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CEDAR WALTON
NEA Jazz Master (2010)

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Walton: What's your last name?

Brower: Brower.

Walton: Brower. Yeah, you told me. Yeah.

Brower: We gonna walk through history.

Walton: Okay. Well, I hope so. [laughs] It's really cooling off just a little bit, a wee bit.

Brower: It'll take a minute.

Walton: Yeah. It's a big room.

Brower: It is October 2nd, 2010. My name is William A. Brower and on behalf of the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program, I'm interviewing Cedar … Is it Anthony?

Walton: Yes.

Brower: Walton.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or archivescenter@si.edu

Walton: Junior. [chuckles]

Brower: Uh, let's, you know, begin at the beginning. Because over the course of these two days, or as much of them as you are able to afford us, we want to walk through your history as you can account it to us.

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: Um, you're from Dallas.

Walton: Dallas, Texas. Yes.

Brower: Born in 19 …?

Walton: '34.

Brower: '34. Tell us something about your upbringing in Dallas. Just give us a broad picture of that.

Walton: Well, I had very loving parents and I was an only child. I came up in a happy home that included also my grandmother, my mother's mother, too. So … which tells you that, uh, my father accepted a package deal, you know – mother and her mother. But he had no choice because my grandmother's cooking was superlative, to use one way to describe it. Seductive would be another. [laughs] He couldn't, he couldn't turn this combination of people down. His wife and his wife's mother. Then I came along.

Brower: What was your mother's mother's name?

Walton: Louise. Grimstead which, uh, that's one of the few questions of people who want to make sure you are who you say you are. You know, like credit people or like that. What was your mother's maiden name. [laughs] But anyway, so my mother was an aspiring concert pianist and she gave that up. I was too young to remember when or why, whether she decided to go into a, a public school teaching, and also she had a few piano students that came around, four or five, not a big schedule because she was busy teaching at regular school all day. She was a very pleasant woman, a big music lover. She used to love to play sheet music. *I'll Be Seeing You*, for instance, comes to mind. She would play that and sing those words. She couldn't play one note without the music, though, which, uh, doesn't make you a bad person. [laughs] At all. But uh, fast forward literally, hmm, sixty years, I recorded a [supervising?] recording with the great Etta James and she sang that song. So that was one of the songs I really knew and was able to do it justice. I wish more people could hear that. The CD got a Grammy. But she's a … as a personality that would… never picked up the Grammy. She was … we had to beg her to do this project about five years because she's a Blues artist. She considers herself … and they were trying to get her to do a Billie Holiday theme, and she was just afraid of, shall we say, a little bit skeptical about doing it. But she finally did it, and luckily she liked me and she liked the producer, John Snyder. And so, I digress. You know, that just happens to be one of my mother's favorite songs, and I

thought it was a miracle that I would run in to it again on a project such as, you know, a person who wasn't sure about their ability to do this kind of music.

Brower: digressions are good

Walton: Yeah, Okay. [laughs]

Brower: as long as we return

Walton: Yeah. [laughs]

Brower: … to the chord

Walton: Yeah. [laughs]

Brower: you dig?

Walton: Okay. [laughs] All right, so uh … and then my father's side of the parentage …

Brower: Let me ask you [though?].

Walton: Oh.

Brower: What do you know about your mother's musical training? You said she was an aspiring concert pianist.

Walton: No, she just studied piano either before I was born … I can't give you much details, but she uh, was, went to college in Texas down in … named Wiley College, and I presume she, uh, had a, uh, she, uh, she took a major in whatever music program they had. And so that's where she was sort of trained. But she had an affinity for jazz that was uncanny, I mean, uh, I mean uncanny in a sense that she would take me to concerts. That's when I first heard Hank Jones. That, that tour, Jazz at the Philharmonic, I uh, my eyes, my eyes popped when I saw Hank, you know. I was very, very single-minded, you know. I said, "Wow!" – to sum up my feelings about Mr. Jones at that time. And we had a …

Brower: How old were you?

Walton: Uh, I was twelve, thirteen, fourteen maybe. Maybe twelve, you know. Pretty young, but totally impressionable because I'd been trying to play since I was five, you know. There was a room in my home, in our home that uh, in winter time, they didn't turn on the heat unless we had guests, you know, so I would put on my overcoat and go in there and tinkle and play what I thought I heard on these records by Louie Jordan and Nat King Cole. And now I know I wasn't

even close, but at that time I thought I was. So … [laughs] it was like fooling myself in a way, you know? But in a good way. You know, just picking out things and making up stuff as my mother used to refer to it, but …

Brower: You were about to speak about your father?

Walton: Uh, he uh was in agriculture, and he'd grown up on a farm in the southern part of Texas near the Brazos River, but the soil was the color of that char here, and I say that because that soil was so rich, I like to joke about it, you could just look there and something would grow. You didn't even have to put a seed in there. So, I mean, that's my way of describing how he described how, uh, rich that soil was. So rich that he and his family, which was considerably large compared to my mother's family … She was an only child with a single mother and I was a … He was from a big family, brothers and sisters, and they had a farm which produced, from his account, first-rate produce, you know, and uh, they had many customers who would come and buy from them. That's how they made their living.

Brower: What was his level of education?

Walton: Uh, college graduate. He went to a place named Prairie View, Texas, which was sort of like a sister college to Wiley where my mother went. In other words if they would have social gatherings, they would sort of like, uh, try to interweave the, uh, the community, uh, and uh, you know, see what came from it. You know, dances, uh, soirees, I suppose. You name it. So they met at that level, I believe.

Brower: You say he was in agriculture. What do he do?

Walton: Well, uh, in each county in Texas anyway, they had what they called a county agent who monitored the farms in the county … uh, their production of everything: vegetables, livestock, or even uh … I'll always remember one day we were on … I used to go with him sometimes to these farms. It was his job to visit these farms and then make out reports and then when it came time for the state fair, he would issue ribbons; you know, blue ribbon or red or white. Blue was the highest, I believe, of these tomatoes and [laughs] different things. Chickens, livestock, everything. And so he was a county agent and he was that. Just to set the record straight, uh, to clarify, there were, uh … He was the Negro county agent. There was also a county agent [there was a Negro fund?] and now I'm talkin' 'bout the Forties now, of course, so …. We had a very happy life, a happy social surroundings, very uh, uh, commendable as I think back, you know. I didn't, we did, we didn't need to uh, uh, to, to … in the small sense, need to be integrated. We had everything, we had everything on our side of the color line, so to speak. And uh, that's the answer to your question about my father and what he did. And I would often go with him on his … Sometimes I didn't feel like goin' to these farms, but after I got there and found other kids and we were playing on the tractors, in the hay and so forth. So, it was great fun. He was a workaholic. He, he had his office and then he would join civic groups like the Negro Chamber of Commerce. All of that was prevalent in the Forties. I can tell you that first-hand, because I heard it. But I just kept on playing, you know. It was just a distinction that didn't, uh, affect me that much.

Brower: What uh … you mentioned seeing Hank Jones, obviously the piano was in your home.

Walton: Oh, yeah.

Brower: Did your mother sit you down and you would just, or did you just grav... how did that happen?

Walton: No, I just, from seeing her play these pieces that she liked, I possibly could have been emulating her, but I was drawn to the instrument without her. She was away working most of the time of the day that I'd selected to go and be with the piano. And then uh, when we saw, when she saw my excitement about the likes of Hank Jones and other pianists, too, Oscar Peterson, or a lot of great people came through that tour. She said, "Well, you know" …. She whispered to me that those guys are great and they don't have any music in front of them, but they can read music, so I, uh, suggest that you look into that. [laughs] That's putting it mildly. She said, "You're gonna have to get your act together; you got to stop playing by ear and start learning some music." So that's when she came in and started me with the books, you know.

Brower: Do you remember what she started you with?

Walton: Yeah, Hanon. Hanon is a book that, uh, [it rubs your fingers?]. They're not songs, they're all exercises, but it's known to … Hanon, H-A-N-O-N. There is a, is a book that uh is uh almost essential to start maneuvering on the keyboard, what we now call the keyboard. That word I hadn't heard until way later. We just called it a piano in those days. And I found myself, uh, delighted to make the distinction between now and then, you know, because uh, uh, what we called things then, we call different things now. At one time I can remember, George Cables said, "Yeah, who's playing keyboard." I said, "Keyboard?" You know, that was the first time I heard somebody say that. Prior to that it has always been piano, so … But these are slightly trivial, I think, but still uh, a milestone in my memory.

Brower: Well, it's not so 'cause you know when you talk about home, your own sort of movement across different piano keyboards …

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: … where that comes from in your career.

Walton: Right.

Brower: So it's not trivial

Walton: Okay, good.

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Right.

Brower: But staying along this, umm … Did you get training outside your mother's training?

Walton: Oh, definitely. Yeah. It was me and my mother … uh … umm … for lack of a better term, we couldn't get along. [laughs] I mean, we loved each other dearly, but we would fight all the time about … I can't even remember, just mother and son differences of opinion. And so when I tried to teach her to drive, for instance, we ended up in a ditch, we couldn't …

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Walton: …we had shouting matches all the time. And for what it's worth, she was a Gemini and I'm a Capricorn. And so … uh, whether that had, what bearing that has, I'm not sure, but …. So I had other teachers she recommended. She certainly loved … The other teachers used to come to our home and teach me, and then …

Brower: Any of them particularly memorable?

Walton: Yeah. A lady named Miz Marble who had gone to a, some school in Michigan which was quite a distance from Texas, especially to me. I said, "Wow, Michigan, this … due north almost." She had been infatuated with the great George Gershwin and I'm sure she had a big crush on him; I mean musically, you know. [laughs] I think she'd even met him once. She taught … I learned *Rhapsody in Blue* as best I could through her. And she was Caucasian so we had to meet – still in the '40s – in a used church, which was sort of like a natural uh, point of uh, uh, you know, rendezvous, rendezvous point. And so, and I can remember uh, sort of like quote-unquote auditioning for her to see did she wanted to teach me, with a piece named *Whatta Ya Say We Go*, I think by Charlie Ventura. Somehow, by this time in my uh, self, you know, indulgence on the piano, I could teach myself pieces from recordings, from recordings, you know, so I had developed from somebody who didn't know what they were doing to somebody who could pick up things by ear, you know, and reconstruct them, shall we say … What's a better word? There's a better word than that. Uh, revise? Nope, that's not the word. But uh, restate them, you might say, you know. So she said, "Oh yeah, I like that." I'm sure she'd never heard it, but I guess my uh, I don't know, enthusiasm about this must have convinced her that I was, I could be a good student. And we had quite a few lessons together. Mrs. Marble, I'll never forget her. And later on, I uh, was invited to do a concert in Dallas at a church and for some reason uh, I had on some shoes … I had to wear my father's shoes. For some reason, I had forgotten one of my shoes … [laughs] … you know, in packing and the excitement of packing. By this time I think I had a legal [release from?] school, I had moved to New York. I can't remember. I had to travel to get back to Dallas and play this concert. And my father's feet were smaller than mine. I was in pain, I remember this whole concert. And [laughs] …

Brower: nothing worse than having your dogs uncomfortable.

Walton: [laughs] Yeah. [inaudible]

Brower: They'd be screamin', man.

Walton: Yeah, there was like, it was worse than being on death row, I believe. Or just as bad. [laughs] Uh, it's funny now but it was not funny that evening, 'cause they were wing-tips, you know, and they were nice-lookin' shoes, but they were killing me.

Brower: Cute but killin', right?

Walton: Yeah. [laughs] So that was one of my most, this is one of my most fond, fondest memories.

Brower: I've kind of … we got lost in that as you were developing the thought but, just about the ear and how in this music, speaking of jazz, uh, it … You know, now people learn, or some people learn, music differently than perhaps the way you came to it and maybe many musicians of your generation came to hearing the music first …

Walton: Uh-hmm\.

Brower: … and then being able to reproduce it …

Walton: That's the word I was looking for.

Brower: … first …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … and the relationship between reading and hearing in jazz; what are your thoughts on that?

Walton: Oh, I think it's entirely essential. You said "the relationship." Well, it's …

Brower: The primacy.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: The primacy in the relationship.

Walton: Yeah, the rela… well, it's just important to be good at both. And I started out with the, you know, the focus, I guess you could say, the emphasis on, uh, ear, you know. And then thanks to my mom, she acquainted me [laughs] with the written notes. [laughs] So I was able to start and making fairly good progress all the up through college with the written note. But to take

piano lessons in that era, the '40s, is automatically classical. Now I'm hearing about courses even in the, at the college where they started jazz curriculum. That was unheard of at that time. So, I've been to a few, a couple of schools and talked to students. My emphasis … I was always uh, dying to stop talking and start playing. I just … but that's just me, you know. I'm not, I don't share that, uh, especially if there's money involved, a lot of people, lot of people in my generation and younger than me, they have a huge uh variety of schools that they deal with, some on a permanent level, teaching, like to head the Jazz Department or something which didn't exist when I came through. So uh … uh, and uh for that reason …. I forgot my question now. Oh, what's the relationship between the written … yeah. Yeah, so …

Brower: Was it [in here?] [inaudible] principally [inaudible] how essential like [inaudible] …

Walton: It varies with the individual, you know, your music or, or written or I think the combination of both of course is the best way to be. And so the greatest musicians I've known were genius readers of music, you know, from the Freddie Hubbards to Joe Hendersons. Instant. With dynamics. Everything. But I, by the time I got to that stage where we wrote the messages, and the way we put down the, the, the written voicings of the uh, of the composition was something like a shorthand, you know, compared to reading each note like Bach or like, you know, the background … you know. Some had to be written but most of them could be in this shorthand that we call chord symbols, which I know you're familiar with, and so … uh, and the rhythmic part wasn't so hard for me because I did have uh, considerable background, but not a complete background like some of the guys I've met. And so perhaps that, uh, uh …

Brower: What do you mean 'not a complete background'?

Walton: No, I mean I didn't finish learning to be a reader where I could do it at sight like these guys that I admired so much. I said, "Wow, Jesus Christ, not even a hesitation." Instant interpretation and uh, including all the dynamics, you know.

Brower: Not just the notes but the music.

Walton: Yeah! And then take a hell of a solo. I said, "My God, where'd these people come from?" Because I sort of like veered away from that and got into composition. Am I changing the subject?

Brower: It's okay.

Walton: Okay.

Brower: We gonna come back to it.

Walton: All right. And then, I'm just discovering from talking to you now that perhaps that's what pushed me into the compositional part of uh, uh my life of musical history, you know. I would make up pieces as we used to call it in the community, but the real name of it is composing. I joined the Jazz Messengers. I brought in a piece named *Mosaic* and the next thing I know, uh, we were recording it. And Art, he was worse than me, I mean, in terms of the written

note. We would rehearse it and he would be walking around slowly, walk around the room slowly, and I presume he was learning it in his special, uh, personal way. And then when he sat down to the drums, it was, uh, a finished product.

Brower: [inaudible] Mosiac, one of my absolute most favorite recorsings

Walton: Yeah. Glad you liked it.

Brower: My little personal moment. That's one of the first three records that I owned.

Walton: Oh really.

Brower: And last week we talked to Curtis Fuller …

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: … and uh …

Walton: He's on there.

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: And I just, I got two copies of that. I got a copy that I had from a kid …

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: … and then later a Japanese import.

Walton: I see.

Brower: But that music and the sound of that music is like, just indelible.

Walton: Right. Yeah, I was very happy with that 'cause all of a sudden I'll be riding around Manhattan at night in whatever car I was in, on the radio come *Mosaic*. The guy, uh, Symphony Sid, the DJ, I guess you would call 'em now – we called 'em that then, a Disc Jockey. He would say, "Yes, that was *Mosaic* composed by See-Dar Walton. He would pronounce it like "radar." [laughs] I always found that amusing but very exhilarating, you know, ridin' around Manhattan hearing your name on the radio with this music. So that was a good … I've had positive experiences ever since that moment.

Brower: In your, generally in your repertoire, you play so many standards …

Walton: Oh yeah. I like that too. Yeah.

Brower: Is that … we've talked about things that your mother played. Does your affection with that part of, with that stream of music come from that?

Walton: Uh, indirectly and partially, yeah. But I was drawn to 'em anyway, you know, because uh, Nat King Cole, *Sweet Lorraine*, those pieces were indelibly in my memory too. The standard I just couldn't live without, I couldn't go … Well, let's see, Ellington's pieces were standards, but uh … uh or *Showboat*, for instance, comes to mind. He played only Horace Silver with a couple of exceptions, you know, but mostly that's all he played was Horace Silver. Which is very gratifying financially, you know [laughs] because those records are still live today in people's collections, you know. And we still get statements, you know, from places like Poland or Uruguay. [laughs] It's incredible the way that uh reinvents itself, so to speak. The existence of these pieces, as long as they're recorded, uh, the, uh, continued to uh, uh, track revenue, which – excuse my sheepish grin on that [laughs] – it's not that much money, but I mean it is a, surprising to me [inaudible] all the time. Yesterday I got, day before yesterday, I got a check for 28 cents, so they're not all big. [laughs] I don't know why they even sent that 'cause I figure the stamp cost more.

Brower: [inaudible] cost about 40 cents, 44

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: …envelope.

Walton: Yeah, right. [laughs] And this is a big envelope they sent it in, too. And you tear off the check. But uh …

Brower: [inaudible] the whole piece of bark

Walton: [laughs] But uh, this same uh agency, they call Harry Fox Agency, which uh … uh, when I was first meeting Herbie Hancock and I was asking him – I can't recall, I can't remember how I approached him – about what to do about the collections of your royalties. And he just said those two words; he said Harry Fox. And he went on talking to whoever he was talkin' to. And so Harry Fox, I joined Harry Fox, which was a good thing, and uh, because I found out much, much later some music friends of mine tried to join Harry Fox and they weren't accepted. I said, "Wow, how 'bout that." It was easy as pie when I uh, joined them, so there's probably reasons for that. Maybe they knew that I was recording or something. Maybe they have ways of monitoring … and in fact that's all they do is monitor. So …

Brower: Lot of juice in that orange.

Walton: [laughs] That's a good way to put it. But I was receiving these, uh, larger from time-to-time, large, medium, small, and they stopped coming for about 10 years, or more, and one day

my wife said, uh, uh, "Wonder what's wrong? [inaudible] She remembered [inaudible] and she called them up and then there was one digit wrong on my zip code. Well, they didn't send them, they just held on to 'em. So it became a box of these uh, checks in these big envelopes. No, come to think of it, it was … Anyway, when you opened the box, it was what I thought was $7,000. I said, "Wow, that's a good …" Well, she said, "It's $74,000." It would appear ten-plus years, you know, because of this digit in the zip code. Boy, what a banner day that was for me.

Brower: That was a big surprise.

Walton: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah, because alone and a couple of other things, uh, there was, there was definitely a windfall, you know, combined with the sale of my recently deceased mother at that time. That, and … oh yeah, and some of the things that my mother had the foresight to put everything that she owned, and she was 97, so everything she owned was in my name, too. So I went and hung out in Dallas, and it was her death certificate to the different institutions. Came home with almost as much as was in that box one day. Then I sold her house so here was a, uh, you know, uh, a fairly successful jazz musician, walking around with more money than she was supposed to have. [laughs] In my, you know, I mean, from earnings from, from playing. So I hesitated to tell anybody. I think I told Buster Williams. I said, "Buster, I'm walking around with a quarter, with a quarter of a million dollars." As … you know …

Brower: added

Walton: Yeah. Put it together. But I was scared to tell somebody. [laughs] I might get mugged. [laughs]

Brower: Yeah, knock, knock.

Walton: [laughs]

[Brower and Kimmery converse briefly in background – not related to Walton.]

Brower: You also, going back to your mother, she'd go along and she'd play things. She would sing the songs, so she knew the words.

Walton: The words were on the sheet music.

Brower: Well, how much important, how important, to you, are words that go along … the lyrics to songs that you play?

Walton: I think the words, I'd say very, very important. I love words but I, I'm guilty of not being a complete, I think, student of, of all words like a few artists I've heard that uh, recommended that like Lester Young, I believe. One great artist, uh, insisted that the musician,

uh, learn the lyrics to the pieces that they decide to play, if they had words, and that was important to their performance. And so I'm guilty of only half doing that. I know the, I think, the most important words in a piece, but I'm guilty of not knowing the complete, uh, uh, lyric. And so uh, um, guilty as charged. I mean, even though you didn't charge me, I don't think. [laughs]

Brower: I'm thinking about it.

Walton: [laughs] Okay. I'm trying to defend myself as well as I can, yeah.

Brower: On a preemptive move.

Walton: [laughs] Can I have some of this water?

Brower: Absolutely.

Walton: [drinks] There's more over there.

Brower: In a, you know, kind of in your teenage years, you know, getting the training on the way to university …

Walton: Right.

Brower: Did you develop any particular, uh, affinity for any particular class of composers?

Walton: Yeah, uh, Bach, Beethoven, [laughs] Debussy were some of the pieces I worked the hardest on. And you can call Gershwin a classical composer. I spent a lot of time on *Rhapsody in Blue.* I was also attracted to uh, well, orchestrally, I was very uh, uh, in love with uh, piano concertos, you know. And it just was, I just couldn't believe that uh, these pianists could remember all that stuff. I mean, the, the, the length of a piano concerto was, with an orchestra, for me, humongous, you know. Even though it's really … they're not really that long if you consider the performance of a jazz piece sometime, but they seemed longer, you know. [laughs] There's parts that uh, uh … well, Gershwin wrote one, for instance, *Concerto in F*, and it features the piano and of course in most of these uh, there'll be a, the qualities of a, of a piano concerto with orchestra there's always a long period where the piano is alone, you know, before the orchestra comes back in. For me that's a very exciting highlight of, of, of a concerto, you know. And then there's other concertos that I let the name slip away from me. I heard, there's one … well, this is a concerto just for orchestra written by Shostakovich, and I heard it as I was checkin' out of a hotel in a, in a, some town in uh, maybe Austria [inaudible]. It was just so mesmerizing and I still haven't found it. I've, I've told people of … I tell people about it and there's a good friend, a young pianist, great guy, uh, great musician, Benny Green. When he heard me say that, he, he sent me a significant amount of copies of what he thinks it is. What I thought it was … when I play it, I didn't get this feeling when I was leavin' this room. It was, it was so uh, great. It was … and I think what attracted me to it was the fact that it was so, uh, uh, uncommitted, it didn't resolve, it never did resolve, it just kept going, you know what I mean? The harmony was not important, there was no harmony but there was harmony. And all I can tell you is that the composer is Shostakovich, and you can help me, if you like. [laughs] If you want. [laughs]

Recruit some people to look for this because I've been looking and looking and looking, but it's not the same one. And there's a section of, of, of the, uh, concerto that uh, comes up, you know, with this significant amount of versions that I have that I think it might be, because in that part of the world, minor is spelled m-o-l-l. You know, like … so it was something by Shostakovich, Concerto for Orchestra in D-moll, I believe. I'm beginning to wonder now because I haven't had that feeling that I had when I was leavin' that room. And …

Brower: What was that feeling?

