richmond, yeah.

**HINTON:** Yeah, we played with him.

**TAYLOR:** Tommy Miles had a local band.

**HINTON:** Tommy Miles, yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Johnson Hefti, I played with him later. When I was in school, I went to Virginia State, I played with him. The territory bands in those days were really spoiling grounds for people like [Unintelligible] and everybody.

**HINTON:** Oh, great. That's right.

**TAYLOR:** And Frank West played with Tommy Miles.

**HINTON:** Sure, that's right.

**TAYLOR:** As a matter when Billy Exstine was putting together that band, almost everybody out of his first band that wasn't with Earl Hines came out of Tommy Miles' band because he used to sing with the band.

**HINTON:** Sure. Yeah, that was really a spoiling grounds. They had these territorial bands out of Cincinnati and out of Washington, D.C. There was one out of Baltimore. I remember a band out of Baltimore. Scat Man Caruthers was a drummer in one of those bands, one of those territory bands out of Cincinnati. I remember him when he was playing drums in one of the bands. Stayed at Uncle Henry's [laughter]

**TAYLOR:** Uncle Henry's, right. Well Milt, thank you very much. This has been really very enjoyable for me and the idea of having someone of your stature just reminisce and talk about history in the first person I think is very important.

**HINTON:** Well thank you. It's nice to be able to talk to somebody about it that has  
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some research about it and has some semblance of it. I feel kind of lonely out here sometimes. I don't want to talk about things that people don't... I find that about young bass players, there's not much [unintelligible] or Rufus Reed, some of the intricate things that we do, we don't want to talk about bass wise. I'm afraid to get into because I don't want to bore anybody.

But then when we get into things and say well here's a thing that I just found, it's wonderful and this is the kind of thing that I'm enjoying with you and I thank you a million for this. I hope it will be of some use to somebody.

**TAYLOR:** I'm sure it will be. I know it's been of use to me because you told me a lot of things I certainly didn't know. Thank you.

**HINTON:** Well thank you, William.

**TAYLOR:** One thing we didn't talk about to the extent that I should have is your photo collection. How many photos do you have?

**HINTON:** We have over 70,000 photos, indexed and cross-indexed so anywhere... anybody that we'd take... musicians, these are musicians. We call it... and I put a thing on it and come up with a number and then pull it right out. And my young friend David, [unintelligible] he's very responsible for that sort of stuff.

We haven't even begun the color. I've got lots of color but we haven't filed the color. I've got some very interesting color slides and they presented very well, the color maintained. We've got slides that are very precious, Sammy Davis dancing with Sinatra on the piano with Basie playing the piano. Things like that that are unique and was 25 to 20 years ago. We have that but we haven't decided to do anything with that.

We have photo exhibitions in Nice, France now. They bought photo exhibits for three years from us. Spanek I think is the name of French photographic company and the exhibition that travels from city to the other.

**TAYLOR:** Well in terms of having someone do that, documenting and putting into category all of the color photos, might be something that someone working for the Smithsonian or some person who's looking to get a degree or something like that, working with the Smithsonian, might be interested in doing.

**HINTON:** Yeah, please help. Yeah, that would be wonderful.

**TAYLOR:** Sure, because it's valuable material that needs to be made available for research.

**HINTON:** Yes, sure. We've got... the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress has 600 eight by tens of some favorite things that we like, you know, 600, and I've got all of the [unintelligible] here. All of the negatives on the filing in Philadelphia but I'm going For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



to [unintelligible] of everything...

**TAYLOR:** So you know exactly what...

**HINTON:** Yeah, know exactly what...

**TAYLOR:** Terrific.

**HINTON:** This neighborhood is like... it was [unintelligible] maybe 60 years ago but a sportsman. Earl Stanley lived out here, a great jockey. Babe Ruth's house is around the corner, the only house that has tall columns on it.

**TAYLOR:** You said Fats Waller too?

**HINTON:** Fats Waller was right down the street here. He got his house when two guys got to arguing about something in the neighborhood and they say well they'll break up the neighborhood, they'll sell their house to a black man. The guy said there's no black man that got enough money to buy the house and Fats Waller... he sold it to Fats. And there was just one of them... Mr. Anderson tells me the man that lived next door to me was a white gentleman that lived in the neighborhood and he said the poker games on Saturday with Babe Ruth, and Fats Waller, and Earl Stanley, they was just marvelous. He just livened the whole neighborhood up. And to share what happened, years later when Jackie Robinson got into baseball, Jackie moved out here.