Walton: Oh, man, a total uh, mesmera…mesmerization? Is that a good word? [laughs] It is now. [laughs] I couldn't believe how beautiful and how effortlessly he uh, the skill, how much, the amount of skill uh, it would take to write something like that. I still didn't get over that, and I still didn't get a chance to uh, reproduce this feeling, to relive this. And uh … I'm still searching, you know, for this feeling, for this … I'm almost, I'm 99 percent sure I got the key right, you know.

Brower: Would you consider classical music, whatever that means, to be a persistent interest for you?

Walton: Yeah, I just don't, uh, there's two sides to that. I, when I'm exposed to it, you know, I'm like a, you know, somebody with their mouth open, especially when it's at this level, you know. Stravinsky's uh, uh, not the uh, *Rites of Spring*. I'll always remember when I first heard that. It may be the *Rite of Spring*, but anyway, uh, when I first heard that, I said, "Wow." When I was a, by this time I was in college, a student friend of mine said, "Cedar, I want you to hear this." And it blew me away. Then I found out there was a dance to it, you know. Just one dancer on stage doing all these acrobatic … Oh man, when I saw that, that made me like it even more. I had no idea somebody choreographed it. Yes, so I think the original question was uh, uh, Does classical music have a role in my appreciation of music … something like that.

Brower: Well, we were talking about your, your develop … your training.

Walton: Yes.

Brower: Your training and then it sort of started …

Walton: Yeah, my training kind of uh, uh, merged with, with, with, uh, you know, led me into the total appreciation of some very high level pieces, you know. I don't like every piece. I'm not in love with uh, Mozart or, you know, there's a few other people uh, that uh, uh, are not modern enough for me. They're great, you know, like if you saw the movie *Amadeus*, you probably couldn't hear what I'm hearing. It's great but for that period, I mean for that period, you know, only it's a … He was a genius. He could write, you know, in a bed. You know, just a … That part of his talent I appreciated, but the sound that came with some of the later composers, startin' with

Stravinsky and movin' on down to a, people like Shostakovich and those kind of people. Even Gershwin, uh, I appreciated more than uh, say, uh, Mozart. Uh, harmonic, from a harmonic standpoint and the skill of orchestration, but the skill … See, the thing is that Mozart had the skill and these … I appreciate that, but it doesn't appeal to me, it doesn't pull me in like some of the other pieces that I told you about.

Brower: Do you like Bartok?

Walton: Uh, yeah, but I mean, I haven't been exposed to him enough. But yeah, I like Bartok, but I'm not as familiar with uh, him as I was at a point. I think I was focusing more on Bartok than I am, than I have recently.

Brower: Among your teachers, before we get to university level, were there any uh, instructors that pointed you [inaudible – tape noise]?

Walton: Yeah, uh … Oh, I didn't mean to touch the mike. Beethoven's *Midnight Sonata* is a prime example of that in uh, first movement is a, a, memorable to me because it wasn't that difficult. Doo-doo-dee, Doo-doo-dee, Doo-doo-dee, DA-da-DA. You must have heard that, right? That part is easy but when it gets to the second movement [laughs] I struggled so hard with it, I just gave up, to tell you the truth. But that's what I'm supposed to be doin', telling the truth, but I'd hate to put us to [inaudible]. [laughs]

Brower: It is what it is.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: You mentioned [inaudible – overlapping sounds] question along these lines: As you go along, you talked about, from the beginning, exercise books …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Were there other books, um, training books that you, were important to you?

Walton: Not as important as Hanon, no. Hanon was the one that just … it had no pieces, it just had exercises, and they were endless, you know, like, it seemed to me at that time, you know, and probably would now, too, if I were going back to that. But that's a good question but … pieces themselves uh, uh, so, uh, so helpful with your approach to the keyboard, to the piano. It's just the way they're constructed. If you learn to play them, you, you're makin' a big stride in your development.

Brower: Now, uh, how were you developing outside of your formal training in Dallas, as a pianist?

Walton: Well, that would, uh, get, uh, uh, there were books, simplified books of George Shearing's arrangements, for instance, that I would buy. I would gobble these up and … 'cause they weren't that hard. They were purposely, uh, simplified and so I remember, uh, learning how

he harmonized, uh, *That Old Feeling*, and I ended up recording with Art Blakey but not, not, not his version. I had, by this time, I uh had uh evolved to a, a, to an ability to have my own version of this piece. And that's on the *Three Blind Mice*. And so what I, I sort of attribute that, 'case that's one of the first pieces I learned from the George Shearing book which was simplified but very advanced to me because this is not something I had, had been capable of uh, uh, of stumbling, coming upon on my own. So, uh, that's an example of outside of the classical community.

Brower: What about playing though. I mean you started …

Walton: Yeah, right around Dallas there was people like David Newman who we were in high school together and we would have jam sessions and I would be invited. I was a little younger than them, David and his generation. But I was invited because I was a Walton kid from down the street. [laughs] Give him a shot, you know, and they would see how happy I was, how hungry I was to uh, be a part of this movement.

Brower: Who was that circle? Give us some more of the …

Walton: Uh, personnel?

Brower: Yeah.

Walton: Leroy Cooper … most of them ended up with Ray Charles. James Clay and these people, but those are the main three I remember. There was a guy named Robert Moss, but he uh … and I was able to play with his band. In fact in a joint across the street from where I lived, they had a band in there and I played with them in there, which was a … my mother and grandmother could – whenever the door opened – they could hear me in there with these guys. [laughs] But I was younger than them. They just, they just, they had to ask Ruth and Louise could I come and play with them.

Brower: Now, who's Ruth and who's Louise?

Walton: Louise is the grandmother, Ruth is the mother.

Brower: Is your mom.

Walton: Yeah, uh-hm. But they would gladly say, "Okay." They would kind of look 'em over …

Brower: The joint

Walton: Huh?

Brower: What was the name of the spot?

Walton: I can't remember.

Brower: You can't remember.

Walton: Sorry, I …

Brower: Did you do a lot of that?

Walton: Yeah. Around … and, well enough to uh get my feet wet [laughs] as the saying goes, Yeah. I did, did uh, a significant amount of that around Dallas but they were all usually uh people, musicians older than me. So uh that represents me being a little uh, oh, precocious, you know, hopefully. I know what I didn't, what I didn't have uh ability-wise, I certainly had enthusiasm-wise. I, I know that got through to these people, I mean, to, to, I said "these people," I mean the older musicians.

Brower: Tell us a bit about James Clay. That's, that's sort of an obscure …

Walton: Yeah, well, uh, he sat behind me in the uh high school band. I was struggling. Well, I was playing the clarinet really by ear. I, I, the uh written note gave me enough, not only gave me problems on the piano – I mean, sight reading, you know – I would have to work on it, then I could play it, you know. But I couldn't just sit down and play it like I saw some people do it. And uh … uh, so uh …

Brower: Let's stop right there. What other instruments do you play?

Walton: Oh, well, I took, I studied bass in, in, uh, you know, when we needed a second instrument in uh … by this time I'd gotten to the University of Denver and I, I, I took bass. Of course we were obliged to take a second instrument, so I was with the, the, the first chair of basses of the Denver Symphony, and he uh, he complimented me on the size of my hands. He said, "You, you could be a bassist," which was encouraging, you know. He was the first one that I saw with a, first player that I saw with this thing upon the neck you could, it was like a lever you could pull and you could get two more notes down, you know. From the E-string, you get C down there. Ron Carter has one and he jokingly says, you know, "It's gonna cost you extra for this lower, these lower notes. [laughs] But that was the first time I'd seen that. And uh, I always loved the bass so much. It was so important, every note. So if you see a bass player playing with me, uh, as long as Davis Williams has, you know, you must have something because he loves the bass too, you know. Only person could love a bass more than me is a bass player. [laughs] But uh, so, uh, James Clay was a good musician, uh, and you know we were in high school together. I was a little ahead of him as Fathead Newman was ahead of me. I played by ear. The band director uh, J.K. Miller, who had been a trumpet player in some of the territory bands around uh, the Southwest, decided to teach school and he had the high school band at Lincoln High where I went. And he let me play the clarinet by ear. You know, I couldn't go up high like you're supposed to on, on, on the clarinet. The clarinet parts were written up extremely high, you know, and for this you need a, what is known as ledger lines, you know, like, you know, like a staff of

music and then you have little lines above it, you know. They're all written all up there; none of 'em in staff [laughs] … the real clarinet parts of a march. So that's what we were concentratin' on. And then he had jazz charts he would bring in. I played them by ear. In fact he was one I can remember, I'll always remember, one day he said, "Hey, hey [Walton?]. Walton, play that for these guys." And I played it and I could do that. So my ear exceeded my uh, uh technique I guess you could say, uh, uh, reading-wise. The phrasing is what seemingly came naturally to me. And uh, but uh … that's about all I can tell you about James Clay. I heard him on his first recording, I think with Wes Montgomery later, and, uh, so we kind of separated, we didn't uh, uh, do too much together before I left Dallas. And we didn't do anything together after, after we both left Dallas. He, he went to California but he returned and finished his life out in Dallas. We were at, in Japan at the same time once and [we made sure it was him?] and Fathead Newman as Texas Tenors, and that's one of the main experiences we had outside of Dallas. That's a long way over there. [laughs]

Brower: You mentioned territory bands. Was that a, a …

Walton: That's a term I hear people like Jimmy Heath talkin' about, at that time, and it just happened to be in the Southwest, you know – uh, bands uh, with, uh, black personnel going around playing and uh, uh, Fathead was explainin', uh, gave me a possible explanation for uh …. Oh yeah, how uh, uh, Miles Davis …. When I met him uh, when I, uh … I., I digress again. When I went into the Café Bohemia and I stayed, my family stayed about one block away from the Red Garland family. I mean, his father was still in Dallas, and I'd heard all about it and so I introduced myself to Red Garland. He was standin' next to Miles Davis at the bar, and uh, it was an instant. Red was a guy would say, "Oh, oh, hey my man!" You know, he was an instant friend, you know, [laughs] as compared to Miles was a little standoffish. One reason is because he had a voice impediment. He couldn't … You must have heard recordings of his voice. It was kinda hoarse. So I think he resisted uh conversations because of that. But he uh, when he found out I was from Dallas, he asked me did I know J.K. Miller, which was this guy who teach… our high school band director. So imagine my uh, um, enthusiasm, as it comes to mind, uh, uh, at hearing the great Miles Davis talking about my high school band director. I said, "This must be Heaven," I said to myself about New York then. So uh …

Brower: Miles had heard of him as, by virtue of the fact that he had traveled with the territory band.

Walton: Yeah, that [inaudible] David Newman's. Yeah, David Newman, when David Newman told me that, I said, "David, I didn't think Miles could have possibly known J.K. Miller 'cause me and David played for J.K." He said, "Well, you know a territory man used to come through there, including St. Louis, East St. Louis, wherever Miles was in it." So I wouldn't be … Miles was in love with trumpet as you know, so he had probably heard him. And he was pretty good for Miles to remember him. So um, I'll always remember that moment.

Brower: Give us a sense of the musical culture that uh, or the musical scene that you were experiencing in Dallas, in black Dallas.

Walton: Well, uh, we would play with people like Robert Balch and there was like a don't-cha, don't-cha, don't-cha; it was like a … what we call a shuffle style, and some of the musicians who were more outspoken would just start breakin' into a big giggle if you try to play somethin' other than that. In other words, that would, that, they will never succeed. It was very disheartening and made you want to escape Dallas, to be blunt. You know, I gotta get outta here. Nobody plays this, except privately, you know, maybe we would have jam sessions, but nobody plays this music in public … that I'm infatuated with, so … I gotta get outta here.

Brower: What, what you were listening to and what you were, uh, working … you're working out through this big gap.

Walton: Huge. Yeah.

Brower: So what were you listening to?

Walton: Oh …

Brower: A lot of modern stuff?

Walton: Yeah. Uh, uh, Bird, uh, yeah.

Brower: Were those musicians coming through Dallas?

Walton: No.

Brower: at any level

Walton: Uh … let me see, no, not, not anyone [inaudible], they didn't come through.

Brower: Was there a sort of a, some sort of black theater scene with the …

Walton: Well, Billy Eckstine came through. He had Dexter, he had great bands. You'd see posters of him, but of course he was a big singing favorite, so, you know, we know his jazz history but uh, to the public there was, they were attracted to this uh …

Brower: Jelly, Jelly, Jelly and all that.

Walton: Yeah! Everything I Have is Yours … and, uh, they're some, a multitude of popular material that he came up with. He even had, he liked to write, he liked to, he liked to uh, very creative tunes; he put a, a, a, what I call a tag, a coda, on *Sophisticated Lady*. And uh, when I met Billy Eckstine on a cruise I think it was, he told me that uh Duke Ellington called him William. He said, "William, did I write that?" [laughs] So uh, Ellington was very charming because he knew damned well, I mean darned well he didn't uh write that. But, so that was his way of a, uh,

complimenting Mr. B. Have you ever noticed that? The uh … if you ever notice uh Mr. B's version of *Sophisticated Lady*, he's got a beautiful extra few bars at the end that he, that he wrote. And uh, I had an exquisite collection – I just can't find it – of Mr. B's, you know, uh, you know of various performances at various times, but the very top level of his uh ability, you know, his, his … and that's on there, you know, as well as uh, uh most of his uh well-known compositions. I have favorites, I'm not sure he wrote *Everything I Have is Yours* but he was certainly famous for that. And these are, and he's got some special lyrics to uh *Ma, He's Makin' Eyes at Me*. Ever hear that?

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: By him?

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: Oh, okay! You, you, you're on board with the Mr. B.

Brower: well, in Washington we loved Billy Eckstine

Walton: [laughs] I bet you did. Yeah.

Brower: Just, you know, 'cause it's such a strong association between that band …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … and, you know, he went to Armstrong High School here.

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: You know [inaudible].

Walton: That I didn't know. I thought he was from Pittsburgh.

Brower: He was, but he went to high school here.

Walton: Uh-huh. Is that a fact?

Brower: And you know, his pianist, John Malachi, was from here.

Walton: Right.

Brower: You know, Leo Parker was from here.

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: Tommy Potter wasn't from here, but he found him here.

Walton: Yeah. [laughs]

Brower: You know, there was a lot of association between that band and Washington.

Walton: Yeah. Charlie Rouse wasn't with him, was he?

Brower: Charlie Rouse did play with him, at one point, yeah

Walton: Yeah. I never did hear that band. I was …

Brower: So, I'm trying to, um, I guess, the picture I'm getting about Dallas in your youth was … there was, to the extent that the modern jazz thing was happening, was more or less underground.

Walton: Yeah, Definitely. Yeah.

Brower: And, you know, the music you were playing out … was jazz but not …

Walton: It had the undercurrent of uh, the, the, the, uh …

Brower: not the most

Walton: Yeah, the, the, the …

Brower: [inaudible – overlapping voices] contemporary

Walton: No, the rhythm was …

Brower: [inaudible] thing

Walton: No, the rhythm was uh, made simple, so to speak, you know, condescending in a way to the listeners. Well, in the sense to me when I think about it now. You know, I mean there just … we had to simplify. We can't play like we know it, that it could be very enjoyable here because people will start talking or it would be uh, uh, uh, unfamiliar to them, you know. That's where, that's …

Brower: Are you saying Rhythm & Blues too?

Walton: That's what I'm talkin' about. Everything was Rhythm & Blues, instrumentally. And then somebody would inevitably sing too. But uh …

Brower: Did you enjoy that at all, or …

Walton: Yeah! Yeah, I was just glad to be on any bandstand. Yeah, I was very young still – 15 or you know, 16, thereabouts. So uh …

Brower: Just … before you leave Dallas, I wanna get a sense of – and you talked about it in a sense – but a more direct discussion of race and its impact on you, your sense of it, your understanding of it.

Walton: Didn't exist [inaudible].

Brower: Okay, we'll come back.

Walton: Yeah, okay. It did not exist. We were able to, uh, I was able to uh … [pause]

Brower: Okay, let's move from Dallas to Denver.

Walton: O-kay.

Brower: So, tell us about how you ended up at University of Denver.

Walton: Well, uh, my parents and I, uh, uh, were on summer vacation in between my graduation of high school and college, you know, in that period. So uh …

Brower: Was it a given that you were going to university?

Walton: No! No. I had already uh, uh, been to Dillard University in New Orleans for a half a semester. I graduated high school on a Friday and my folks shipped me out that Monday to New Orleans. They didn't want me to hang around 'til the school year started, 'cause I was a mid-term graduate. So uh …

Brower: Were you a good student, by the way?

Walton: Uh …Uh … [laughs] sometimes. As much as I could be, yes. Yeah, I uh, I uh, I did okay in, especially in high school. In college I started to get more attracted to playing in uh … sort of like, uh, uh, made me deviate from my intended uh, uh, uh, uh target, uh, goal, uh, was to get a college education.

Brower: So, I didn't know about the New Orleans episode, so …

Walton: It was sorta short. Me and Ellis Marsalis enrolled the same day … back in those days which was '51, I think. So uh, I think my parents just wanted me, to get me out of the house, I don't know. [laughs] I was, I'll never know. I forgot to ask my mother. But uh … that's the …

Brower: Did you get into the New Orleans scene while you were there?

Walton: No. No, just the campus scene. Yeah. To get off campus, luckily my parents – my mother especially – knew at least one person I could go visit and get some uh ….

Brower: Home cookin'?

Walton: Yeah. Uh-hm. Besides … but I found the uh, uh, the oysters, the way they made 'em there, they were horrible to me at that age. I said, "My God!" [sighs] But uh, now I, I've become sophisticated, but I mean I still like 'em cold, all iced-up, you know. They were cookin' the uh … this, this was hard for, uh, this was like you say, you say home cookin' is home cooked oysters the way they made it. And I just wasn't, uh, sophis… I mean, I just hadn't grown accustomed to that taste. It turned me off completely. I said, and I'll always remember, and I can't remember how I was able to wiggle out of that, eating that, without insulting the lady who cooked it, 'cause she was so proud of this, I remember. This is a long time ago I remember, having the feeling of how disgusting it tasted. [laughs] So … I like, I love oysters now, but they are, you know, on the shell and with the ice. I can eat tons of 'em. As well as the other, um … what's the other thing on the shell?

Brower: Clams?

Walton: Clams. Clams and oysters, I can eat them all day. And you don't feel filled up, like a lot of dishes that we, uh, experience. But uh, yeah, the New Orleans experience was a, a, very good, um, 'cause I had a great, uh, science teacher. It was a humongous [inaudible] class. So I go … it was maybe sixty people or something, you know, up in this great big room. This guy, he was so intense, and then I saw him later, believe it or not, on the Steve Allen Show a number of times, you know. He would call him in 'cause he was an eccentric, you know, and he would, uh, drive his points home in a very uh, almost comedic way, but it made a lot of sense. And I, if I, if my life depended on thinking of his name, I can't think of it. But anyway, he was on that campus, and uh, uh, I joined the choir. I was a music major, so, uh, where everybody went to the college choir. And I, um, uh, the, the, the choir director, choral director, was named Booker, Henry Booker, I believe. And he was an absolute genius, you know. To me, you know, he could play these pieces, man, and look up like he was in ecstasy, you know, without even, the music was right there on the piano. Evidently, he had, he could scope it, which the great readers can scope a whole two pages and not have to look at it; turn, they may glance down and then they got it. I've met people like that too. And he was one. And he would teach us these pieces and we were an a cappella choir, so we went on tour through the South. That's a great memory too 'cause he had perfect pitch so he would just whisper the tones to the sopranos, altos, all the way up, inaudible to the audience, and then when he would do that, we would just start. I imagine if you were in the audience, you'd say, "My God, how'd he do that?" So, that was my first contact with what I considered real genius, was Henry Booker. And we were all music majors so we could read the notes; it was just one note for us to read, you know, our parts, you know, baritones … I think I was a baritone by that time. I know I wasn't a tenor so that was a great experience. That was my most cherished, one of my most cherished memories of … And then of course they had a, a, a, uh, military big band that rehearsed on campus there, and that was my first, uh, experience, and

they were playin' jazz charts, and that was my first experience of being that close, like as close as I am to you now, hearing that, you know … Wow! Hey! It was a sergeant major, that was the first time I'd heard of that rank even, was in charge of this band, you know. And why they rehearsed on the Dillard campus, I still don't know. But uh, there was a guy named Harold Battiste I became friendly with, and of all things, he became the music director for Sonny and Cher. I couldn't believe it when I moved, when I lived in Los Angeles. I said, "Wow, you do that?" He said, "Yep." But Los Angeles is not the place for jazz. The beat that we like, the beat that I see you have collected – non-existent. Or it used to exist for a long time out there, but gradually it phased out until now, it is not there. It's not … nowhere. I mean, maybe if you go underground … maybe, but uh …. A guy who's playing with me in town now, Willie Jones the Third, uh good example. He escaped just in time from Los Angeles. And uh, he's become, uh, miraculously a, adept to, uh, my repertoire and quite a few others, including the late Hank Jones. McCoy, he plays with everybody. He's phenomenal and very friendly, the most respectful guy you ever want to meet. He must be, uh, maybe he's approaching forty now. And uh, he recently got married and uh, he's always been one …. I've known him before when he was in Los Angeles. He hadn't developed yet. It was when he got with Roy Hargrove and I heard him a few years later, I said, "My God, is that the same guy?" Put on my binoculars to see [chuckles] to see what … [inaudible] able to see him. He came up through Billy Higgins … sort of. Billy Higgins had a, uh, place out there, The World Stage, where he gathered and encouraged the young musicians includin' Willie. But uh, now how far did I digress that time?

Brower: I don't know.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: We're pretty far down there with you. I think you're testing me. [laughter from everyone]

Walton: No, no! [laughter]

Brower: Can he follow this one? Is he lost yet?

Walton: No, no. [laughter] I'm the one that's lost. [laughter] But uh, so, uh, uh, Los Angeles, I can remember having a performance at a hotel named the Bel Age. It's right on Sunset. Very, oh man, five-star hotel. And they had a jazz room. So I was in there. So I decide to hire Willie. This goes back to the '80s. Uh, I lived in Los Angeles from '88 to 2000, so it was between there sometime, somewhere. And uh, so we were about … it's time to, for the downbeat and no Willie, you know. So [laughs] and the bass player was getting poised, you know, and so here comes Willie and his father with his drums, you know, no cases, on one of these things that you carry luggage on.

Brower: A dolly?

Walton: Yeah, with the wheels. His father's with him … total support. And I like to tease Willie. I said, "Well, I saw him comin' so I counted off – one, two, one, two – and by the time I got to four, Willie was set up. [laughs]

Brower: Ready to swing.

Walton: [continues laughing] Ready to go. We laugh about that to this day as a great moment. And uh, Willie's an incredible gentleman as well as a musician. Outstanding musician. He's right in there. Now he's producing. He decided to, you know, well, 'cause this is not the era, the era of, uh, label signing or instrumental players is fast fading. Either you do it … you do it yourself, you know. I, uh, I'm, uh …

Brower: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Walton: Oh, it works both ways because uh, uh, if you, uh, uh, can, uh, get the finances to uh go into the studio and do a session, you can sell it online. Better than waitin' on somebody to distribute it into a store.

Brower: But you don't have the almighty producer, you know, directing, telling you what to do, 'cause …

Walton: [laughs] Now I know you're joking. [laughs] Ahmad Jamal says a producer's job is just to go get coffee. But I hope he doesn't mind me quoting him because it's a hearsay. I didn't hear him say it, so don't let that out, please. [laughs]

Brower: [inaudible – overlapping voices]

Walton: No, but I, I've …

Brower: What's your opinion on the subject?

Walton: A producer?

Brower: What's your opinion on the subject?

Walton: I like to produce, uh, myself. You see a lot of my uh, CDs or whatever produced, uh, by Cedar Walton. And in my case with the HighNote Records, that's just in name only. There's not another, uh, not another level of anything… but nobody knows better than you what you want with your music, you know. We have uh, we don't have the producer in the producer sense like uh … what years were these?

Brower: [inaudible - overlapping voices]

Walton: In the '70s.

Brower: Like Orrin Keepnews.

Walton: Yeah, right. Yeah, right. I uh, I, I, was …

Brower: Teo Macero.

Walton: Right. I was on, I was on sessions with each of these people, and they just ask you, "You wanna do another one?" [laughs] Stuff like that, as I recall, you know.

Brower: They didn't hear, they didn't hear when you played a bad note and say, "Go back and do it?"

Walton: No, most of the engineers would, would, would tell them that and then they would make believe they'd thought of it – in my opinion. I don't want to give the impression that I have a bad uh, uh [laughs] taste for uh …

Brower: We're just tryin' get the record straight here.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: We wanna get the record straight.

Walton: Yeah, okay, well, you're certainly gettin' it straight. Uh, but uh, see, in the days of Columbia Records which was – I'm tryin' to calculate – I think it was probably the '70s.

Brower: Dr. Butler and all of that.

Walton: Huh?

Brower: George Butler and all …

Walton: Exactly. George signed me and I was able to do some, uh … I was still proud of uh … and he finally, somebody told me they're CDs now. And uh, I did one named *Animation* and I did one named *Soundscapes*, and uh …

Brower: Since we're, we're, we're, you know, digress to that point, you want to talk about those recordings?

Walton: [pause] I guess so, uh …

Brower: Let me see if I can …

Walton: There's one. Yeah. That's the first one: *Animation*. And uh …

Brower: and here's...

Walton: Oh, yeah!

Brower: Now we gonna talk, we gonna get back to New Orleans, which is where we digressed.

Walton: [laughs] Is that where we started?

Brower: Yeah, we went through L.A., we ended up over here.

Walton: Produced by George Butler and Cedar Walton. You see that? George was out takin' a ride probably in one of his car collections. Same thing on this one, yeah. So uh, I, oh man, when I, when I realized uh, the, uh, uh … uh, the, the, the, uh, uh advantage you had by producing and uh, uh orchestrating and doing everything, uh, and how much it paid during these days, I said, "My God, I can't even, again I couldn't tell my fellow musicians what I was doing, financial-wise. It was pretty lucrative, you know, to do these uh, these two especially. These are the only two I did, but I also produced uh, two for Bobby Hutcherson. I was just sittin' in George's office one day and I said, uh, "Well, maybe I could do those." We, we were trying to figure out, for some reason, uh, it came up that, uh, Bobby was about to do some things, you know, and, uh, for that label. So I sort of volunteered. That's how I remembered because I knew how much it paid. [laughs] And Bobby was, of course, next to Milt Jackson, for me the greatest vibist, you know, in the music. So, Bobby agreed and uh, we got together and came out with some pretty good products. One of them was named *Highway One* and the other one had the word "love" in it, but I can't remember the name of it. But uh, George was, you know, the uh, uh … What's the producer above the producer? Executive producer. And I was the producer on those. You get uh, uh, what they call a project number. We *got* … I'm speaking in past tense in those days, and you go up to Hertz. Of course with Bobby I had to go out to the West Coast. He was a resident of the Bay Area. So uh, you know, you have an air ticket, you have to rent a car, your hotel, everything, you just give the project number and Columbia pays it. I said, "My God, I can't tell nobody about this." [laughs] I mean, it gave you that feeling of uh, you know, just exclusivity and secret mission, so to speak.

Brower: What was your thinking musically on these projects?

Walton: Uh, well, uh, tryin' to, uh, formulate … Well I, what I, what I actually, what I did was uh, uh, applied in a musical way with two tracks from this first. You know, I made two, two tracks of what I planned to do with the, a lot of the same musicians that ended up being on it. And uh, gave it to, let's see, Herb Alpert and uh, a few people. George Butler liked it. He said, "Let's get him now." And so …

Brower: So you were shoppin'.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Shoppin' some ideas.

Walton: Exactly. That's, that uh, that's how …

Brower: And if you could, if you could, um, summarize, what would the idea that you were shopping? What were you after musically? Or …

Walton: Well, I, I …

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] yourself [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Walton: Well, first of all, uh, I didn't have to be *after* myself. I was after … uh, there's no way I could escape uh, all these, uh, all these compositions, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, have a good deal of my, uh, style in them. I mean, they're, they're, how could it not? It's me doing it, you know. So I was tryin' to attract, uh, um, quote-unquote a larger audience than uh, the uh, quintet, uh, quartet, uh, uh, format, and uh, with uh, keyboards, [chuckles] electric bass, and one of these things I had not one but two drummers on it, and percussion, and just a larger scope with uh … These became uh, I discovered the term "turntable hits." The company was proud to hear 'em when they rode in their uh – I mean the company, meaning, you know, the people upstairs – when they were riding in their limos, they loved to hear these DJs across the country like to work them in their uh, sequence, uh, I found out. So uh, um, I digress again. But that was what I, what I, what I did was practically applied, shopped and got signed. And it ended up to be two and then, of course, with the other uh, Bobby Hutcherson products, it ended up to be four.

Brower: Now, is …

Walton: While I was in the, well, in it with Bobby Hutcherson, I was in the booth, not playing. I was watching George Cables play.

Brower: Uh …

Walton: And, uh, here.

Brower: Did you work with Bob or did you do more than give him a cup of coffee?

Walton: Uh, oh yeah. Yeah, 'cause I had another producer do that. [everyone laughs] Yeah, yeah. [inaudible-overlapping voices] I won't call any names 'cause he would probably [others laugh] either come after me with a, uh, you know, a buzz saw, I mean a chain saw. So uh, I won't name him. But uh, if he sees this, he'll know who I'm talkin' about, so … I'm in trouble. But uh yeah, so uh, no, we uh …

Brower: He got paid and all's forgiven.

Walton: [laughs] How 'bout that. It was a very interesting, uh, and the, my comprehension, you know, was, was, even surprised me. But I mean the reason I, uh, uh, that initiated my surprise was how surprised my assistant producer was of how I comprehended how to uh, you know, after we did the uh basic tracks, uh, add, you know, what we wanted to add to it, you know, which in one case was a …Oh, man, part of a large ensemble, you know – trombone section, saxophone section, etc., trumpet, a bass section to add, so you … They sit in there in the booth, uh, they sit in the studio with headsets on, with what we had done. And I orchestrated around that. So that was just, oh man, a big uh, man, a win-win situation for me. It was just outstanding. And I didn't have to worry about, you know, they were getting' paid every musician. It was just a great memory. It is, it still remains a great memory, me doin' that.

Brower: Do you care to talk about the dollars and cents of it? I mean, you said, "Well, I didn't tell 'em." What, you know …

Walton: Well, how much was I makin'? [laughs]

Brower: Yes, I mean, 'cause this gets, this gets to the, it speaks to the economics of the business at that time, and I want to follow this line of thought.

Walton: Okay. Uh, for that period in, in, in, uh my life, uh, which was in the '70s – '70s slash '80s. Yeah, uh … So you got, it encompasses the '70s and the '80s, uh …. Well, let's see here; it might say so on here. But these amounts that I'm about to reveal [laughs] were uh, flat pay was $7,500 just, without even going in the studio. Every uh, arrangement was $1,500. I found that out, I said, "What?!" So my pen got … I would write, I would, [general laughter] my pen got busy. [laughs] So I guess uh, I'm a confessed um … What do you call all those people who love money? A money-lover? No, no. [laughs] You know what I mean, uh, this kind of society.

Brower: Capitalist?

Walton: Capitalist. I'm a self-confessed capitalist. At least I was then. So uh, now I've moved on, you know. [laughs] But we're not talkin' about now; we're talkin' about then.

Brower: So you are, are you a Democratic Socialist now?

Walton: I don't know what I am. [Wait?] … [laughs] Well yeah, uh, a Dem…Democratic Socialist, yeah. [laughs]

Brower: So a project could be fifteen to twenty thousand dollars.

Walton: Uh, I guess if you do the amount loosely, yeah.

Brower: I know you did more precisely.

Walton: No, I didn't, I didn't even do anything, just, just you know, have a mail box. [laughs] But uh, yeah, but that was pretty good [inaudible]. Let me see, that's eight songs on here, only

one of 'em not mine. I uh, uh, let the bass player, the bass player had a pretty good tune, but I orchestrated it so that was … so if you … Eight times 1,500. Hm.

Brower: Twelve.

Walton: Huh?

Brower: That'd be twelve.

Walton: Okay, twelve and then the seventy-five for flat rate, uh…

Brower: Gets you to nineteen.

Walton: Yeah. Let me see, I can't think of anything else. Well, of course, the uh, well, if you wanna go into the box of uh, Harry Fox, later on, continuously, you see … wherever it's played on the radio, uh, television. Uh, I'll give you an example.

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Yeah, it, it adds up even, you know, it's uh, perpetual. I think that's the word. In pa, pa, perpetuity.

Brower: Perpetuity.

Walton: Yeah. [laughs] So uh, so you got two of them, man, that's not bad. Even Freddie Hubbard would come in and do a guest solo on one of these …

Brower: You said that you couldn't, you didn't talk to the musicians about the dollars and cents but clearly they, they were aware of it; didn't they begin to perceive you differently or treat you differently?

Walton: Uh …

Brower: … as you began to do other things.

Walton: Uh, uh. No, no, no, no, they did not, they did … See, they were single minded [inaudible], they didn't even notice. I don't think. They didn't act like they did. I was still playin' my normal things, uh, in person. I wasn't playing this. In fact, uh, I did something on the RCA before these that Donald Byrd and uh, Bill Cosby came out to a, The Lighthouse which is in Los Angeles, and they said, "We just came out here to see did you do what you did on that record out here with these four guys." You know, they were teasing me because I had all kinda, uh, added

instruments and things. Frank Foster did a long solo and, and uh, we just had George Coleman, Billy Higgins and Sam Jones.

Brower: Just George Coleman.

Walton: [laughs] Yeah.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices/laughter] [Brower mimics Coleman sounds?]

Walton: Compared to the amount of people on what they had heard, you know. They wouldn't leave me alone. [Just said?], "When, when is the orchestra coming out?" [laughs] I said, "Man, leave me alone, I'm trying to make a living here. I'm just trying to make a buck." So, there were some great memories. I, I'm glad you uh, only you, Mr. Brower, could have brought that out to, uh, for all the public, uh, internationally to perceive, if they go to the Smithsonian. You don't do mail-outs, do you? [laughs]

Brower: It goes out as "hidden in plain sight."

Walton: Oh yeah, all right, good.

Brower: You know what I mean.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: You gotta wanna know it.

Walton: Yeah, okay, all right.

Brower: Um, just to go back to New Orleans, you mentioned Ellis; did you, you came into Dillard together, did you develop a relationship?

Walton: Yeah. As much as you …

Brower: Was he playing saxophone or piano?

Walton: He was playing … uh, bass. I mean, uh, in fact, uh, which brings to mind, most of the musicians I've met when I went to New Orleans played more than one instrument. More than two. I said, "My God, [how they do that?]," you know, to myself. I didn't know you could do that, I mean, uh, I had studied bass in, in college but I mean, I would never try to play a gig. I couldn't last, probably, with the blisters. But uh, but these, these, these guys were playing more than just one, one instrument, you know like uh, enough to make a gig. I played a gig at some high school with Harold Battiste on the, whatever he was playin' that night, or one of the readers, and Ellis on bass and me on piano. That was my one outing in uh, New Orleans.

Brower: Did you meet James Bly? Did you ever hear about him down there?

Walton: Uh, I met him later. He wasn't around uh, during … 'cause I just stayed there one semester, and he might, I might have preceded him. I mean, yeah.

Brower: Or Nat Perrilliat?

Walton: No, I, I, know the names but I got there and left before I met 'em. Yeah.

Brower: So, take us to Denver. Why did you leave, why'd you go?

Walton: We were on vacation when my parents headed for California by car, and we stopped off in Denver and somehow …

Brower: Had you decided to leave New Orleans, why, why did you not go back to Dillard? Before we decide why you …

Walton: Yeah, that's a good, that's a good question. I do not know, uh, I mean I don't know how to uh, articulate why I didn't. I guess I wanted to uh, uh, maybe, uh integrate. Maybe I thought that was important. I don't know. I'm just tryin' to think of why now. But that was certainly integrated in Colorado, you know, so …

Brower: Before that …

Walton: Oh.

Brower: Um, I was asking you a question about, about um, your perception in the role of race in your life in Dallas, and you said it wasn't a factor.

Walton: Not at my age. No, I got through it …

Brower: You had no sense of doubt, being segregated?

Walton: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. I just took it in stride, uh, if that's possible for ten – eight, nine, ten year-old – 'cause uh, on the uh, tram, uh, uh, on the bus, there was a sign that fitted into a slot, uh, about this big, uh, about the size of a brick [chuckles], but uh, thin, you know, tin, maybe tin in its, you know, the way, uh, it would, uh, be materials it was made out of, but it had a slot and each seat had a slot for it to fit in. And uh, on one side of the sign said For Colored and the other side said For White. So we just didn't sit above that sign. We could adjust it.

Brower: It depended on who's on the bus, depending how far back in the bus the, the slot was.

Walton: Exactly.

Brower: [inaudible].

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: So …

Walton: I just took that in stride. My mother didn't seem to mind. She wouldn't have because uh, one aspect I remember hearing her talk about was when she went to buy clothing, she couldn't use the fitting rooms in Dallas. She had to go over to Fort Worth where they would let people of color uh, use the fitting rooms. And to this day, as I'm thinking about it, I think that's kinda weird. [chuckles] I mean …

Brower: Dallas, one rule; Fort Worth, another.

Walton: Thirty miles away.

Brower: So you get a sense of the capriciousness, the arbitrariness of this system.

Walton: Yeah. I'd have to go to Webster's for those, but uh …

Brower: No you don't. [everyone laughs] You know exactly what I'm talkin' about. … with your prodigious self …precocious and prodigious self [laughter]

Walton: I just, some of those words you come out with, Mr. Brower, you know, a little over my head. I don't mind admitting that.

Brower: It's not over your head.

Walton: [laughs] But uh, yeah, that was one of the factors uh, in coming up. My father always, he never, he never used Black. He, he, he didn't, uh, he, he never did, he didn't outlive, uh, the word Negro. He lived 'til 83 so he, he, uh, succumbed to, uh, Alzheimer's. A real sad thing to see because I knew, he always remembered Ruth, you know, my mother, her name, and I knew eventually I, uh, unconsciously, somewhere in me knew that one day he wasn't gonna know me. And one day he said, "Yes, Ruth is here." Ruth was there?! And I just fell over there. It's, it's almost comical because uh, uh, I just didn't know him like that, you know? And I can't remember what succeeded that but it was just very sad to see him, a man, a workaholic like he was. He uh, not only was he this county agent I told you about and he was a member of the Negro Chamber of Commerce, he also sold chickens. [laughs] You'd see, I mean, you never seen so many features in you life, which reminds me of Art Blakey's excuse for being late for work. But that's another story. You'd see people in there with, you know, wringing, wringing uh …

Brower: We'd do that on Sunday after church. Mother would bring that chicken [inaudible], walk to a chick and run around, you know, and deep-feather it.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: We did chicken that day.

Walton: Right. Wow. Well, if you can imagine a whole room full of these, with coops and feathers everywhere … [laughs]

Brower: [laughs] I can't imagine that.

Walton: No. [everyone laughs] This happened, this is when my …

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices/laughter] … [chicken shit?] …

Walton: They didn't have time to shit, the way these guys were wringin', man. He had a team and so he would sell 'em, I guess they would pick 'em out … seems like hot water was a good way to get the, loosen up the feathers, I think. I never did it personally, but uh … I, was, I never saw so many feathers in my life. [laughs]

Brower: Do you like chicken?

Walton: [laughs] Yeah. Milt Jackson used to tease me and never let me live that down. "Well, Walton, we know what you want; you don't even have to order." [laughs] Chicken. But uh, um, so, uh, uh that was the way, uh, my father … and he used to let me uh, uh, demanded that I would sell eggs, you know, to our neighbors, you know. "Mrs. Johnson or … How many do you want?" You know, 'cause they would buy from me 'cause they were friends of my [family?]. But I had to carry 'em to them, and so I had one or two casualties of uh, breakage. And he wanted me to learn how to make change, you know, so that was his way of doin' that – Cedar, Sr. That was his uh, uh, more or less concept of how to raise a kid.

Brower: Was he severe?

Walton: Naw, I wouldn't say severe, but, uh, he had that air about him that you didn't want to cross him.

Brower: Uh-Hm.

Walton: One instance was uh, I borrowed the car. He had a meeting, at say three, so he had to leave our residence at, at least 2:30, and I rolled up at 3:01, up into the yard, and he's waiting. So I said, "You're a dead duck," I said to myself. [laughs] He and my mother both, I guess she was there to cushion the blows, but he didn't have time to deal with me, he had to get to that meeting, so …. So that wait, for him to come back home was a uh, what do you call it? It was a long period of time. Uh, uh, an era, huh?

Male voice: I think he hit it.

Male Voice: An eternity.

Walton: Yeah, eternity, that's what I was lookin' for. And so uh, he, uh, he took care of me.

Brower: He's got a lot of big words, too.

Walton: He uh … yeah. [laughs] He disciplined me uh, properly, I think. You know, with a strap, you know, [inaudible] [do this?].

Brower: Uh-huh.

Walton: Whipping is a whipping. Now they call it child abuse, I believe. But uh, and that's what it was, too. [laughs] I don't know, he, uh, he wasn't kiddin'. So he didn't do, when he was gonna discipline you, you know, you know it was gonna be serious. You let mom take care of the light stuff. That, that was about the biggest one I did. Oh yeah, except for one other instance when uh, me and my little gang tipped into next door, the Reverend Chambers' residence. They had uh, some hell of a peaches, you know.

Brower: [chuckles]

Walton: So we carved a hole in the fence and went over and got our peaches. And Madame Chambers was layin' for us, right at the door. "I see you, I see you, all of you." That was another time when he disciplined me. There were only two times I violated his, you know, his authority. So uh, so where are we now? In Dallas or family or racial? Yeah, it's all, all, all of it self-contained.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: There was a gentleman around the corner named uh, last name was Lewis who brought in uh, uh, the artists, you know. I mean, he was a promoter. So there was inevitably a party in his yard for these people who came to Dallas to perform, and I would, uh, you know, go next door and see who it was, you know, any person of interest. A lot of times uh, Rhythm & Blues artists and my interest was minimal.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: But uh, people like Lena Horne or Billy Eckstine, Marian Anderson, were hosted to a, shall we say, a, a reception at the uh, the Hill's residence which was two doors down, a little nearer to me than this person I was telling you about that did booking. And at a given moment, they would, they would call me and say, "Okay Billy, you can come now," and I'd go with my autograph book. And they'd say, …

Brower: They called you …

Walton: …"Ah, isn't he cute," you know. "Ah, he's such a doll." Oh man, I went crazy. I had a great autograph book. I can't find it now though. Makes me want to cry, you know. But not on camera, on camera … I won't do that. But uh, yeah, that was, so that would give you an idea of how we uh, existed in the two-way rules of segregation.