**TAYLOR:** Really?

**HINTON:** And Campanili moved out here. Ella Fitzgerald's house is... it became from a white sportsman's neighborhood to a black show business neighborhood. Lena Horne lived out here, Ella Fitzgerald, Illinois Jacket is still here and several others, Cootie [Unintelligible] moved down here so it became that kind of... Jackie Robinson moved out here and then Campanili moved out there.

When Basie moved out here he bought the whole block across from where Fats Waller's little house was. Basie's Katharine bought the whole block. Put a cabana in there, Olympic swimming pool, and had all these big redwood fences with roses all around it and just gave wonderful parties out there. But it's so funny, Basie who loved Fats, his wife buys the whole block across the street.

Now Mona, my wife was handling the estate and they wanted to sell the property and some real estate people bought the property and they put four condominiums up where Basie had his backyard. And we said well there goes the neighborhood. And they charge an arm and a leg for them and they're calling it Celebrity Mews [laughter].

So it's kind of unique neighborhood. In fact we've seen this thing come around and in this house there are four of these little condominiums jammed up in this space where

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Basie had his backyard [laugh].

**TAYLOR:** You have a different looking church across the street.

**HINTON:** Yeah.

**TAYLOR:** Tell me about that church.

**HINTON:** [Unintelligible] Congregational Church. That's the Congregational Church. We call it black bourgeois Baptist [laughter]. In this neighborhood where most of the people are schoolteachers or principals, professional musicians, they live a little better and enjoy things a little better. We have wonderful minister that just retired. Johnson was really the man that built that church over there. He built it.

**TAYLOR:** Is this the very tall gentleman?

**HINTON:** Yeah, he's retired. He lives in Atlanta now but he was quite responsible for the neighborhood.

**TAYLOR:** And he's quite active in the neighborhood.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah, he was quite active. He did all of the organizing, getting the things together, and he went out to get the men in the church. I know he got to me. I sat on his Deacon Board for five years.

**TAYLOR:** Did you really?

**HINTON:** Yeah. That's kind of unique for a jazz musician to be on the Deacon Board but I loved it. And his father was still living and his father was a great Sunday School teacher. I like Sunday School. I'll be in Sunday School on Sunday but I'm not too much... I was raised with the Bible [unintelligible] my grandmother and I got thrown out of all... I think I might have mentioned it.

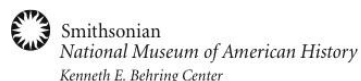
I got thrown out of all the bible classes because I asked too many questions. But you have to give me an answer. As we said before, you've got to prove it to me. And my grandmother was a strict religious lady and she had me going to bible classes.

I'd go there and when they told me that Adam and Eve... and Cain killed Abel and went unto the land of Nod and took himself a wife, I said you just told me it was only Adam and Eve, now you've got Cain and Abel, now what did he take for a wife?

And they would call up my grandmother and say, Ms. Robinson your grandson is causing a whole lot trouble here in Sunday School.

But I found out... I researched and I found out because I was very much interested in the scriptures, and I got third degree in Masonry. I wanted to be a grand lecturer in the lodges but I traveled, the music would keep me from that.

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But the discipline and the morals to it is remarkable to me. It's a man's way of life. The thing of having me to promise to swear that I would do certain things, the obligation is with me. If you're drawn to that lodge and you don't do it, I don't have to accept you as a member because you're not doing what you promised to do.

And being a musician we are responsible to ourself. We're not concerned with how them people think we played as much as we are... I know how I played and I've got to check up on myself. So this is what I like about the church, and about religions, and Masonry, it's my responsibility.

Johnson was able to talk to me and several other guys like me, and working with him on... I swept up the church. When we didn't have enough money to pay somebody I was over there Saturday afternoon cleaning up and that sort of thing, and it's rewarding. It's a good thing.

**TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**HINTON:** We've got another young minister there now that's following in the same steps. He's interested in the youth and get the youth going in the neighborhood and we're making some gains. It's difficult but we're making some gains.

**TAYLOR:** You've got to try.

**HINTON:** Yeah. Reverend Johnson would always tell about, don't be sitting down there in your finished basements thinking that everything is cool. There's a lot of people out there not happy so you've got to get out there and do something about it instead of sitting in your finished basement. He would say about smoking, he said, "Fool at one end and fire at the other" [laughter].