Brower: How strong was the Blues culture of Dallas?

Walton: Very, um, very strong, as I recall. I was too young to uh, absorb a lot of it, though. I hadn't gotten to the Blues [inaudible] they didn't have the Blues yet. [laughs] [roaring noise, unidentified] Whoa. I didn't know, but seriously, no I didn't know … Yeah, I'm sure it was. I saw posters of everybody who came to town which had to include B.B. King and uh, everybody, but I didn't go. I was too young.

Brower: You, and earlier, you mentioned Henderson and you mentioned Fathead, and you talked about James Clay, but uh, was that, was that a part of your uh, this tenor saxophones, was that a big thing there for you or was that something that just sort of a term that people throw around [inaudible-overlapping voices]?

Walton: Yeah, that term came later, I think, the Texas Tunes. At that time, I didn't hear a reference at that time, because I was still in my teens, and I didn't, these catch phrases hadn't reached me yet.

Brower: Okay, so, you were with your parents in the car, in some kinda way, you're goin' to California. Get us to Denver.

Walton: And then we, we stopped off in Denver. It was quite a long drive from Texas. We stopped off in, uh, I guess somebody suggested uh, that I was, uh, college-student age, and uh, referred us to, to, to the school out there. And we went and it was brand new. I think that attracted, uh, the young Walton, young Cedar. [chuckles] And they claimed they had co-ed dormitories, which uh, I said, "Wait a minute now, come on; this can't be." So what it was really, and they had apartment style uh, uh, uh quarters that the guys stayed in and then they had apartment-style quarters for the girls. So in my mind, that's, I saw, I thought all the boys and girls would be together. [chuckles] That's how dumb I was. And uh, I haven't gotten that smart yet, but still I, I'm smart enough to know that that couldn't have been. It was heavily monitored and uh, everything. But it was new. All the structures were new. And there was some great teachers there, too. And uh, Reed Music School I thought, I think that's true, still uh, uh believe that uh, my tenure there, my, my time there was uh, very valuable to, to my, uh, especially orchestration skills because we were obliged to play every instrument, you know, just, even if we did … of course, uh, everybody played instruments that they didn't play normally, but you get a feeling for it after a week or two, uh, you know, uh, so it gave you a, a, a chance to uh, see what that instrument saw on the written page. So, that was good. And you could get a chance to feel what they felt as they were playing these notes, too. But uh, you know, the only thing was uh, you had

to be a very patient instructor to listen to this … 'cause we were all on the wrong instrument. But that's how they decided, that's the way they taught us how the trombone worked, the trumpet, and clarinet, the sax, everything. I'm not sure we had violin but we had flutes and we had oboes, and uh, played all of 'em. And I remember that was a good, I still think that's a great way to familiarize a person with a certain instrument.

Brower: Was there a specific jazz instruction, uh, or …

Walton: No.

Brower: … persons on the faculty that …

Walton: Yeah, they played at night at nightclubs, but they didn't bring it into the classroom.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: I initiated with uh me and a bunch of pals, you know, pals in the music department, little arrangements, then we had so much fun. But it was also curriculum.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: So uh, no, it hadn't, this uh this kind of curriculum had not started yet and this is in the '50s now.

Brower: Now were there any … You said you initiated and you wrote some things. Are there any things that later became a part of your, of your original repertoire that have their origin in your time there?

Walton: Not one. No. Just a school issue, a school experiment at that time. I didn't uh, I didn't have any plans for it. I mean, you know, I didn't know how to, anything about how the business worked. I just … but I wanted to experience that on campus. So did they.

Brower: And how long did you stay there? Did you complete your …

Walton: I stayed there about two or three years. And my problem became that uh, I accepted after-hours gigs, you know. I'd go to bed and then get up and go to these after-hours gigs at say, midnight, and stayed 'til sunup. And then uh, for some, uh, I have to say stupid reasons, scheduled a 9, 10 o'clock class. There's no way I could make that, and if I did make it, I would sleep.

Brower: So take us into that world, that after-hours world that you were playing in.

Walton: Ah, yeah, there was a place, uh, uh, the name of the place was Lil's and it was a bona fide after-hours place, so if an Illinois Jacquet band came and played in Denver, had a bite to eat, you could go there and eat, and uh, they would put the liquor in the, say coffee cups, you know. They might even put a little coffee in there. And, but, the bulk of it was cognac or whatever the

people uh, they wanted it uh, drank. And I met uh, literally hundreds of musicians who passed through there, including John Coltrane or uh, Richard Powell, uh, Bud Powell's little brother … They were playing with uh, uh, Johnny Hodges, and uh, oh man, Ellington or people uh, loads of musicians would come to this place 'cause this was the hang, you know. Charlie Parker even came through there and sat in. He, he was a guy who loved to sit in, more than uh …

Brower: Did you sit in? Did you play with him?

Walton: Yeah. He played with, we played … you know, the band I was in uh, he came up and, "Can I sit in with you fellows?" It was very simple.

Brower: So you got to talk about that.

Walton: Well, that's …

Brower: Not [just?] to mention but just …

Walton: Yeah, that's about it. When I was at the piano, you know, was a …

Brower: Do you remember what you …

Walton: I had been to the concert where he played, you know, which uh, a tour which featured Stan Kenton's Orchestra, special guest, Dizzy Gillespie. Charlie Parker, Frank Rosolino, Erroll Garner played a set, and it was a very exciting concert. And then uh, oh man, about sixty percent of those people came to the club, includin' Charlie Parker. I don't think Dizzy came, but uh, Charlie did. And uh, he played a couple of tunes and then he proceeded to doze off, you know. He was, asked for a chair. It was a rather high stage and so uh, it was uh …

Brower: Do you remember what you played?

Walton: Uh, *Dancing on the Ceiling*. Uh, I remember we played things in C which puts it in uh, A-natural for, for alto, and another one uh, in C, but I can't remember exactly what it was. Diane Reeves is, is, is a bit of a trivia on that. Dianne Reeves uncle, Charlie Burrell, was the bassist in that group, and he also played with the Denver Symphony. He played very good jazz bass. He still does, too. I mean, this amazing coincidence, I think, 'cause when I met uh, Dianne, she told me that she was the niece of Charlie Burrell. I said, "Well, no kiddin'?" I said, "Please give him my regards." So those are the things that …

Brower: What was it, stay with Bird further, what impression did his playing have on you?

Walton: Oh, it was just a great … being in the presence of a great … you would hear him practicing his, in the back, his …

Brower: I'm talkin' 'bout Bird.

Walton: Oh, Bird. [laughs] Uh, he ...

Brower: He can come too...

Walton: No, no, Bird was just a little bit slow that night. Uh, uh, I think he'd consumed a little bit too much scotch and so, it's not … I don't enjoy talkin' about anything except the fact that he set in, and the guy taped it, and I wanted to hear that but he erased it. So I was goin' after him with a chain saw. I said, "Man, how could you erase that?" So it wasn't uh, the true Charlie Parker, uh, since you drew it out of me, Mr. Brower. I didn't want to talk, you know, negatively …

Brower: What year was that at the time?

Walton: Oh, it was, all those years was the '50s.

Brower: 50 …?

Walton: Oh man, uh …

Brower: I mean, would it be music...near the end so to speak of Parker… would have to be.

Walton: [pause] It was between '52 and '55 'cause I came to New York in '55. So it was between those two years.

Brower: Any other … were there any musicians in, that you were associated with during your time in Denver that influenced you?

Walton: Uh …

Brower: Or taught you anything, or that you shedded with with when you … or that you had particular strong relationships with?

Walton: Uh…. Not really. Uh, they would hire me … uh, uh, there's one name, Shelly Rim [?]. There's another name, Bob Gray, a guitarist. They would hire me to play with 'em and so uh, but I was pretty much on their level by then, you know. So uh, there wasn't a lot to be learned except the, the time on the bandstand, the time at the piano, and uh, tryin' to, you know, uh represent myself in a good way. I met Frank Foster, he came through. And joined Basie, sought us out and came and sat in. But by this time, I was playin' at another joint, so …. But anyway, you would meet people who would seek you out and if they were interested enough, and uh, play.

Brower: Would you con… would you consider yourself to have been like a first-call piano player in Denver at the time?

Walton: Not necessarily, no. I just uh, 'cause the music, uh, world, community uh, didn't have enough people in it to have a first-call. [chuckles] You know, it was small. Very small. Then they had a club named the Rossonian which was on the famous Denver, part of Denver named Five Points, and people like Oscar Peterson, etc. played there, and uh, I didn't go in there too much 'cause it was a little deep for my pockets, you know. And so … I went in there a couple of times, though. In fact, the brother of uh, Fletcher Henderson, his name was uh, oh man, uh …

Brower: Horace.

Walton: Horace. Yeah, Horace Henderson came through there and did a residency at the, at this club, and I used to be there as many times as I, as time was allowed. Go there and watch them rehearse. And sure enough, one time he either got ill or had to go to a funeral or something, and they had me come and sit in. That was a big thrill because … And then I would watch him write music. He wrote music so fast and handed it out to the guys, I said, "Wow." That shows you that that can be done, you know. Showed me. I didn't know that was possible to be done that, that fast. So that was quite an education for me. And then I got to play while, you know, he was off two or three nights. A guy named Eddie Calhoun was on bass, who ended up playing with Erroll Garner much, much later. And uh, uh, the great Gail Brockman, he was known as Chicago's famous, Chicago's uh, original uh, big-time trumpet player, was in the band, too. I mean, but these names uh … The other names escape me.

Brower: You mentioned that Coltrane was one of the people you met there

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Was that just in passing …

Walton: Yeah, very, very brief, yeah. Uh, I just went over to the table and uh, uh, you know, I had remembered his name of being on a Dizzy Gillespie record with a, people uh, names like Kansas Fields [laughs] and then John Coltrane. I started being suspicious, were these stage names or what? But they ended up to be real. But uh, I got friendly, I bonded with uh, Richie Powell, you know, the young brother of uh, Bud. And we stayed up almost all night. It was already late.[laughs] But after, he was able to uh, impart some things that were very valuable to me about his association with Johnny Hodges, traveling around the country. Once in a while Johnny would, at least two or three times, left Duke Ellington and had his own band, and then he would return to Ellington. So, that was one of those times. So uh, there was one good thing about being in Denver: in my case, I was playing and I had access to all these musicians that would come through, and uh, want to be some place, you know, before they went, I guess, to sleep. So um … That's how it was in the early '50s. And then of course I uh, in '55 me and a friend of mine drove uh, to New York from Denver, which is a long drive. Impossible to do today. I mean uh, gas-wise, if only gas-wise, you know. We only had about $70, $75 each, and for us to make it in Manhattan with that budget is hard to imagine.

Brower: What was gas a gallon, do you know?

Walton: No, I don't remember.

Brower: Fifteen, twenty cents or something?

Walton: Probably. It would, those, with your mathematical wizardry, I'm sure you anticipated. But yeah, if you only got $70 a piece, it's gotta be almost a penny a gallon. [laughs] Right?

Brower: I [think?] so.

Walton: Yeah, I see your mind, what are you tryin' to add it up. [laughs] But no, we, we somehow we ended up in Manhattan, and I'd never heard of you can't park on this side of the … you can't, no parking. Oh, everywhere I worked, man …. And all these fumes from uh, the uh, trucks in Manhattan, you know. And me with my rather delicate system, I broke out in hives, you know, from these fumes. Now this is a self-diagnosis, but it's got to be true. What else could make you break out like that? The frustration of not being able to park? I ended up parking in the Bronx.

Brower: [laughs]

Walton: That's how far away I had to go. Take a subway back 'cause …

Brower: How did you decide to drive? What was the impetus?

Walton: Oh, meeting all these people uh, that passed through where I was playin' in Denver.

Brower: You just got the bug.

Walton: Well, they said, "You should come to New York," you know, if …

Brower: They were encouraging you.

Walton: Yeah, exactly, yeah. They said, "You gotta come to New York." This … You got to uh … tryin' to remember a few others. Uh, Jerome Richardson, I remember, came through there and uh, it was a very long list of people I met and uh, whose names, names escape me. A complete list of names escape me, but they were all very encouraging. They all mentioned that New York was the place. And I, I still agree because it's become the cultural – probably was then, too – the cultural center of, of the universe. Yeah. And so uh, I had been, let me see now … [mumbles under his breath]. I'd been when I was thirteen. My mother Ruth took me there 'cause she had a friend in Rochester and we had some friends in Brooklyn from Texas. So we went by train from Dallas and then we changed trains in St. Louis, and all of a sudden the train became uh, non-segregated. I said … that, that had a big impact on me. I never sat in a place where you could sit anywhere, like a train car. And that … There was a couple sittin' in front of me and my mother that had the tiniest baby I ever seen. They let my mother hold it, you know, and just … I

remember these things. Then when we got to uh, St. Louis to change trains, we had a few hours. We had some friends there we went to see, and got back on the train and ended up in …Rochester was our first stop. Then, next stop uh, which incidentally uh, uh, those people in Rochester had a great record collection, you know. And I was in love with records, man, you know, like *Early Autumn* and all these things that people had. And probably a lot of other things, but this uh, *Summer Sequence* was something that uh, Ralph Burns had written for Woody Herman. I remember listenin' to that at these people's house. And then I went to the golf course with the husband, and it was the first time I tried to play golf. But the ball would not go where I wanted it to go. I wanted it to go there, it went there. And uh, this guy said … he saw some people walking across where we were playing and he said, "Four!" and he put an expletive in there after it, you know. And he was a man of color and I said, "Wow, they can do this here?" to myself. I made a mental note of that. And then when I got down to Brooklyn, on the way to uh, Rochester to …

Brower: Let me, let me ask you, was the expletive multi-syllabic?

Walton: [pause] Three syllables, yeah.

Brower: Three syllables.

Walton: Yeah. Started with a G. [everyone laughs] So, uh, now I [arrive?] …

Brower: Now he got into the picture, too.

Walton: Huh? He got into the picture?

Brower: Yeah.

Walton: Well, you got, you had, my overall visit to the North from uh …

Brower: I mean, you know, the big G.

Walton: [pause] Yeah. [laughs] Yeah, the big G. On that level, yeah. [laughs] Doing something, uh, coming out a person's mouth, uh, you know, had some people that I didn't, had never seen anybody of color do. Uh, this is uh, '47. This is forty …

Brower: You could get lynched for that.

Walton: Uh, back where I'd come from, you know, but not there. And so, I arrived from Rochester down into New York, which was, which was Grand Central, and I'd never heard these words: Poughkeepsie, Utica, Schenectady. I say, "Wow, what the hell?" [laughs] Heeeeee! [laughs] [inaudible] never heard these words before. My geography, evidently, was not my

strong point. But uh, probably not that many people know these words, man, uh, uh, you know, from wherever I came up. Why, why would they need to know these words? Unless they uh, you know, had the foresight like Ruth did to take me to them. But I wanted to see Jackie Robinson. That was, that was my aim to, to, when I got into Brooklyn. Uh, Ebbets Field was there and that's what I did. My mother went up to the Apollo to hear Billie Holiday sing with Count Basie. Now I wish I'd gone with her, but … I was happy to see Jackie slide into second. The guy said, "You're out!" He was tryin' to steal second and he got this close to the umpire, man. They argued for at least five minutes and again I was in awe. I said, "My God, they can do that here?" I'm gonna move here. So I mean it's uh, comical in a sense, you know.

Brower: You know the significance of Jackie Robinson, I don't think people can, can, can, you know possibly estimate … I know from my father, that was the penultimate …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … personality of the time.

Walton: Yeah. He was an incredible player.

Brower: That was, I mean, we think about all, all the sports you think about now and all the stars you think about then, it was all about professional baseball. It was …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … nothing that rivaled professional baseball …

Walton: True.

Brower: And there was no barrier, um …

Walton: Bigger.

Brower: … bigger …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … than to, you know, play on that field.

Walton: Uh-hm. That's right.

Brower: And uh, a lot of people really … amazing symbol …

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: what they symbol… to us. [pause] Let's take, take a moment.

Walton: Yeah, a moment, man, I'm starvin'. No, I'm not starvin', I just had breakfast. [laughter]

Brower: You ain't Marvin, though.

Walton: Huh? I'm …

Brower: Starvin'. You're Starvin' Marvin.

Walton: [laughs] Starvin' Marvin. So uh, let me see, we got time to go to uh, I been hearing about a place named uh, uh … God … so … Sweet … Hmm Hm-Hm … Sweet …

Brower: Georgia Brown?

Walton: No. [laughs] Sweet Rice? Uh, something Rice.

Male Voice: Something that's in walking … close …

Walton: Yes, it's, it's, it's I know how to get there.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: But uh …

Male Voice: Would you like to eat now?

Kimery: Would you like to eat now?

----continues with non-interview discussion re temperature of room and places to lunch, etc-----

Walton: Yeah, uh …

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] break to eat?

Walton: Yeah, it's so hot in here. [inaudible-overlapping voices discussing the heat]

Female Voice: We want to check that one photo of you, however.

Walton: Okay. [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Male Voice: … see can I get this heat down.

Female Voice: Okay. Yeah, it's very warm.

Male Voice: It's 82, no wonder.

Male Voice: It's like we have it on a, a timer or something 'cause it was getting cooler and now it's getting hotter again.

Male Voice: [inaudible]

Male Voice: Probably tomorrow won't be able to do 'cause of, Cedar has to get back to, to New York. So I guess whatever we capture today is pretty much it. So based upon that [inaudible-overlapping voices-people (including Cedar) in background discussing how to regulate heat] We can leave this stuff here [inaudible-overlapping voices] documentation of that [inaudible-overlapping voices] as we get more into the, the, the, the guts of this [inaudible-overlapping voices] There's a lot of stuff still to be said, but … there's a lot of [inaudible-overlapping voices] stuff like with L.A. and talk about [money?] and stuff like that. Good stuff. So we'll wait 'til Cedar comes back and figure out [inaudible-overlapping voices] I have it blocked out 'til six but I know he's getting [inaudible-overlapping voices] words, you know.

Brower: Counter-productive.

Male Voice: Yeah.

Male Voice: I'll call back downstairs again and ask them …

Walton: Yeah, this, this, this is killin' me. I shoulda kept on my shorts [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Male Voice: … 'cause it was …

Walton: It comes out cool over here.

Female Voice: I know. [inaudible-overlapping voices, discussing heat settings, a call to downstairs requesting help with heat]

Male Voice: So I just called down, they're gonna … I called down, they're gonna send an engineer up. How do you … I know that, I was talking to Bill about tomorrow won't work out for you 'cause you gotta get back. So we need to figure out time-wise – and energy-wise because we don't want to put you in a position of … We know you're workin' tonight too.

Walton: Yeah. [inaudible]

Male Voice: Seven in the morning?

Walton: [laughs] No, no, we [inaudible] for the club.

Male Voice: Okay.

Walton: [inaudible] that uh, is a Saturday night. That day would be [inaudible] uh, logistics, tryin' to get there, then park, and get in there. Otherwise, [we'll?] leave uh … probably be better to take a taxi over there instead of drivin'.

Male Voice: I'd say so.

Walton: Yeah, yeah.

Male Voice: My car, I got my car ready.

Walton: Oh, yeah, yeah, I don't mean uh … yeah, okay. [inaudible-overlapping voices] Yeah, right in the vicinity.

Male Voice: So we could do, if you wanted, we could go either a little bit longer or we'll get some lunch right now and come back?

Walton: Yeah, okay, well, uh, yeah. [inaudible] interview [inaudible] Just give it a minute and then uh, where did you [inaudible]?

Male Voice: Right around the corner. [laughter from another male] … 'bout two doors down. [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Male Voice: It's gettin' a little cooler.

[About 4 minutes of talking, not related to Cedar. Some background talk too faint to decipher. Female voice most prominent. Sound of automobile accelerating. Talk between male photographer(?) and female with accent. Male explains: They are doing all the NEH Jazz Masters. He says to another person: She knows me from New Orleans. She says she's based in New York. They talk about one of her students. Talk turns to cameras, prices, etc. (3-way conversation – 2 males, 1 female)]

Male Voice: So, uh, tomorrow is out. Whatever we do has to be done today.

Walton: *Well, uh, not necessarily, uh, let me see. We could do it awhile tomorrow.*

Male Voice: That would give us uh, [inaudible] uh, how you feelin' [inaudible].

Walton: No, not so much that as uh, you know, the gentleman who uh, who is riding with me, when he has to be back. [inaudible]

Brower: Hm.

Walton: [inaudible]

Brower: [Audry Drummond?]

Walton: Yeah [inaudible].

Brower: Number 3.

Walton: [chuckles] Number 3?

Brower: [When?] it jumps to 3rd.

Walton: Oh, yeah, right, exactly. And uh, so uh, if he's up for uh, stayin' a [inaudible] on time, we could probably pull it off.

Male Voice: Well, I don't have the room for tomorrow, so we'd have to do it [inaudible-overlapping voices]. Yeah, either that or somewhere else or I'd have to talk and see if they'd let us [inaudible] leave, if we can, if I can have the room tomorrow also.

Male Voice: So, we'd probably want to start and stop today if possible.

Walton: Oh, that's the time we leave for the club.

Male Voice: So we want to stop about five.

Walton: Yeah.

Male Voice: Okay. So if we …

------end of non-interview discussion re temperature of room and places to lunch, etc--------

Walton: I'll put on my short-sleeved shirt, you know.

Female Voice: [inaudible] change?

Walton: I'm really hot. This is cotton.

Brower: Yeah, with long sleeves. That's probably, that's not helping.

Walton: Yeah.

Kimery?: Let's go. Let's go, let's go, let's go.

Brower: We're goin'. 'Cause there's a thrill up on the hill.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: Um, 1955.

Walton: Yeah, that's when I made the drive from Denver to uh, New York.

Brower: Who'd you drive with?

Walton: Oh man, I can't remember my friend's name. Jesus Christ. I'll have to say Milton something. Hmm Hm-Hm.

Brower: A musician?

Walton: No. No, just a friend who had been in New York before. He was ravin' about it and tryin' to get back. He loved it.

Brower: He was tryin' to get back and you're tryin' to get there.

Walton: Yeah. So we had, you know, a mutual uh, uh goal. We actually stopped off and spent the night in some city at some YMCA, you know. The budget allowed all that. I just can't believe it.

Brower: What were you, in going to New York, what were you going to? Were you …

Walton: Well, uh …

Brower: Did you have somebody's phone number? Were you gonna check up with somebody?

Walton: I had a couple of phone numbers and uh, Ed Thigpen, uh, comes to mind who had encour… anybody who had come to this club, I tried to get their number. But uh, you could find a lot of 'em who I had met there uh, playing at different places, jam sessions and things, so I had uh, uh, a plan in mind to uh, start, uh, to enroll in Manhattan School of Music. But realistically, I wasn't quite ready because I hadn't worked uh, diligently enough on certain pieces, you know, that were required. Not that there was a list of pieces that you needed to play, but uh, you needed to play a complete work of something, and I wasn't ready. And you could hear the other, uh, applicants while you were waiting and oh, I said "No, I gotta get outta here." And that was the end of that idea.

Brower: You went to the …

Walton: Oh yeah, I went in there in the, in the, in the, like in the waiting room at the dentist or doctor.

Brower: Oh, this is gonna hurt too much.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: I'm not gonna have this root canal today.

Walton: Yeah, something like that. But uh, I'll never forget how relieved I felt when I went back out into the city. Sorta steam … happened to see a couple of steam shovels or something. You know, the, the, the life of the city. I said, "This is why I'm here to breathe this life, New York City." I was in love with the city, you know, uh, for, the first reason being, you know, my earlier visit, and then getting there and just getting, uh, uh, making myself woven into the fabric of whatever happens there, especially in Manhattan in this year, and in any year, I think, that you can think of. It was, uh, uh, really a, uh, beehive of uh, of uh, activity. And I didn't miss nuthin', I went to people's rehearsals, I went to … Oh I had to take day jobs, of course, and we, I took a room in the YMCA that's located on West 34th Street. Sloan House it was called. And it may still be there. A very, about $11 a day room, and uh, I managed to work that out by working places like Macy's and uh Horn & Hardart and uh, uh, calls to Mom who'd say, "Bring you ass home! Are you kiddin' me?" [laughs] All I needed was twenty bucks, but I mean, uh, she, that wasn't her language. That's my language: "Now bring your ass home." She probably said, "Bring your butt home." [laughs] But anyway … What are you doin'?

Brower: She'd say a hard head makes a soft behind?

Walton: She used to say that. Her mother said that. [chuckles] But uh, I was determined and finally, man, fast-forward, quite a while uh, uh, she was able to tell her friends that uh, she'd been to New York to hear her son play at Carnegie Hall. So that was uh, a good outcome, I think, in those who doubt it, you know, uh, uh, somebody's child's in New York. But you had to be young, I think, to uh, to, to, to go there like that. I was twenty-one, I mean. So … At age twenty two, almost to the day uh, I got drafted, which they had mandatory draft then. So I went over to Germany for a year and a half and uh, but not after, you know, not before doin' the six months of basic training at Fort Dix uh, which is near New York. And uh …

Brower: Before we get to oversees, what happened in that year?

Walton: Oh, ...

Brower: You worked, you struggled...

Walton: day jobs and I was goin' out to all the gigs I could see and all the jam sessions all over, rehearsals I could muster, and then there was a piano in the balcony of the gym in the, in the, in the, in the Y. So I was able to uh, you know, work out often. So uh, that was a plus.

Brower: What circle of musicians did you establish yourself with at that time?

Walton: Uh, well, the local uh, sort of big, uh, Harlem musicians basically. Uh …

Brower: For example?

Walton: Oh, let me see. There's a guy named Steve Pulliam who conducted the jam sessions, uh. My timeframes are overlapping here a little bit, uh, Mr. Brower. Uh, but uh, the musicians I took up with were, were, uh, basically unknown in the jazz world, but they played, they had gigs, you know, in uh, New York was so vast, Brooklyn gigs, Bronx gigs, people who take you sincere: Come with us, we want to take you to uh, Canarsie. I said, "Canarsie? Okay. Sounds interesting." And then we met Phil Woods and I asked him could I sit in and he said, "Yeah, come on up." Like in a movie would be, "Come on up, kid." [laughs] But he just said, "Come on up." [laughs] Same with Jackie McLean. I went, sought him out, and his pianist uh, was uh, takin' a little too long at the break. Jackie was doing like this, I asked him could I sit in. Same thing: "Could I sit in?" Same thing: "Come on up, kid." So uh, I was everywhere. So uh, uh, but these weren't uh, say, a big crowd. Both Phil and Jackie had recorded but they hadn't made their big move yet, uh, you know, I think, so … I was, I was lucky in that sense to, to, to locate them. And those are just two examples. Those are two main examples who invited me without hesitation to sit in.

Brower: How strong was the uh, the jam session scene?

Walton: Oh, it was quite strong. Um, there was one place in Harlem, um, I can't think of it, man, and that's uh, that's an important uh, uh, memory, too, but uh, uh … Connie's, Connie's on Seventh Avenue. That's where uh, uh, uh, the musicians, uh, jammed. And uh, I wouldn't miss that for … That's all they did there was jam, you know, every night. That was the show. So uh, I got a chance to sit in, as I recall, a couple of times. And I met some of the people that I'd met in Denver there. And I would say, uh, I remember saying to Richie Powell, "You probably don't remember me, but …." You know, the usual thing. I hear people tellin' me that now. I say, "Yes I do, I remember you." Sometime I'm truthful and sometime I'm not. Doesn't matter. I think it means more to them to say yes, which probably was in the case of Richie Powell, too. [laughs] I can remember somebody … But we spent quite a few hours together that night in Denver, so he might remember me, might have remembered me. But uh, yeah, that was a, some, uh, some of the uh, those are examples of some of the first things I did in those, uh, in that first year, uh, you know, in New York.

Brower: So you got drafted and …

Walton: Yeah, then I went to a place called Fort Dix down in New Jersey for basic training, which lasts six months. And then uh, read my orders to, to, uh, go, uh, by ship to Germany and stayed there a year and a half.

Brower: What did you do in the military?

Walton: Well, uh, we were …

Brower: Were you in the Army band?

Walton: Yeah. Uh, no, not the Army band. No, we were in Special Services where we could do shows, variety shows, and then finally we were uh, uh permitted to have a jazz band, which I was the leader. [chuckles] And uh, so my duty was to get up in the morning, go have breakfast, and then go in this room and write, and then go to lunch, come back, then go to dinner.

Brower: Was that tough duty?

Walton: [laughs] No, that was easy compared to what before I got, before I managed to get there, you know. I was in the Calvary (sic) as I recall. I was a wireman and uh, if you can picture a spool of uh, uh, uh electrical wire as big as a, as tall as this room, a spool, and my job was connect the uh, command post where the officers were out to the outer post, you know. And if something went wrong, they had to wake me up out of my sleepin' bag and go with my flashlight and find the trouble. And uh, a young lieutenant who had uh, who was probably my age, but he'd gone to West Point so he … Luckily I had my helmet, we called it a helmet liner, you know, but it's made out of … like a baseball, like a batting helmet. So he kicked me in the head. "Wake up soldier." And boy, that hurt. Not physically, just the idea. This guy about the same age, but he had the bars. Kicked me in the head, said, "Wake up. You gotta go check out that, you know, what's the difficulty here in the communications." That's uh, one of the more unpleasant memories. And uh, I heard some of the people uh, as I was pretending to be asleep, talking about me, said, "That Walton, he can't even splice a wire." Which I said to myself, "You got that right." [laughs] So finally uh, I got out, you know. You, you apply and you get, you get out of these things, as I recall, you know. And uh, I got called down to Stuttgart and that's where my headquarters remained for the rest of my time in uh …

Brower: And that's when you were able to get to the music, at that point?

Walton: Yeah, yeah. Those were my duties. But some time we did, first we did a few variety shows which included the son of Bing Crosby, a guy named Gary Crosby, for inst… as an example. Uh, and uh, various and sundry musicians who had applied to this Special Service Unit. And uh, that's where uh, uh, my, uh, musical uh, activities began. That's when my musical activities began in the, in the military, playin' for these shows and then finally a jazz, a real jazz band. They called it Jazz One 'cause later on, they had Jazz Two, you know, with different personnel. And we were able to requisition uh, different players from different places. Uh, it had the uh, been the professional pride to them, coming into the Army, so we had the cream of the crop who was available. People like Eddie Harris, for instance, came through and joined us. And uh …

Brower: Did Leo Wright.. for that [inaudible]?

Walton: Oh yeah. He, he was uh, he was part of the, he was in the, he was in the uh, the uh, the Colonel's favorite – the, the symphony, you know. So he played the jazz saxophone uh, when necessary in the symphony orchestra. So uh, when they had pieces that required that instrument, I recall. I'm not sure he was ever with us in the, in the jazz band. But uh, yeah, uh, Leo was a

great musician and as you know, he got discharged from the Army and joined Dizzy Gillespie. Had a nice, uh, career. Then he moved back to Germany and uh, started a family over there.

Brower: Any other significant musical associations from that, that period?

Walton: Uh, of the military? Yeah. Uh, Houston Person. He was in the Air Force but we would all gather in Heidelberg on weekends to play. Uh, a guy named uh Lex Humphries, a very good drummer from Philadelphia and uh, and of course Leo and a few others whose name escapes me, but whose names escape me, but those are the main ones, especially Eddie. We became very good friends and he overcame a lot to uh play his uh saxophone because he had contracted a gum disease which uh, uh caused him to lose all his teeth and uh, and had to start over again with replacements. And uh, you know, he had no feeling in that area, the embrasure, you know, for a long time. But he, he never gave up; he worked all day every day. He's the one that comes closest to reminding me of John Coltrane, just never stopped playing until he just got physically tired and uh … uh, he became very successful with his uh version of jazz.

Brower: How did race play itself out in the military?

Walton: Oh, uh, it was totally, it was totally integrated uh, by uh, by the time I got in there – '55, '56. I think Truman had done that, as far as I remember. Uh you know, I mean uh, in terms of doing something uh, uh, gettin' it uh, uh, uh a law passed or something. Word has it that Harry Truman did that. And uh, I would have to do some research to confirm that, but that's who I believe it was. But yeah, it was totally integration, uh integrated.

Brower: And as a, a formal fact, it was integrated. What about associations? How was it actually functioning at a social level?

Walton: On a social level, there was race uh distinctions uh, different bars uh, white soldiers would uh, uh congregate and uh, uh, and same applied to other bars where the Black soldiers would congregate. And I know we were on a tour with one of the shows and we stopped at a bar and it was uh, it was I guess what we used to call a hillbilly bar. In this time they were called a redneck bar, I guess, you know. And man, we had to get outta there. There was uh a furious uh mistake, you know. Bottles started being thrown and oh man, I was hiding under the table, you know – stealthy animal that I was – and uh made it back to the bus.

Brower: Did you get a chance to play with uh German jazz musicians at that time?

Walton: Ah yeah, yeah. Yeah, they were, they were fine. Uh I can't remember a lot of the names uh, but uh, they certainly uh were uh, uh, you know, competent musicians. We sought them out and uh set in with them. They were glad to see us coming, you know. Especially in downtown Stuttgart, the Atlantic Bar; we'd go there. Until perhaps uh we heard that uh, we weren't supposed to be off the base, you know. But we managed to get down there and uh and if the MPs came, of

course, we had to sort of like make ourselves disappear. But we were young. I was twenty two, so [chuckles] I would take a chance. I wouldn't do that now. If I didn't live in New York now, I certainly wouldn't go there now. [chuckles] But if you're young, you'll try anything … I think. I mean, I did.

Brower: So you didn't re-up?

Walton: [laughs] No. Not at all. In fact I could have become an officer. They came through with the uh – what do you call it? – the uh, uh aptitude tests and uh … but I, I didn't uh, I didn't want to be any part of the military after my required time. I wanted to get back to the city. And uh, explore … [inaudible] 'cause the Army actually provided me a, uh, for a chance to uh brush up on things that I uh, uh needed to brush up on, you know.

Brower: So you used the time.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Basically to shed?

Walton: Hm, yes, indeed, yeah, writing-wise uh and playing-wise, yes. No question about it.

Brower: Are there any compositions that later …

Walton: Emerged uh from that period? No. I just used 'em uh in that point in time and I didn't re-use 'em. No particular reason uh that I can think of. I would do, I guess I was just in the moment every time I went somewhere, did something. It didn't necessarily have to be uh, uh part of my uh next chapter of my life.

Brower: So you were discharged in …

Walton: '58. From '56 to '58. It was a two year uh, uh requirement in those days. And I went back to uh, to New York and uh started doin' a little better and uh got noticed by uh J.J. Johnson at one of the jam sessions at Birdland, which they had for uh … Those of us who uh weren't band leaders, uh, they would uh, uh have these uh sessions at Birdland on Monday nights. A gentleman named John Geary, who works with Jazzmobile now.

Brower: Oh, Johnny Garry.

Walton: Yeah, I'm sure you know him.

Kimery?: [inaudible]

Walton: You know him too?

Kimery?: He promise me a job when he, when he would retire, I could have his job, but he won't retire.

Walton: [laughs] You could always ask.

Kimery?: That's what he told me.

Walton: Oh yeah? [laughs] I'll be doggone.

Male Voice: But he won't retire.

Walton: Yes, that was a first uh … Wow, what an art cover. Can't tell what that lady's doin', can you? [chuckles]

Female Voice: She's in motion.

Walton: [laughs] Oh yeah, that's for sure. [laughs] Yeah, that was a great uh experience of meeting uh J.J. Impeccable uh artistry and uh, just a miraculous uh … He was, he was exactly ten years older than me. By the time I got to him, I was twenty five and uh, he was thirty five, so … I always remembered the uh ten year difference in our ages. So …

Brower: When, when you, you say, he noticed you at a jam session at Birdland …

Walton: Uh-hm. That's what he told me and uh next thing I knew I was in his band, me and Tootie Heath. We replaced Flanagan and uh Elvin.

Brower: You know, what was, was there a given circle of musicians that were at Birdland during those sessions?

Walton: Uh, Johnny Garry was uh responsible for organizing.

Brower: Imagine that.

Walton: Yeah. Two, two bands, each Monday night.

Brower: Uh-hm. And what, what was the circle of musicians, 'cause it seemed like you fell into a kind of pool of, of musicians at that point.

Walton: Well uh … hm … uh … Well, Cannon … the Adderley brothers did a Monday night, for instance. I mean, they hadn't quite gotten fully establish yet, so they uh … And uh, I played with a group coordinated by John Coltrane that included Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, and uh, Elvin and uh, uh the bass, the late bass player named um … I can't think of his name. But uh, that was a great night. I remember we had the rehearsal. Of course, Elvin wasn't there; he didn't have to be there. I mean uh, I didn't know he didn't have to be there because I was just meeting Elvin,

but uh … That was a great night, uh with John Coltrane and that group, playing opposite the Adderley brothers. And uh, for some reason, man, the lights started blinkin' on the Adderley brothers, man. New York was … That's when I realized how cruel the audience could be sometime. I mean, the people that uh run things in New York could be uh, you know, blink the lights, let's get these hip guys back on stage.

Brower: Time for you to go, basically.

Walton: Basically, yeah. I felt insulted for them, you know. It wasn't quite fair to uh blink the lights … but anyway, it happened and uh, they all uh, uh, I think, uh lived through it, you know. But uh … Uh, I think uh, I thank uh Johnny Garry for choosing me for one of those … end up uh, uh, leading me to J.J.. I stayed with him at least a year or two.

Brower: When you were with J.J., were you mostly in the New York area?

Walton: No, just, we toured. There was a place, there was a Blue Note in uh Chicago during those days and uh, let's see, we went all over, you know. It just … He had an agent uh who, who sent us places. In those days the bands wore uh uniforms alike and uh we had those – except for the leader of course. And uh, I was exposed to his uh, uh concept of orchestration and uh organization of uh material

Brower: What was his concept of orchestration?

Walton: [laughs] You want me to say that in one sentence? Or one uh month? Uh, no, it was simple uh, it was, had a certain amount of uh, uh directness to it, uh and uh, uh, he would feature himself uh of course which is what people wanted to hear when they came out to hear J.J. Johnson, the number one voted trombone player every year for that period, you know. And uh he was a very healthy man, you know. Uh, I, I, would measure a person's health by if he had all his original teeth, and he did. He's one of the few people I met that had no uh false teeth. [chuckles] At 35. And uh, I guess until about 37 and when I left, he went to the Jazztet with uh Art Farmer and them – uh, Art Farmer and Benny Golson. But uh that uh was uh a very memorable uh nice uh high level uh of music, period, for me, being with J.J. Johnson. And very few people … I naturally, I remember him vividly but I don't think many people remember J.J. He certainly wasn't in Ken Burns' uh account of jazz, which I think, I didn't think very much of that. I thought that was … How could you leave J.J. out? But perhaps there's reasons.

Brower: You know, I was going to, you know, since you're talkin' about J.J. and I think that other, you know the other, maybe another …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … trombone player that you sorta can't talk to you about talkin' about is Curtis Fuller.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Uh, if you could – and I'm stepping out of chronology now – but just talk about them as trombone players.

Walton: Well, just uh basically Curtis' musical knowledge uh didn't quite add up to J.J.'s but he compensated by havin' a larger sound. And by large I just mean large. It was … J.J.'s had, his sound was adequate. I mean, more than adequate, mind you, but for some reason, somehow Curtis found a way to make his bigger. I don't know whether it was the mouthpiece, the embrasure or what. Uh, just the, the, the, uh physical uh attributes of his being, you know. But uh, I always thought that, but he didn't uh, he didn't have the knowledge of changes that J.J. … he doesn't. But he's alive, so … [chuckles] that's one advantage, but the, the, the thing uh is that uh, uh, he didn't need it because he compensated for it. When I heard, not too long ago, a version of *Cherokee* with him and uh organist Jimmy Smith, uh I couldn't believe how he got through those changes, you know, knowing him and his knowledge of, of uh harmony. But once he heard any part of the chord in his ear, he could, he could deal with that instantly. So, that's, that's one of the …

Brower: So you're saying that J.J. was stronger theoretically.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: But Curtis had uh – I'm not gonna use the word "intuitive" – but he could process what he heard and develop it.

Walton: Instantly. Yeah. And his sound was a little bit bigger, but uh that didn't uh sway anybody's opinion of J.J. at all, you know. J.J. was the Man. Miles Davis was quoted as saying he would pay him by the note. He uh [chuckles] was so intrigued by his uh ability. And uh I can't help but refer back to uh the uh classical recording *Walkin'* uh, J.J.'s statement on that alone, not to mention Lucky Thompson who is totally uh forgotten. Uh that record there was superb, I think. Did you listen to it much?

Brower: I've heard it.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: But I can't say that I would hear it the way you heard it, you know [inaudible] …

Walton: Oh yeah. I was, I was addicted to it. Yeah. For a man of J.J.'s uh integrity, intelligence, to quote something like uh *One Mint Julep*, for instance, you gotta go back and hear it.

Brower: Did, did, the, the other thing about, you know you just mentioned Ken Burns and in talking with Curtis, he really uh did hit on the impact of J.J. not being in there…

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: … J.J. [inaudible-overlapping voices] …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … He felt it was very profound.

Walton: Right, yeah. I can understand uh Curtis' feelings on that, that being his instrument. So, it's something uh, that uh will always be a mystery to me. So uh …

Brower: Now the next move is Jazztet. How did you get to the Jazztet? Wht were the circumstances that led you to that?

Walton: Uh, a ten dollar raise. You know, back in those days that ten dollars was that important. [chuckles] So … Me and Albert Heath uh both uh moved over to the Jazztet, replacing uh McCoy Tyner and uh, uh, oh, let me see, who was it? Might have been on drums. Oh, Lex Humphries is the guy that had been on drums, yeah, so …. It was a long time ago but I remember those moves at least, and it was uh, the difference uh …

Brower: Was Curtis there when you got there? Or was it Tom …

Walton: No, no, Tom, Tom McIntyre. Curtis had left. And uh, the thing is uh that uh, uh, it was all Golson. Every piece was Golson, but uh very often he would put out big pieces of music so that helped me with my, you know uh, re… uh return to my studies of uh reading notation, notated music 'cause he had tons of it.

Brower: Well, that would be, you know …

Walton: Like uh – excuse me – like uh *Killer Joe*, for instance. That was all written out. Dee-dit. Ahh-bop. Like that. So uh, it was good for me in a way to uh revisit uh … 'cause with J.J., he just had little sketches which uh I do to this day. I just, I was… especially rhythm. I just, everybody in the rhythm section has the same part for most of the time, unless it's something real special I need from somebody, but uh …. So, but so, but uh, I'm not sure of … Anyway uh, it was all right, you know, I enjoyed … It was a good uh career move until uh I got the call from Blakey who I'd met the day before I went into the military. He uh … the night before I went to the military. I told him, I said, "I'm goin' into the military." He said, "Oh, call me in the morning and I'll tell you how you can uh avoid the military." But of course he didn't answer. So, I went in. But he remembered though. Art Blakey had a very special knack for uh, uh discovering people or, you know, remembering people, and sure enough, he called me and Freddie Hubbard. We went in the same day with the *Mosaic* that we mentioned earlier, that piece. And uh we had a great uh time in a, in that group because uh for one thing, we didn't think, we didn't know it at the moment, but uh in those, you know, ever time you thought you might have a few days off, you know, he'd call us, say "Let's go. We gotta go to Minneapolis." So we just worked all the time, which was good, you know, even though we wanted to stay home at least two days. But not with Art.

Brower: Did you rehearse much?

Walton: Uh … Let me see. Well, when, when necessary, yeah. It wasn't no rehearsal … uh rehearsal-oriented uh, uh concept uh with the Messengers. We had to rehearse. I mean, for the record date, but with Blue Note you had uh, I mean we had four days to prepare the solos and everything and then on the fifth day you went out to Rudy Van Gelder's and recorded it.