So he was kind of a man that really got things going. I went to the prisons on Sunday with him after church to talk to prisoners. They were over there in the prison or jail up on Quincy Boulevard and these things... it's good for you. It didn't hurt [laugh] one little bit.

**TAYLOR:** It's absolutely good for you for sure. That's wonderful, thank you.

**HINTON:** There's one more I'd like to tell you about this Reverend Johnson before you. Benny [Unintelligible]. You know what a [unintelligible] guy Ben was but underneath he had a very soft heart. He was a pussycat but if he was drinking or something he had [unintelligible] and they was all upset.

But he loved me, and he loved Mona, and he loved my daughter Charlotte so much. The last place he lived in the United States was at this house. When he left here he never came back, but he left right from here. My address is in his [unintelligible] book. So we were good friends. He stayed downstairs there. We were good friends and I went to introduce him to... I had Reverend Johnson my minister over at the church. I said, "Look I'm over at the church. Why don't you come over and go on a couple record dates  
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with me and see what's happening". So he said, "Great", so I took him out on a couple record dates. When he was a young man he didn't look like a minister. He was a sharp dude and really together.

So after the record date I took to [Unintelligible] and I'm standing in {Unintelligible] and I said, "What are you having"? So he said, "Okay". I said, "Well we're down here, what are you having"? He said, "I'm having a brandy". I said, "Okay, you have brandy, I'll take a vodka and water".

So we're standing at the bar having a brandy and Ben Webster comes in. So he's carrying on, hey so and so, yo, so and so. So he come over where we was and I said, "Hey Ben, come here a minute". I said, "I want you to meet Bob Johnson". "Hey Bob how are you doing?" I said, "Bob is my minister at the church" [laughter]. He's [laughter] right down so he said, "Yeah, Reverend Johnson", he said, "Yeah, Milt's a nice guy. I've got to come out there, I got to come out there [unintelligible]". So Reverend Johnson said to him, he said, "Ben, I come to hear you why don't you come to hear me some time"?

And sure enough the next week Ben came. Well he promised me he was coming. Well I'm sitting on the Deacon Board so I'm way up front in the church. My daughter Charlotte had some speech to say and he loved Charlotte and Ben associated... Ben was sitting in the back of the church and I didn't know he was there, but the minister's facing the back... the congregation is there and I'm sitting this way.

So the church got over and Charlotte made her speech. I didn't see Ben. So now you've got to go by... the minister stands at the door while you shake hands with everybody as you're coming out of church. I said, "Well we didn't make it, Ben didn't show". He said, "Milt he was here". He said, "He was here. He sit right in the back of church". He said, "Your daughter got up and made that speech and he started crying and got up and left [laughter]. He started crying. He didn't come home. He went away some place, but he did come.

Reverend Johnson went to Copenhagen once for some church conference and went to see Ben and Ben carried him on to his house. Ben lived with a lady. I don't know whether you know about this, but this lady in Europe named Ms. Hotloper, in Copenhagen, an elderly lady. She just adored Ben like he was her child and she chastised him and he took it just like he would take it from his mother.

I've got a tape that somebody should see sometime of him talking to her and he's saying, "This woman treats me like my mother". This old lady would come to the concerts and sit down and listen to the concert, and when Ben would get drunk or something, she said, "Come on, get somebody to get him home".

And to this very day I've never seen her face-to-face but I've talked to her on the phone. If Ben got out of line she would call me on the phone and tell me that Ben was acting up. If the phone would ring at ten o'clock Sunday... five o'clock Sunday morning, I knew nobody was calling me for a record date. It was ten o'clock at night in Copenhagen and Ben was drunk [laughter] and he was calling me. So our relationship was so beautiful. I looked up this lady but I guess she's long been gone now. Ms. Hotloper. I've got some moves of her talking to Ben and she really loved him, and was taking care of him as best  
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she could.

**TAYLOR:** Somebody gave me a tape. I'll see if I can find it. It is of Ben conducting a rehearsal.

**HINTON:** Oh, yeah I've got that tape.

**(END OF AUDIO FILE)**

\* \* \* \* \*

**CERTIFICATE OF AGENCY**

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

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**CAROL J. SCHWARTZ**  
**PRESIDENT**

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