Brower: And they paid you for all of that?

Walton: Oh yeah. Minimal uh lunch money, yeah, type fees, yeah. But we were glad to get that, goin' to Manhattan and play …

Brower: Those are three very strong personalities in different ways. J.J. Johnson to effectively Benny Golson even though it was supposed to be a co-op …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … and then to Art Blakey.

Walton: Right.

Brower: Um …

Walton: Well, uh, it, it, it uh needs to be pointed out that Golson had been uh involved with Blakey at one point with the *Blues March*, etc. Right?

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: Yeah, so … There was a string there that uh I think uh needs to be acknowledged.

Brower: Well, part of what I want to ask you is this, the, the kind of uh sound that was the signature of Blakey's band …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … when you got with the *Mosaic* record and …

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: … with the three, three horn format.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Um, you know we can kinda trace that in the things that Curtis was doin' before he ever got to Blakey into the kind of a sound, to a degree, in the Jazztet from just even the voice of the bone in, when you start to spread the harmony across those horns. I mean that was a sound that was developed. Yes … Is that a thread? Yes or no.

Walton: Uh, is that a thread?

Brower: Musically speaking.

Walton: Yeah uh … to a degree uh but uh Wayne had his uh way of uh dealing with the three horns. I, I had my way. And uh Benny had his way. They were all different. And there was a thread only in, only in the instrumentation, you know, not anything else. The styles, to me, were totally different.

Brower: How would you describe the distinction between, say, your style and say, Curtis' style and Wayne's style in the sextet or with Blakey?

Walton: Well uh, I'm comin' from a piano player's uh, uh point of view, so to speak, so I can see my notes. Well so could Wayne, you know, he could see … But I could see my notes as a piano player so it was a little different shading uh that I had developed uh as a pianist arranger as compared to Wayne who was just a, a … well, a saxophonist arranger, but you had to know, you had to, you have to see the notes on the piano before you write 'em down. I mean, you have to hear 'em in uh triplicate. I mean, you know, not in triplicate but I mean, you have to … all, all three notes involved. And very often a bass note too. But uh, and uh, if you listen to uh *A Moment's Notice* uh, you can hear a Trane, uh Trane's really simple approach to uh orchestration and it's just so simple, I found. And I saw him do this on the piano as I was sittin' on the stool … He, he would, he would … and they were so, so much simpler than mine, as a pianist. See, he's a saxophonist, so that's … and I used to love to hear people who played other instruments play the piano because they weren't like a piano player; they were like a horn player. That make any sense? [chuckles]

Brower: That makes some sense to me.

Walton: [laughs]

Male Voice: Just on the record, it might make sense to some musicians.

Walton: Yeah. [chuckles] Right, okay. Yeah so uh, that was … Kenny Dorham, on the other hand uh, was a person who was very proficient at the piano. He'd uh been close to Bud Powell and learned so much and he was …. Freddie Hubbard was very proficient at the piano. But I mean, the first instrument of those two gentlemen were trumpet. But it's all kind of variations mixed in together uh with approaches to orchestration. And uh, they all have their uh idiosyncrasies, so to speak. They certainly all have their personalities and uh characteristics that differ them from others.

Brower: How would you compare the three of them as leaders?

Walton: Uh … which three?

Brower: Johnson, …

Walton: Oh, my three. Yeah.

Brower: … Golson to Blakey.

Walton: Uh, Johnson was uh uh, featured himself and his uh, uh total wizardry of his instrument, and, and was able to uh include the rest of us which was usually a quintet, occasionally a sextet. So, but it was, it was trombone all the way, but in a real … coming from such a master you didn't mind, I didn't mind at all 'cause I was hearing God on trom… the God of the Trombone. [chuckles] But uh, Golson was dogmatic in that he insisted on every note that he conceived of, and you had to put it up on paper stretched across … letter Z … uh from A to Z. And uh, uh I didn't like it but uh it, it helped me though, you know, in a, in a way.

Brower: And what – before we get to Blakey – what role did Art … how did that dynamic work between Golson and Farmer?

Walton: Oh, fine. Farmer was totally uh at the ready all the time. I mean, how could he not be? He was uh, you know, uh the trumpet player in the Jazztet and uh he had the lead voice in most of the arrangements. So, he had a big job. And he liked to do it. And uh Golson featured him and his sound uh for the most part, exclusively. And uh …

Brower: He didn't bristle at the fact that all the music was Benny's or …

Walton: No. No, he … not in my recollection. And Benny sort of tolerated one of his pieces which was not his forte, those compositions. He didn't much mind, you know, so …

Brower: That was a good marriage.

Walton: Yeah. Exactly. Precisely.

Brower: Were you writing during all of this, even as you were …

Walton: I tried, I tried to get 'em to play *Mosaic*. We must of … and we would try to record it, and it must have taken, it must have taken at least twenty eight to thirty-some takes. For some reason the chemistry just didn't jive. So I ended up takin' it to, into the rehearsal of Mr. Blakey. And those guys, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller and Wayne Shorter, they ate it up like it was Post

Toasties. They played it better than I could. I said, "Wait a minute; I wrote this thing here." [chuckles] But uh, that's how it was. It was great. And Art picked up on it, and when he put his touch on it, it was ready to go.

Brower: So how was Art Blakey to work with?

Walton: Uh, incredible. He, he uh pretended that he was the gentleman and we were his officers, you know. And on uh another aspect, uh, uh point of view, it was like we were a team of horses and he was a, you know, leading from behind. You know, driving a team of horses. That's how I always pictured him uh, uh, you know, what's the word? Uh, uh, uh … you know, few uh, uh futuristically, no, no. The uh, uh, the imaginary … No, that's not the word. You know what I mean. Virtual. A virtual team of horses and he's crackin' the whip. He's uh the general, you know, who never gets into combat, says "Charge!" You know, he stays up on the hill. [chuckles] [general laughter] And uh, but uh it was very enjoyable, I mean, as I related to you. I'm relating joy now, not uh, not uh uh, what's the opposite of joy? Sadness?

Brower: Pain?

Walton: [laughs] No, there was no pain except "Pain" Shorter on sax. [laughs] [general laughter] No man, we all had a great time and Wayne would uh, he was in the moment too. He would … 'cause Art, for some reason, uh we found our position, you know, ourselves in position of uh waiting on him to do whatever he was doing, you know. And so, Wayne wrote a song, said, entitled *Those Who Sit and Wait* [laughs] dedicated to us. [general laughter] We didn't know where Art was or what he was doin' but we had to wait 'til he came before we could make our next move. But it was a great uh, uh, uh he was a great band leader. He encouraged uh us to write. We couldn't write fast enough. We'd write four, five, six tunes and we'd go in the studio and uh record them. And uh, for a long time, I thought he was uh, uh breaching contracts, but I found out much later, he just had one uh, one-deal deals, one-recording deals with everybody. You know, he was very smart, smarter than *I* thought he was, 'cause I thought he was just brazenly … Okay, I'm with Blue Note but I'm goin' over here and record with Columbia, you know. But he wasn't like that. He, he couldn't have done that legally, now that I think about it. But I thought he was, you know. So he had me in fear … [chuckles] … so to speak; somebody being that brave. But uh, he wasn't. He was a, he, he's the one who saw like, pointed out to me that uh prior to meeting him, I thought uh intellect came from going to college. But after meeting Art Blakey, and then I found out that you can be very intelligent by, and never going on any campus. [chuckles] – by playing for kings, queens, uh mayors, governors, you know.

Brower: I guess his level of exposure in life …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … experiences and his ability to process them.

Walton: Yeah. Exactly. Uh-hm. And bring in the top quality of uh artistry, so to speak, to these places. There's even a video of us from uh San Remo uh, Italy, which shows us uh in that band. Have you seen that one?

Brower: No.

Walton: Oh, you ought to … Well, it's, you can Google it even. You can … remarkable. And it has uh a version of uh, uh *That Old Feeling* on there too which uh is very uh, somewhat uh attractive, if I have to say so myself. Because it started with the George Shearing simplified version and moved way up [chuckles] to my version who knows how many years later, but at least twenty five or thirty. So uh …

Brower: How was the experience of going to uh Japan with him?

Walton: Oh, it was uh always uh …

Brower: Seems like that was uh sort of a watershed thing, Art Blakey in Japan.

Walton: Yeah, he was a big favorite there. When we went there, they would greet us uh with all these flowers, you know, at the airport and … as if we were uh, big uh celebrities or … we were big celebrities uh in their, in their minds. And uh, uh more so than we had, than we had been with … say when we got to Chicago, we'd just take taxi to the hotel. [chuckles] But, arriving in Tokyo was, was a very uh uh big occasion, an event, so to speak. And so uh, it was always good. We were a big favorite. He worked there a lot, very popular in Japan which uh probably prompted uh, well, prompted me to write that … that's a Japanese word there, *Ugetsu*.

Brower: Yes.

Walton: And uh prompted uh Wayne Shorter uh probably to write uh *On the Ginza* which I think is in there. And uh which is a big uh, uh street, shopping street.

Brower: Here's another one.

Walton: *On the Ginza*, yeah. Oh yeah, Kyoto probably prompted Wayne to write *Kyoto*. That's going over there and uh making so many friends and thanks so much there, and uh, really packed audiences of, of big uh concert halls. So that was uh … little did I know that was my, the prime of uh my life. That was the prime.

Brower: Do you really think those years …

Walton: Yeah. Yeah, man. To get that much exposure and on that level, and uh, it was uh 24/7 uh, uh, of, of high uh, uh, uh, uh, high level of uh, uh, uh pleasure, musically. And sometimes socially too, but mainly musically – the places we went and the, the greetings we got, you know, and the welcomes we got over there, you know, to answer your question. Phenomenal. And then after I left the Messengers, uh I heard that he started goin' so much as the Messengers, he had to

[chuckles] change. He decided to go one year and call it Orgy in Rhythm. [chuckles] Just to keep going instead of, you know, so I had the privilege of going with him on that, on that particular tour. He, he added two conga players on that one. And uh, that was quite an experience, but uh, the main times were when we went.

Brower: Talk about the sheer force of Art Blakey, playing with him, just bein' on the bandstand with him.

Walton: Yeah, well uh, Art uh, played uh, very uh, uh, at first uh exposure to him, you think he's playing very hard and bombastic. And he is in a way but he leaves little holes that develop. I like to think of it as develop my radar, you know. I could tell when there was a space. You had to be quick, though, you know. Your radar had to be up to date, like I guess uh compared to a, a guy who works in the tower at the airport, you know. He sees bleeps uh and uh, he would leave openings 'cause he had played piano himself uh earlier, I heard. And uh he told me, you know, and so …. That was what I uh, the uh, pleasure, education I got from working with Art was uh, I like to think of it as uh enhancing and developing my radar for, knowin' when, when I could be heard. 'Cause in between all this bombastic stuff, he left spaces for you.

Brower: When you, when you wrote for him uh … You didn't write anything for him.

Walton: Yeah, I wrote *Mosaic*. Well, I mean …

Brower: I mean in the sense you didn't write any parts for him.

Walton: Oh, no, no, no. That was out of the question. No, he, he went through his whole uh musical uh career uh, it was no reading involved. He played with Billy Eckstine. He took me over to meet uh Billy Eckstine one night, and that was a … that was the first time I'd seen Art act real uh kind of demure [chuckles] in the presence of Mr. B. That was a …

Brower: Well, Billy had to be a bad, had to be a tough guy.

Walton: Oh yeah. They, they, they, they had fights and physical fights when he came through the South, when he had Dexter and all of them, playing to uh divided audiences, and so I'm just … this is hearsay I'm tellin' you. But I believe it, though.

Brower: But to command the respect of the, of the kind of men he had in his band …

Walton: Yeah. That too. Yeah. Yeah.

Brower: … respect as respect among men.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: So …

Walton: Dizzy Gillespie uh, uh, uh noted that on one of his interviews. He understood the music – he was talkin' 'bout Billy Eckstine – and how to present it and plus he could sing, he was handsome. He [inaudible-overlapping voices] …

Brower: He could knock your ass out.

Walton: That too. And he even had a knot named after him, the Billy Eckstine Knot.

Brower: You mean like in a collar?

Walton: A collar. Yeah. Knot in the collar. So uh, I'm told when he was asked to join the Rat Pack, you know, with uh Sinatra and those people … I think uh Sammy Davis ended up joinin'. But uh Billy would never uh take part in anything like that. I don't think he had to, it wasn't the style of, that wasn't his style, I don't think. So uh, that was uh …

Kimery: So … ready?

Brower: Um, off-camera, we were, I was, just wanted to visit the subject of Art Blakey the band leader, not on the music side of things, but on the business side.

Walton: Right.

Brower: And how he handled … and I'm saying this uh, uh, uh … Curtis told us a story …

Walton: Oh.

Brower: … last week.

Walton: Ah.

Brower: Uh, where you … some club and he gave the, the responsibility for paying the band to some …

Walton: Um, to some stranger.

Brower: Well, some [inaudible-overlapping voices] …

Walton: Stranger to us.

Brower: Yeah, a stranger to you.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: And according to him, you didn't take to it …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: …too well, and …

Walton: Well, uh none, none of us uh, uh actually approved, naturally. I mean uh we were in Kansas City and uh all of a sudden uh, uh, uh this uh person who was uh, uh givin' me a, uh sayin', "Okay, Curtis, you're next." And so uh, I don't know why Art did that. It was sorta one of his traits, I guess, to give somebody immediate responsibility. So uh, uh, I don't know what Curtis said but uh, I know that uh, um, um, I uh, uh, uh, uh I objected. But it's just physically the way uh, uh the room was laid out. I was standing uh up by my bed, so every time [chuckles] I would say something uh with uh, say an objectionable tone to it or, you know … What's goin' on? … you know, he would just push me and I would just fall on my bed, and I would bounce right back up. And uh from your expression, this is not similar to Curtis' version, is it?

Brower: Well, he said you took exception to it.

Walton: Oh yeah, right, okay.

Brower: You took exception to it and you took exception to the young lady and her role in this. That's what he portrayed.

Walton: Yeah, uh Art did. Ar, Art, Art more or less defending her position. Yeah. Well yeah, that … that was typical, but uh, um, for me that wasn't such a overwhelming moment but that's because uh, uh my experience with Art uh, uh, you know, I got to know him so well uh, that was just one incident, you know. It, it was, it had, it was amusing uh, you know, when you look back, you know. And uh in those days, you see, you could uh give somebody else uh your plane ticket and they could use it without no problem, so … without any problem because uh Jimmy Meritt was a victim in this particular case. He gave uh her Jimmy Meritt's ticket. We were flying back to New York and I looked up and uh she was sittin' in the, in the seat and uh Jim Meritt, Jimmy Meritt had to call Art's manager to get a ticket back to Philly. So I mean, all these things are going around in my head, and the initial impact was uh, is, is, is blurry to me except what I just told you. I, it was, it is, it, it, it, I remember it being uh greatly amusing, you know. And uh, so uh …

Brower: Why'd you leave the band?

Walton: Oh, I got it in my head that I was just tired of traveling. Me and uh, by this time it was Reggie Workman, we left to take a long-term engagement in uh The Five Spot, which uh clubs had long-term engagements in those days. You know, we, uh, we had a trio there uh which was led by uh Tootie Heath and uh, we, we, we were happy to, we were traveling so much with Art, you know what I mean, which was exciting for a long time, but then we never got a chance to stay home. [chuckles] And so, that, that, that was, it wasn't a real uh uh heavy reason that we, that we left, you know. And Lee Morgan had come back and he uh, he was not the uh, uh, say,

wizard of the trumpet, in my uh view, as Freddie Hubbard was. He, he wasn't, he wasn't any – not to say he was any less talented – he was just uh less effective uh for Art's style. He moved right over to Max Roach uh, uh Freddie did. And so it gave Art an opportunity to accuse Max of stealing another one of his trumpet players, which uh accused Max of stealing Clifford Brown in an earlier stage. Uh, so uh, uh, but uh Art uh was a very uh special kind of band leader. Uh, uh that I, in hindsight, have come to appreciate very highly, you know. He was always uh, you know, on time, and uh, I mean he stressed on time and he would, he would uh take your money if you were late. And I was a victim of that unfortunately one time at the Apollo Theater. Once the band had started and you're not in your, on stage, man, that's, that's … You say, "Oh, we'll all go have a good dinner tonight," you know, with Cedar's money. So uh, that was uh, that in hindsight is quite amusing too. But uh, he uh, he had a variety of ways but he was so sharp and uh he was so proud of us, you know. Javon uh tells me that uh Art told him that uh when Cedar and Wayne and them got in the band, the music started gettin' sophisticated. That's what he quoted Art. And uh I guess I just never thought of Art saying that, you know. He never said it to me. And uh, so it stands to reason that he would tell somebody who succeeded me that, you know.

Brower: That has to be one of the finest sextets …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: ...of finest bands in the history of music, I think.

Walton: Yeah. We were waitin' on uh to get at least an article in the *Downbeat* [chuckles] at that time, which was the only book. They didn't have the *Jazz Times* or anything but the *Down*…. But we never did get any recognition. We were a little saddened by that, I think. That was the only downer that you could uh … 'cause we were workin' every night someplace. I mean, standing room only place … uh, uh audience, so …. And Art was very proud of us in his presentation, you know, of, of our music.

Brower: Give us some sense of what your itinerary was. Tell me about what …

Walton: Well, Los Angeles, uh, Europe, uh, tours of Europe, you know, which is a, a succession of cities uh, you know, Switzerland or Germany or Italy or … and the like. And uh, uh the Netherlands uh, everywhere. I don't think we went to Spain, but we certainly went to France and uh, uh … It was just a magnificent uh itinerary.

Brower: Was there a club circuit for you in the States?

Walton: Uh, well uh, yeah. We played uh Birdland in New York, uh, was our main uh place in New York to play. Uh, San Francisco, the Jazz Workshop, in those days. Uh Chicago uh was uh, the uh, Joe Siegel's place on the southside – Jazz Showcase, I guess you can call it. He still uses that uh name. And uh, yeah, Minneapolis …

Brower: Was Detroit on that …

Walton: Oh yeah, Detroit, yeah. I remember a place named the Minor Key and uh yeah, we had a, we had a club circuit in the, in the States. Uh, once in a while we would go to a, a, a, uh, an institution of learning [chuckles], you know. Uh, university or so and uh …

Brower: Did you hit Cleveland?

Walton: Yes. We hit Cleveland, I remember hitting Cleveland. And uh, oh man, never went to Florida that I recall, but we went to, I think, Atlanta once which uh was a little diff…, off the beat and path for us. We usually stayed sort of like East, Northeast, Far West, uh Midwest. So that was a nice uh diversion.

Brower: What was your, when you, when you were in the States, um, what was the composition of the audience? I'm speaking racially.

Walton: Oh man, uh, that's a hard question, simply because of my ability to remember uh … I think it was sort of even-steven, maybe with a little edge on White in some places and uh the opposite in other places. I can't really uh verify that it was uh, uh, uh solid uh difference every, every time. It varied.

Brower: What about in Washington? Was Washington uh …

Walton: Uh, I was …

Brower: [? caramie?] spoke about the Howard Theater.

Walton: Yeah, I remember playin' there but I couldn't see exactly who was in the audience, but uh, uh I would take a guess from the make-up of your fair city that uh it was mostly Black folks.

Brower: What, what … other than Howard, were you doing … when you were in Howard, what was the bill you were on? It wasn't just Art Blakey.

Walton: No, they would have a comedian and uh probably somebody like uh either Ray Charles, Betty Carter, those kind of shows, jazz shows.

Brower: And what other … Were you doing the same thing in Baltimore or …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … Chicago?

Walton: Yeah. Yeah. I can remember Baltimore had uh, uh Herbie uh … oh, shucks … Mann, Herbie Mann and his, you know, his group uh, uh … Hubert Laws was playin' with him then. So uh, that's some pleasant memories, but those shows in theaters uh wasn't just us. It was uh, uh a

jazz show, usually a comedian who was the MC, a good, you know, a well-known singer, and maybe another jazz group with uh a Latin tinge. And uh, that kind of thing.

Brower: Were you, did you feel like you were on the end of that kind of, of performance scenario. I mean that … when in the '60s was … did you have the sense of it that that kind of presentation was coming to an end?

Walton: Uh, not while I was with Art. Uh, let me think. But it did come to an end, though, you know, and uh I just hadn't associated the two, me being with Art and uh how Art's schedule was and how that kind of uh show uh, uh, how long it continued. But uh, it was certainly at the peak of its uh existence during the time I was with Art, no question. Even when we were the Jazztet, we did those kinds of shows and uh, sometime we would be opposite … I can remember we bein' opposite Dizzy. But that, that's at the Apollo in, in New York. Those were the best shows uh, you know, in terms of line-up, I thought. But uh, we had a terrific schedule and uh we were uh terrifically uh, I think, supported by the majority of the jazz audience all over this country and all over Europe and Japan. So, it was a golden time. I was uh very pleased with my timing, I mean as I look back, you know. I was probably pleased then but you couldn't feel it then like you can as a memory. I, I can't.

Brower: And to compare then and now, scene-wise, you know, in other words, you credit it as a golden time in your life …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: How would you compare it to this time?

Walton: Well, now is a golden time because uh I'm no longer the sideman. I've uh accumulated uh a significant amount of compositions and recorded them, and other people are recording them, I can see from the mail box [chuckles] that I referred to earlier, and uh, so uh, this is a, this is a magic time for me personally as compared to a magic time for the music.

Brower: Okay.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: That's a very good distinction.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Um, uh, since we kind of mentioned Baltimore, um, do you remember the Left Bank Jazz Society?

Walton: Yes. Oh yeah, couldn't, how could I forget them? Yeah. That was a major … and uh, the, the, the, the, the uh, the uh funny thing uh one of the funny things was uh, me and Hank Mobley tryin' to get down here, you know, from Penn Station. There was one train and if you missed that one, you definitely would be late. And we had uh, we actually had our hands, if you can picture, we were, the train was pullin' out, we had our hands on the train but couldn't get on it, man. It broke, both are hearts were broken, layin' out on the platform. Had to pick 'em up and try to get the next train. And naturally, when we, we, we arrived, man, inevitable uh chewing out. "Man, you cats [inaudible]; we're waiting on you, you know better than …," uh but it was fun though. We still played the show and uh I guess we played a little overtime to try to compensate. I can't ever remember them uh docking us or, or deducting any of our fees for … but they were, they were mad. We were mad at ourselves, man, for missin' the train so closely. So uh, but it was a wonderful uh experience, the Baltimore, the uh Left Bank Jazz Society, you know.

Brower: I thought that was one of the best listening experiences …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … audience to musician …

Walton: Yeah. And from the musicians' standpoint, you know, all that food at every table, and uh … [chuckles] Well, you were sittin' down. You've sat down and ate with me; you know I'm a, I'm a, shall we say uh, uh moderate, I practice moderate intake. I saved part of my sandwich. It's right over there in the, on ice, so …. But anyway, in those days though I wasn't nearly as moderate. I would eat some from every one of those tables. And there was a fun, one fun thing was to, to play, which I did at least once, uh, play, uh, uh, with uh, Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt. You talk about two different personalities, and just to be in the room with them, and Sonny talked fast, making his point, whatever it was, and uh, uh, Gene Ammons was the Martin Luther King of those two. He would slow everything down. He'd say, "Sonny," you know, "I just don't agree with that." Whatever it was, you know, it just … and I was just so uh, uh, having such a heavenly feeling being in their company with their exchange, and they played just like that. Sonny was tryin' to play the, the keys off the horn, and uh, Jug was just takin' it easy, exhibiting his very huge sound, very communicative. You didn't even have to like music … [laughs] … to, you know, to enjoy him. He was just a …. And Sonny Stit was a wizard, too, in his own way. But he, he wanted to compete and uh, Gene Ammons would have none of it. He wouldn't compete. He said, "No, we're not here to …." And then one time Gene called in and uh, said that he was ill. You know I was, all of us were a little suspicious, man. Maybe there was some skullduggery or something. But it wasn't; he, he died right about a week later. And then so they sent Lucky Thompson to take his place. And oh, man, he took Sonny's attitude a whole different way than Gene Ammons did, you know. He said, "Oh man, I didn't, I didn't come here to do no contest. No, I just, I won't have that." He was so different from Gene's way to uh, respond to uh, uh Sonny Stitt's uh, competitive spirit, you know. He couldn't help himself. He would challenge. And Gene would ignore it and just do what he did, you know, but uh, uh, Lucky took it to heart. He was a different kind of personality. Lucky was a perfectionist but in another way, he was, he, he didn't fear uh, he resented this uh, uh, attitude of tryin' to compete from uh, Sonny. He resented it more than anything else. He, he, he could deal with it if he wanted to, but he, he uh, thought uh, in another kind of way. He thought that, that they shouldn't be even on the table, for

them to compete upon stage. But that was, uh, Sonny's, uh, uh, uh mode of … What do you call it? I can say it in French. Mode … uh [laughs].

Brower: Operandi.

Walton: Yeah. Okay.

Female voice: It wasn't operandi?

Walton: Yeah, oh, I'll take that. [voice above laughs] Modus operandi. [laughs] Thank you, uh, Mr. B. for your, uh, steering me into asking them. [everyone laughs] But uh, yeah, that, that was a [good?] example of, uh, some of my trips to the Left Bank. And then another one was, uh, when, uh, Etta Jones was there. Just her. And my, uh, the trio with me, Sam Jones and uh, Billy Higgins, we would play some trio tunes, and uh, a guy put it out. I forget the, you know, probably … *Memories of the Left Bank*. I can't remember what he named it, but that guy who produced it, uh, uh, his name is …

Brower: Joel Dorn?

Walton: Yeah, Joel Dorn. Yeah, he, he, he's, uh, he's deceased now. When he, uh, played that for me, you know, 'cause it was hard to get a sound, you know. The, the guy was sittin' by the tape machine at the, at the, uh, Left Bank, you know. He never even touched the machine, [laughs] you know, so sometime the bass was waaay up too loud, man, and he, he didn't, he didn't have on a headset, he wasn't that kinda … uh, what was his name? It escapes me. Uh, hm. Anyway, due to him, a lot of good music was lost 'cause this guy … Joel Dorn, got all the tapes, but a lot of them were worthless. You could do nothing with them. They would even work day and night on tryin' to balance 'em, you know. And uh, but uh, he got one outta this one. This was fantastic. She sang the *Blow Top Blues*, and Herbie Lewis happened to be on bass, just, this time along with me and Mr. …

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] Billy?

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: So this was *Three Sundays in the Seventies*?

Walton: Yeah, that sounds right, yeah.

Brower: *Live at the Left Bank*?

Walton: Uh-hm. That's a killer. I had to sit down when I heard that one – in this guy's office. I said, "Wow!" So uh, that was uh, uh, a bright moment in my memory of The Left Bank. I had

forgotten how good we sounded, you know. I guess we were takin' ourselves for granted, so to speak. But uh, that was a moment of musical ecstasy when I heard it in his office. I said, "Oh man!" So he gave me a fee and he tried to convince me that uh, he was, uh, uh seriously interested in uh … Clifford Jordan was on there, too, I think. Yeah. Yeah, and uh, Bill Harman. Do you have the personnel there?

Brower: Uh, I only have it as a trio.

Walton: Oh really?

Brower: Herbie and Billy.

Walton: Yeah, Okay. Hmm. 'Cause I remember I had to point out to him uh, give him information on some of the widows, like Billy's widow …

Brower: To get 'em the money?

Walton: Yeah, yeah. I, I suspected he might not have been that serious as he uh, uh, claimed to be, or try to reach out and find them and pay them. 'Cause Sandy Jordan, I still see her occasionally, she said, "I'm still waiting, Cedar." So, I mean, he's dead now. But anyway, uh, I don't wanna put a bad uh, vibe on somebody who uh, did that type of thing, but it is an example of uh, somebody not followin' through with uh, their, their promise.

Brower: One of the things you said you wanted to, to speak on, uh, is your time with Abbey Lincoln.

Walton: Yes, uh.

Brower: You were talking about the first rehearsal.

Walton: Yeah. Yeah, uh, I think it started when, uh, I told you that uh, I stopped Art Blakey and went into the Five Spot for a long-term engagement and we were opposite, uh, was a trio where we were opposite the Mingus dynasty. I'm not sure he called it the dynasty then, but …

Brower: Jazz Workshop, probably.

Walton: Yeah, and he had uh, sometimes quintets, sometimes sextet, and uh, uh, Max Roach was really fond of uh, of Mingus, especially, you know, he would go see him all the time. And he and Abbey Lincoln who, uh, recently married at that time, came and uh, um, Mingus was having one of his tantrums. In fact, he had his bass by the neck and he was draggin' it through some, uh, goin' toward the stage through some swinging doors. You know, it was just … practically mutilated his bass. He just let 'em close, you know. It was terrible and uh, uh, and he kept uh, sayin' where everybody could hear him, "I'm sorry Max, but you know, I don't mean to be doin' this, and I'm sorry." That's, that's what I remember, you know. And uh, I can't even remember the outcome. But anyway, during that time, that evening, uh, Abbey Lincoln told Max, "Well, this is the trio I'd like to record with." So uh, uh, I think we ended up doin' it, except by that time Tootie

wasn't around. We had a guy named J.C. Moses, uh, who's from Pittsburgh, and we had uh, Reggie, uh, we uh …

Brower: So you took Workman out of the, out of the Blakey band?

Walton: Yeah, me and him stopped at the same time, yeah, 'cause Lee Morgan had returned and uh, Wayne held his ground for, for long as he could, uh, resist uh, Miles callin' him up and tryin' to get him. And Miles finally, he went, as you know, he finally joined Miles' group in the …. Miles was uh, uh, almost eager to explain uh, uh, the, why he uh, preferred Wayne was because he reminded him of Coltrane. So uh, which I can relate to that. But it took him quite a bit of …. Miles, I used to hear uh, Wayne say, "Yeah, Miles called me today." He said, "Yeah I'm tryin' to figure out this guitar." You know, he was really making friends with him, very clever, slow approach to closing in on the uh …

Brower: The kill.

Walton: Yeah. Yeah, the [laughs] they grabbed him. But uh, Wayne made big strides, I think, with, with, uh, with Art and Miles. And then the Weather Report, Art wasn't too pleased with that uh, union uh, when he, uh … I guess at some point he witnessed how, uh Wayne and Zawinul were, and uh, I can remember some statement Art makin' that he didn't know, he didn't really approve of, uh, he thought, uh, Wayne should have been more strong, uh, stronger in that relationship. But uh, uh Zawinul was somewhat of a bully. I mean, not physically, just uh …

Brower: Badger you, mentally?

Walton: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He still couldn't stop Wayne's talent, though, in my view, you know. Wayne wrote some beauties even with that group. Yeah. And uh, so, uh, uh, in fact uh, one time I was in the company of Zawinul who I had met back when he was with Cannonball. A guy from Austria who told me that, oh man, he used to play accordion; he had a great musical background, and uh, so … And then uh, later on uh, when we uh, ran into each other, he was tellin' me how arrogant he was. He said, "Yes, I'm arrogant" – as if I had been saying that to somebody, to a newspaper, but I, but I hadn't and he knew I hadn't but that's just the way it sounded. He said, "Yes, I'm arrogant, Cedar." I'll never forget that. I never had anybody tell me they were arrogant and, and were, and were arrogant**.** [laughs] That's funny but where were we, we were leaving Blakey.

Brower: And gettin' with Abbey.

Walton: And gettin' with Abbey. Okay. So uh, uh, Mr. Moses on drums had to, had to go home on a family emergency; Jack DeJohnette was just arriving into New York from Chicago; and uh, we quickly groomed him for the trio behind Abbey Lincoln. Abbey Lincoln and the Cedar

Walton Trio. Must have been a thirteen week engagement at a place named Wells in Harlem. That's the home of Chicken and Waffles, yeah, uh …

Brower: Yes, indeedy.

Walton: Yeah, so uh, we stayed there a long time and then uh, with great success, I mean, it wasn't that big a place – along the lines of the size of the, the, the Bohemian Caverns, but totally different, you know, totally different. The bar was soon as you walked in the door, you know, the bar started.

Brower: That was down the street or up the street from Count Basie's. Wasn't Count Basie on the same [street?]?

Walton: Uh, Count Basie's was practically next door on the same side of the street. But uh, that was a wonderful gig – until they decided to put upstairs a disco, which would have been all right but in between our songs, you could hear Dum Dum Dum Dum.

Brower: Was that similar to your experience this weekend?

Walton: No, I didn't even know it was up there.

Brower: On the 3rd floor of the Caverns?

Walton: Right, I did not know.

Brower: Okay, look, I hope you don't notice it tonight either.

Walton: Yeah, I'm sorry you brought it up because I, I, I certainly … We're so far from – aren't we? – where they are. They're not directly above the stage, are they?

Brower: Well, two flights up.

Walton: Oh, two flights up. Yeah. I didn't hear them. But this is one flight up in, in, in Wells, and you could hear Dum Dum, and uh, Abbey said, "I can't take this, Cedar."

Brower: Did you write *One Flight Up* or *One Flight Down*?

Walton: One Flight Down.

Brower: Okay, so it wasn't about that?.

Walton: No, no. [laughs] Uh, so they said, "Cedar, what can we do?" And I just happened to know that uh, uh, Betty Carter had just returned from California. I think she was livin' out there for a while. And she was out in New Jersey. So I said, "Well, Betty Carter's right over there in New Jersey, you know." They wanted to keep the show goin' with somebody in the Cedar Walton Trio. So [laughs] when Betty … They got hold of Betty, Betty Carter came in and uh – Am I still

good? – and uh, so for all, uh, practical purposes, I recommended her to, uh, you know, to the club, to, to replace Abbey Lincoln, and uh … I'm not sure if she knew that or not. At this point I don't care, but I mean, the way it turned out was so … First thing she did was reduce my salary about five dollars. That, that uh, that made me cry. It broke my heart, you know. In those days that was a big reduction, you know. That's uh, that's a whole week's worth of subway tokens. I was comin' in from Brooklyn and so uh, and I still had to take a cab after I got off the train to get over around, get over to the club. Anyway uh, and then uh, on, on, our conversations during intermissions I couldn't help but bring up Abbey Lincoln about one thing or another. And oh man, Betty lit into me and said," I'm not your [pause] cotton-pickin' mother," you know. I don't know where that came from. I don't care about Abbey Lincoln and uh, and then I made the mistake of being like two, three, four minutes late a few times. And on about the fifth time uh, as I entered about five minutes late, I saw John Hicks down at the end of the bar [chuckles] and that's the end of that, that's, the rest is history. He stayed with her for about eight years or more. I stayed with her maybe eight days. [laughs]

Brower: So, what year would this have been?

Walton: Uh, this is seventy … oh God … seventy something.

Brower: Middle '70s?

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Early? … maybe seventy [inaudible-overlapping voices] seventy-three

Walton: Yeah, maybe just seventy, uh one or two. Yeah. …

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] Betty [inaudible] Chris Marlowe [?] and, and Calvin, Calvin Jones on the bass.

Walton: Uh-huh. Yeah, I know who you mean. It was Calvin something else but …

Brower: Tall kind of guy?

Walton: Yeah, yeah.

Brower: Wore glasses.

Walton: Yes. Yeah, I know him. But uh, Calvin Hill? No. It may be … yeah …

Brower: It might be.

Walton: Yeah. Yeah. But uh, so me and Abbey stayed friends, in fact uh, uh, I guess after her and uh, Max broke up, she moved to California and I'd written this song named uh, *The Maestro*, and uh, uh, before, uh, I got the song to Abbey, uh, we had a, uh, presented it to her, uh …

Mixed Voices: [hotel engineer comes into room, discussing the heat]

Walton: Yeah. We had uh, presented it to Sam Jones, presented it to uh, uh, Sarah Vaughan who when we had a chance uh, when we were in her company in the North Sea Jazz Festival, and Tom Flanagan really liked the song and he would play it with Ella Fitzgerald. But neither one of them liked *The Maestro.* Yes. [chuckles] And uh, so uh, when I got out, I had a chance to uh, record it and present it to uh, Abbey Lincoln, and I told her the story about those other divas who uh, didn't like it. She said, "I'm glad they didn't like it because I'm really eager to do it." [chuckles]

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: So uh, she said she was very eager to do it and we did it. And uh, I wrote the lyrics. I haven't written any lyrics since that, and uh, hadn't written any prior to that. So anyway, uh, she was under uh, the impression that when she arrived at the studio that it was her record session, not … So I didn't tell her any different. And uh, and when she found out, she didn't really care, you know, just, just a misconception.

Mixed Voices: [discussing how much longer for the interview] Fifteen minutes.

Walton: At the time, uh, in our group was uh, the late Bob Berg on tenor saxophone, the late Billy Higgins and uh, David Williams and uh, and we invited Abbey uh, and she sang my song, *Maestro*, and uh, as you know, he was named after the song, the LP, and uh, it was a great occasion. She, she loved the song. She, we had a rehearsal at her, at her place in L.A. and uh, oh man, she just adored it. You could tell, you could feel it right then at the rehearsal. She did an amazing job, I think. And it's a, it's, it's even hard to … I never heard any other singer even try it, you know. Uh, but she did, she did enough for all the singers, you know. I think she did it justice, and I really liked the way she interrupted it and uh, some of the lyrics needed to be spoken, you know, like a, uh, "a duke be chosen." I told her, "Say that, don't sing that," you know. And so she did, she did it gladly and very effectively. And so uh, that's one of my proudest uh, moments, uh, and uh, she was a wonderful uh, artist and a beautiful … In fact I was just lookin' at a picture of her that you should just see … Oh boy. Yeah, this is [chuckles] this is not a, this is the way she chose to dress on this pose here. I've got another picture I'll show you after we finish [fillin'?]. She so young and uh, beautiful, you know, it was taken at another period of her life. But uh, her and Max had a wonderful marriage for, for a long time. They did things, *Freedom Now Suite*, you know, a lot of things like that uh, protesting uh, the ways of the South and that was the beginning, I think, of uh, uh, significant protests, especially from the music world, uh, against uh, the discrimination laws, etc. Uh, the outlaws. [chuckles] So anyway …

Brower: How did that sensibility work itself into your music, if it has?

Walton: Oh, I uh, don't have a good answer for that because uh, what I do musically I uh, I can't uh, uh, incorporate anything socially uh, really that I can tell you. Uh, I'd have to think about that. I, I can't just, I don't have uh, uh, uh, uh, a real, uh, motivation to, to do that in the first place. I mean, to, you know, and it's a great question, mind you, and I think there's a lot of answers from a lot of composers. But I, uh, I don't, I think uh, instrumentally, it's, it's uh, it's uh, more like a science as compared to a movement to me. *Freedom Now Suite*, I think, had uh, uh, all kinda vocals in it, uh, you know, expressing uh, this uh, period in American history. But uh, my music is instrumental, it's not uh … except …

Brower: … it's not programmatic.

Walton: No, with the exception of *The Maestro*, and it's about Duke Ellington. It's not uh, social, socially significant, I don't think, you know, except a story about one man and his uh, contribution to, to, to music history.

Brower: I want to sort of go in a different direction. I want you to talk about your influences at the piano.

Walton: Well uh …

Brower: Players that you really admire or influenced you in how you approach the instrument, how you play and how you think musically.

Walton: Well, I mean, I would say uh, in a large uh, uh, uh, the orchestra was Duke Ellington's uh, instrument, but uh, I, I think I'm one of the few people who really appreciates his piano playing while he's involved with his orchestra 'cause it's so spare and then sometimes it's not spare. It's totally unpredictable and he has some runs that I've never heard anybody uh, even come close to. And they're all different so I mean, this is a man I admire heavily uh, the piano. Thelonious Monk, of course, but that's uh, uh, uh, like Ellington; it's incorporated with his uh, compositions, his style. And then uh, on another level uh, Hank Jones, uh, uh, uh, Bud Powell, prior to that uh, because he sort of like invented uh, as far as I'm concerned, the uh, approach uh, um, to swing that, that, that no approach had preceded him … uh, that I know of, you know. He, he, he uh, succeeded uh, Earl Fatha Hines uh, in terms of that overall style and took it to his own personal level which happens to be the roots of bebop music. And it was a magnificent uh, uh … I heard some of it on this station … What'd you say? Sirius Radio?

Brower: XM?

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Well, I guess it's the same thing now.

Walton: Yeah. Uh, magnificent artist, you know, until, of course, he got uh, he was, he had the misfortune to get sick. Uh, uh, they tried some … Word has it that they tried some, uh, shock treatments on him before they had perfected shock treatments, if they are in fact shock now … I mean, uh [chuckles] perfected now. But uh, that was too bad for him because he lost, but he didn't lose his uh, touch for his arrangements and everything, but away from the piano, he was like a vegetable almost. So …

Brower: You've recorded a lot of Monk's music, visited Monk's music repeatedly in your repertoire.

Walton: Yeah, well Monk, Monk was very uh admiring of pianists, and I consider myself fortunate to be one of them. He was very nice to me all the time. You know, I mean, uh, we have no other person to uh, compare our relationship to, you know – except me and him. And he was always, you know, a piano player [pronounces "piano player" the way Monk always did]. He would say, he would talk with his teeth closed. He said, [imitating Monk], "piano players supposed to be sharp," he would say, for instance. And uh, uh another thing is, "Play your own shit." And that's what he did all the time. That's what I would do all the time, except I got a few arrangements as you reminded the audience of uh, standards. But so did he. He had a couple uh, *Sweet and Lovely* comes to mind. Trane. Have you heard that?

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Uh-huh. And so uh …

Brower: [inaudible] Monk is a lot about space and uh, almost making good [?] implications of what he played. You play a lot of details, a lot of details in your music.

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: It's fascinating to hear you explore Monk, um, you know, where he is harmonically with, you know, with your approaches.

Walton: Yeah, well I tried … perhaps I'm guilty of tryin' to enlarge on it or, uh, you know, develop it, you know, what he left out, maybe. You know, I don't know exactly uh, how to explain that, but uh, it's almost impossible in my view to not be attracted to Thelonious Monk, his style, magnificent, totally individual style. And he is a good … He came up in the Stride era and he was good at that, too, which uh, I missed that era.

Brower: How about Tatum?

Walton: Oh yeah, no question about it, yeah. I was weeks, years, listen' to him. But just enjoyment, but then I found myself unconsciously tryin' to emulate what he did, but certainly not uh, note for note. Never. Uh, I took a different approach of being influenced in his case, you know, 'cause he did the undoable, [chuckles] you know, on the keys. And he had arrangements of standards. He didn't have many uh, originals. Didn't need to. His style was to approach standards,

you know, and arranged 'em and uh, he had arrangements uh, if you listen to him as much as I, I, I did, I have, you can hear 'em.

Brower: Do you think of yourself as a, as a romantic?

Walton: Uh, no. Uh …

Brower: In terms of maybe you're interested in developing melody and exploring all the implications of that?

Walton: Uh, I don't exactly know what that means, musically, romantic. You mean like uh, uh, Beethoven or Brahms or somebody in the jazz uh, were romantic? Who, who … I don't know what romantic is.

Brower: Well, I think I'm thinking about a bunch of things. I think I'm thinking about Romanticism in music …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … includes some of those people.

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: And I'm also thinking about the affection for, for ballads, for standards and really bringing out the, the values, the musical values in those standards, which I find interesting, just … when you talked about composers, you talk about really … like Stravinsky …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: …and things like that, and when I think of how you explore um, the standard repertoire …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … there seems to be an affection for these, for the qualities of these songs.

Walton: Yeah. Well, uh, perhaps I am a Romantic, but uh, for you asking me that, I wouldn't know whether to say yes or no. I, I really wouldn't. I uh, uh, If you …If you think I am, I am. That's the way I look at that. I don't know how to apply uh, someone being a Romantic to what I play, to, to, to, to how I play, how I … I certainly love uh, uh love songs, you know. I mean uh …

Brower: You just seem to have an inner sort of … with these, uh, inexhaustible access to songs.

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: You must know hundreds and hundreds of songs.

Walton: Well, may one hundred. [laughs] I would be surprised at hundreds and hundreds, but uh, uh I've heard hundreds and hundreds and uh, chosen to uh, uh, try to uh, uh, recreate them in my style in many instances.

Brower: And while we're, you know, in this area, go back to Hank Jones and …

Walton: Oh yeah. Did I mention him as one of my favorites?

Brower: You did.

Walton: Yeah, right.

Brower: An early sort of a model in your youth, but …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: … later you come to know him and, and …

Walton: Yeah, but I knew him still uh, uh, uh, uh minimally. I don't know him that well. I mean, I speak to him when, you know, and we've been on tours together even in Japan where they have ten pianists. Uh, they called it "a hundred golden fingers." And uh, I got to know him uh, a little bit, you know. He's a very uh, uh gentlemanly person, you know. One time I told him, I said, after I'd heard him play, I said, I said, uh "Hank, that was impeccable." And you know what he said? "What do dat mean?" So he's got this kind of sense of humor that's above the norm.

Brower: He went to the vernacular on you.

Walton: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he's … I found out he's a, he's good at that. So uh, anyway uh, Hank is I think uh, or was impeccable in his, in his style and his uh, uh dedication to music, no question about it. And he uh, he was at a concert, he was gonna back up Carmen McRae that night, and I saw him running into a practice room to make sure he had her music right, you know. He was that kind of person. So uh … perfectionist to a, to a degree.

Mixed voices: [background voices talking about how much time is left]

Walton: Yeah, I think we would … I'd like to do that tomorrow.

Brower: Okay. We done?

Walton: Yeah.

END OF DAY ONE

Brower: My name is William Brower. It is October 3rd, 2010. I'm sitting with Cedar Walton and Kenneth Kimmery conducting an oral history for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program. We're at the Dupont Hotel in Washington, D.C. This is Day 2 of our interview. Um, I think we were talking about influences when we wrapped up uh, yesterday. Um, and I, I just want to start today with the, with how you feel about or think about being characterized as a Hard Bop pianist.

Walton: Well, to my knowledge, I had never been uh – until you just told me – I've never been uh, aware that I was characterized as a Hard Bop pianist, so uh, in view of that uh, it's not such a bad, uh, characterization.

Brower: In almost every uh, review I read, uh, and the school of music with which you are associated … Hard Bop.

Walton: Right.

Brower: Preeminent hard bop pianist. …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] thought of in those terms. You know, I think of other pianist that they would probably think of in those terms. It would be like a Horace Silver or Bobby Timmons, and some others. Um, do you think that that is a, um … First of all, how would you define Hard Bop?

Walton: Uh, I wouldn't because uh, it seems to me it's a more of a, a term of, of, that was uh, uh brought into popularity by journalists. It's a journalistic term because what I heard of and what I would, what I pursued, as I recall as a young uh, student of the music, was Bebop. You know which of course originated uh, in the words of Dizzy Gillespie from, from uh, uh, a drum lick: be bop. You know? And so Hard Bop was something I started reading about and still do, but I have no uh, way of uh, relating to what it means – Hard Bop or Bebop. To me, it's, it's Bebop and Bebop represents the uh, period that uh, succeeded the Swing Era. Bebop moved in as a style of uh, choice of the uh, uh, of the period. And uh, and uh, oh man, uh, countless practitioners uh, come to mind. Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie more or less popularized it more than anybody else. And then uh, they had uh, offshoots, offspring – offshoots, not offspring, I think would be a better word – uh, that followed in their footsteps, you know. Miles Davis, uh, uh, let me see, uh, and then there was some uh, artists who were uh, in the transition. They overlapped. Lester Young was definitely a prominent figure in the Swing Era with his uh, uh, epics uh, with Count Basie, excursions of that uh, style. And then Bebop came into focus and he kept right on going, so it was uh, his is a perfect case of my view of uh, of styles overlapping, you know. And so uh, uh … so gettin' back to your question. Hard Bop is something uh, that I, I, I read about probably

just like you did. [chuckles] Uh, I don't know exactly what they mean by Hard Bop, I just know there's Bop or Bebop, and it's the period that uh, came after the Swing Era after the Basies and the … But I mean, they all overlapped. I mean, I heard the Duke Ellington Band play uh, tunes that had uh, definitely had a definite Bebop flavor, you know. After he'd established his … Duke Ellington is not a prime example because he was such an individual, it would be hard to pin him down into a style, which he said many times himself. Uh, and uh, as you, uh, probably have surmised, I'm a big fan of Ellington, his approach, his uh, method of uh, presentation, his insistence on giving credit to a soloist every time they solo, and his uh brilliant interludes at the piano. I always used to think that he played the piano as if he had an appointment somewhere. [chuckles] He would uh, he would play uh, it would sound like it was really a, it was really an interlude. It didn't sound like, it was something in of itself. It was part of a whole. The orchestra, then the piano interlude, and the orchestra would finish this piece.

Brower: How did Strayhorn uh … Do you think of Strayhorn as an extension of Ellington of uh, or as something unto itself?

Walton: Alter-ego is the term I like to use. He was uh, uh … You could call it, you could say an extension or uh, I think, quite feasible too that you could, that he could be referred to as an extension, but the thing is I just uh, wasn't present when uh, Ellington discovered him. I don't know exactly how they came together except uh, Ellington certainly had a knack for finding people that uh nobody else had found. He found uh, Strayhorn when he was very young and very precocious and uh, enlisted him immediately, so I read. And uh it's totally believable because … And then, now uh, it's uh, it's been revealed that uh, their styles were so compatible that uh, uh, prior to uh, uh Stayhorn's affiliation with Ellington, Ellington was doing most of the orchestration, but he was good at farming out stuff to people who could write in his style, I presume, you know. And uh, he was a great composer and a prolific composer, and during his Cotton Club days and uh, beyond. But then Strayhorn came in, Strayhorn started writing everything. [chuckles] But in this society in the Forties uh, being an African American and also a, a homosexual, uh, you were not gonna be presented. And this was a fact. So through Ellington uh, uh, Strayhorn could exist musically. And he was forced to do that. I'm told that uh, uh, that the copyist – you know, when an arrangement was finished – they wouldn't even copy [inaudible]. Not that I'm pitying him now 'cause he was a great, a wizard, a genius of uh, Americana, American music. But they wouldn't even copy his music because of homophobic, they were homophobic, I think, to put it mildly. And uh so …

Brower: Do you find uh when you, when you visited Ellington and Strayhorn um, you know, compositions that you'd like to interpret …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: … Did you find something different in Strayhorn to develop and, than you do with Ellington pieces and, if so, what would that be?

Walton: Well, I don't know who wrote what, to tell you the truth, to be blunt about it, you know. Uh, *Satin Doll*, I just found out that Strayhorn wrote. You know, I was intrigued by this piece when I heard the first 78 record of it on Capitol written by Duke Ellington, so … Who's to say? I

mean uh, when I play it I think of Duke but I mean, now I know it's Strayhorn wrote it. There was a movie score, *Anatomy of a Murder,* you may remember; Strayhorn wrote all that, I found out uh, very recently. It's a video that's available that they show once in a while about this. And uh, one guy, and I don't know the guy's name so perhaps I shouldn't quote him, but uh, he's the one that pointed out on this video that you'll see on PBS once in a while, that uh, being African American and homosexual uh, was uh, Strayhorn's reasons for not being able to be uh, [in a position?] on it in his own, in his own right, so to speak. And Ellington knew that and uh, it was no problem for Ellington to uh, utilize his talents and uh, in view of this uh, somewhat problematic situation he found himself in.

Brower: Goin' back to this, to the notes about Hard Bop. I think that you are right. It is a term, a journalist term um, and maybe a marketing term, but people were hearing something in the development of the Bop style or Modern Jazz style, some uh, different thread, some, something that caused them to want to say well, "It's Bop, but it's a different kind of Bop."

Walton: Right.

Brower: Uh, and I think, you know, one of the things people point to is a focus or use of, of a, sort of gospel elements or you know, [funky?] soulful approach …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … a certain kind of hard groove …

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: … and typified by the kind of drive that, that Blakey put in there.

Walton: Uh-hm.

Brower: Um, think of Cannonball's bands or Horace Silver's bands as being more typical Hard Bop bands. You know, with that in mind, um, does it have any relevance?

Walton: Uh, no, if you uh, uh admit [chuckles] that uh, it's a journalist uh, uh, uh term of Hard Bop, uh, uh, I would have to agree with you. I mean uh, certainly these artists, Horace Silver in particular, he was another one who uh, who uh really concentrated on his own work, on his own compositions for the most part, with an occasional visit to uh, standard. And Thelonious Monk is another prime example of somebody, totally individual and totally uh, uh a user of his own original pieces all the time. And uh, he was just a presentation and his was … like his … it turned out to be they would get up and dance uh, it was a happy … That must have made him quite happy to be able to present his music uh, almost significantly uh, exclusive, you know, Monk pieces and uh, and uh, Horace Silver too.

Brower: You focused on a sort of a handful of Monk pieces that you've interpreted, you know, over and over again …

Walton: Yeah, I have a Monk medley that I, that I uh play more than any other Monk piece. It includes uh, oh about uh, come to think of it, about five, six tunes: *Evidence*, *Ruby, My Dear*, uh, *Off Minor*, uh, *'Round Midnight*, and uh, *Blue Monk*, and *Rhythm-A-Ning.* So it's an extensive medley.

Brower: Was it … what is it about Monk's music? Now, you talked a bit about your relationship with Monk yesterday. What are you, what are you, what are you finding in that music that makes you want to uh, revisit it and keep, keep, keep interpreting it?

Walton: Well, it, it's just a great uh, example of uh, of personal uh, style and the way it's presented uh, uh, from someone, an eccentric person. He didn't have a lot to say uh, uh, you know, verbally, but uh, his music was very very recognizable and very popular among uh, those of us who, who, who, uh, were still at the student stage compared to him. He came, he was, he was another example of overlapping from Swing into Bebop, you know. He was, in his generation uh, you are required, as a pianist you are required to Stride, know how to stride. And he was no exception. Ellington, Basie, all those guys. When the conversion came uh, they were fortunate enough to have retained this, this uh, skill, in my view, you know. I uh am not uh a great strider. I can stride slowly. Ellis Larkins comes to mind. You know that name?

Brower: I do.

Walton: Yeah. He, he, he took the uh, he uh, helped me realize that you don't have to be Art Tatum to stride, you know, you can stride a little bit with a little of the edge taken off and still uh, uh, get your point across. And uh, remembering one of your questions from our previous interview uh, uh, yesterday's interview: You said was I romantic. I mean, did I consider myself a romantic uh, composer or musician and uh so uh, these uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, I think examples of these transitions uh, uh, an example of a, uh, you know, from uh, the uh pure Swing style converting over uh, making it smooth, smooth, uh, even un… uh, uh, you know like uh, it slips by you, you know. There's a, a, a, a, you know, a way to, they manage to uh, uh, transition from one era to the other without you noticing it. [chuckles] You know? And uh, uh certainly uh, there's some pieces that uh, Monk composed and uh Ellington and Horace Silver composed that, uh, were somewhat romantic. Most of them, those, in my view, were ballads. And in my view, I have a couple of ballads, a couple of slower pieces that uh, made me think of your question. Uh, I'll give it some thought and maybe reflect and uh perhaps they would qualify as uh, being, uh, uh, uh, having a romantic flavor to them.

Brower: The, the, is it … You express an interest in more modern classical composers yesterday. Do you hear the affinity in Monk to that?

Walton: No, not necessarily. I just hear Monk in Monk. Uh, Monk is uh, his style is uh, is uh, I think something that's uh, self-contained, in my view. Now I could be wrong. This is just my uh, uh opinion. Monk is in, in, in and of itself – Monk's uh, contribution.

Brower: You know, last night you were, there was a conversation goin' on at the piano, I think before the second set, when Javon was talking something about the relationship with Coltrane.

Walton: Yes, he mentioned that he has uh, a version of the, I think they call it *Outtakes*, uh, on Atlantic Records at that time where they actually, you could actually hear a, a short conversation between me and Trane. That's one of the things he was talkin' about. Does that sound like what it was?

Brower: Exactly.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: What was that, give us that, that circumstance.

Walton: Well, I didn't remember it, but uh what Javon told me he heard us saying was uh, that uh, I was saying, "Well uh, Trane, you know, these changes are so difficult."

Brower: Changes to what?

Walton: Uh, all the pieces on his uh, *Giant Steps* presentation. Um, *Black Sonny*, *Giant Steps*, *Countdown*, uh, *Naima* – that, that, that recording. That's what he was referring to. And so, he said he heard, he wanted me to hear it because I hadn't heard it, didn't remember it.

Brower: You weren't involved in that recording, were you?

Walton: Yeah! Yeah, I was …

Brower: I thought that was Tommy and …

Walton: It was Tommy Flanagan, but before Tommy and them did it uh, I did it with a drummer named Lex Humphries and Paul Chambers and Trane. And then uh, we uh, reflectively, I was with J. J. Johnson. I went out of town and Lex Humphries was with Dizzy Gillespie. He went out of town. So when we returned to town, uh, Coltrane had to, had to finish … the company said, "No, you gotta do this recording." So he chose some other people. He chose Flanagan and Arthur Taylor for members to finish the session.

Brower: So you would have been on the session?

Walton: Yeah, but it came out anyway, after he, uh, after his demise.

Brower: So you're not on the original *Giants … Steps* album.

Walton: Release? No, no.

Brower: Release that has Flanagan, Wynton Kelly, a couple of different... [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Walton: Yeah, right.

Brower: … combinations there, uh, it is in here somewhere. [laughs]

Walton: What do you need … Do you have to have it now? Oh, you need it to refer as a reference.

Brower: Yeah. No, this was the original …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: What you're saying is there's another release that has …

Walton: Yeah. It's called uh, *Ultimate Takes.*

Brower: Okay.

Walton: And uh, somebody handed it to me in Japan once after John Coltrane had passed away. And I was delighted. I said, "Wow!" It's as if he was reaching out from the grave and givin' me a little boost. And uh, the uh, uh, conversation that Javon was referring to was the one uh, that uh, uh, had uh, had me asking Trane, uh, uh, uh, where'd he expect me to uh, express, express on these changes since it was so, going by so rapidly and uh, not that, uh, in a, in a predictable uh direction. He, he said, just, just, how can I express myself. Uh, uh, and the word "truth" came in there somewhere. Uh, I got to ask Javon again but so uh, my retort was uh, "Well I don't want to tell any lies." And he said John cracked up. You could hear him laughing at that … the always comedic Walton [chuckles] in that instance. And uh I was delighted to hear, I had never heard that. But Javon is a, is an extreme – Javon Jackson we're talking about, ladies and gentlemen – uh, collector, you know, of tidbits that uh nobody else even thinks about. He's wonderfully gifted and uh, has a wonderful leaning toward that.

Brower: I'm gonna have to get that.

Walton: Yeah. [chuckles]

Brower: Round out my stuff.

Walton: Yeah. Well, I would refer to uh, uh, I would contact Javon first because it might not be on the … 'cause I definitely would have heard it 'cause I was, I owned it, you know, the uh … So he might [mean?] another take, alternate of the alternate. [chuckles] But uh, I was very pleased uh too, 'cause I, when it came to *Giant Steps*, I did something that uh, is uh, I realize now is a big

no-no. I declined a solo. It was too hard for me, you know. So John said, "Okay." Just played it without a piano solo, but Tommy had tried to negotiate the changes, with some success, I mean … Certainly, it was uh, it wasn't anything to be ashamed of when he played.

Brower: You talked about (any more)... How extensive was your relationship with Coltrane?

Walton: Oh, just uh, mutual admiration or we were uh neighbors, so to speak. We lived within a radius of eight to ten blocks of each other, and uh, I forgot how we met, but uh, anyway, I would visit … me and Lex Humphries would go up … sometimes he had his old drum set with him. We'd visit him unannounced in his apartment, and each time we would hear him in there playin'. He played 24/7 – except when he was exhausted and as his wife put it, "Fell across the bed with the sax on his chest." And uh, so uh, he's just like me, I guess, because uh, I was a young musician and he could see some of his self, himself, in me uh, tryin' my best to uh, uh cope with this amazing uh, uh transition that he was makin' on a personal level. I used to, the way I used to put it was: He put in more man-hours on the horn than anybody ever existed on the planet. He just played and played and played, even on intermission on his uh gigs. On one occasion uh, they had not two but three bands at the Berlin. I was with Art Blakey and uh, there was uh, John Coltrane's group, and there was also Betty Carter and her group. And uh, way in the back there was a very old fashioned uh, washin', dish washin' machine, one of these that uh, I hadn't seen before or since, you know. It was, I guess they were built for restaurants. The thing was like a round … looks something like a roulette table. Uh, but rusty, you know. [chuckles] They weren't using it, they'd even stopped using it by this time. So you, it was way, very far back in the, in the back of the club. Uh, through these swinging doors, it looked like saloon doors that the waiters came out off, if you can picture that. So he was way, as far back as you could get, still playing on intermission. But when the doors swung open, you could hear him. So I uh, Betty Carter saw me walkin' in that direction, so she said on the mike, "Cedar, tell him to please stop doin' that." So I said, "Okay." So uh, as I got nearer to him, I thought about was I was about … my, my, what do you call it? My uh, my mission. [chuckles] And when I got back to him, I just said uh, "How you doin', John? How's the family?" No way I was gonna tell *this* man to stop playing, under any circumstances. So I consider that a nice memory. The fact that they had three bands at once, to me, is uh fantastic.

Brower: I was gonna ask you, uh …

Walton: That was the jazz corner of the world.

Brower: Yeah.

Walton: Berlin, it was …

Brower: How many people could be seated there?

Walton: Oh man, I don't know exactly but uh …

Brower: About 200 or … ?

Walton: Maybe 250. Maybe. But at least 200, yeah, between 200 and 250.

Brower: So it would be more of a room like uh …

Walton: It was in a basement, but uh, a little different from uh, your Caverns here. It was a long, it was a long stairway, you know, carpeted and uh easily acceptable (accessible), about uh, wide enough for say, maybe uh, eight people, you know on the stairway with railings. And then down at the bottom of the stair was the box office, and a few more steps down was the club which was uh, there was a bar, uh, uh on the left, and then uh, there were booths on the right, and there were tables all through the middle. So it was a sizable club, beautiful stage. You [could?] get Basie upon the stage, except you couldn't, you couldn't get…

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] Comfortably

Walton: Yeah, but without the piano. The piano was down but that didn't matter.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Walton: Yeah. The, the band was elevated and Basie, uh … but uh, on this uh Blakey uh, LP, you have uh … *Ugetsu* Do you have that one?

Brower: I do.

Walton: Yeah, you can see me. I'm the … the piano onstage on that one. So, I wasn't the leader and there … we didn't have a big band and so we were able to squeeze me in and you can see just a little part of my face on the, on the photo. But uh, that's when I first heard Basie. Prior to that I'd heard Ellington 'cause Ellington, I presume, traveled more extensively throughout this country than Basie. So when I heard uh Basie and uh the new uh vocalist, Joe Williams, down there, I was just blown away. I said, "Wow! What is this?"

Brower: What kind of money were you, were you making or did you know what the band was making, making … They have three bands here; I mean, what kind of nut was that?

Walton: I have no idea. I would have to do some uh, uh virtual math and uh, that's not a good question for me. Uh … When baie was there there was nobody there but him, though. I mean, I remember that much. Couldn't have three small uh … the amount of people in his uh, organization, uh, amounted to uh, a total of three small groups, or even more maybe. You know, four, five.

Brower: If you're countin' bodies …

Walton: Five trumpets and uh yeah …

Brower: Three bands …

Walton: Yeah. For a total of one Basie band, yeah. Betty Carter and her trio, and Art Blakey and his sextet and then Trane and his quartet, so, it was almost, almost a balance but uh, I have no idea what the nut was, uh …

Brower: How would that, how would an evening like that unfold? Who was the opener? Who was the … Was Betty the opener?

Walton: I cannot remember, I'm sorry. Uh, I uh, though you could presume that she was. There's no reason why she shouldn't have been. She could be sandwiched in the middle or Trane would start, and they might have varied it every night; I'm not sure.

Brower: And how long a set where you playing?

Walton: Oh man, at least an hour I would think. It's a … even though we might be instructed to play forty minutes, I'm sure we played an hour.

Brower: Well, that would be like one Trane tune?

Walton: [laughs] Sometime. He hadn't gotten to that point yet they would play that long.

Brower: Uh-huh. Was that the Elvin, McCoy, Jimmy Grier band?

Walton: Yeah. Uh-hm. That's who it was. And it was just very exciting. We played opposite them uh, in uh, Lincoln Center, the original Lincoln Center up on 64th Street – Alice Tully Hall. I remember one night … they had a long bar where we were waiting and we could hear them. They had a, uh, uh, acoustic sound system that they uh, piped into the bar. We could hear Trane's group and uh, and uh, he uh, sort of opened for us as uh, as we called it. I hadn't, that term hadn't uh, really, uh, surfaced yet: opening act. Not in our community. But he played first and then we, we were very popular so … perhaps a few steps more popular especially with Art Blakey and his uh …uh reputation and uh, uh fame, you know. So it was only fitting and proper they would start, but we could hear them so clearly – I'll always remember that – through the PA system and out at the bar which was long and empty because everybody was inside listening, so it was just our band, you know. It may be uh, four stools apart just, you know, relaxing, using that as a dressing room. We had dressing rooms but the sound seemed to be better. I don't recall the exact reason why we were out there but uh …

Brower: Was there, was there a … I know that there was a, people were – and I don't want to be stuck on Trane, since we're here … um … Trane uh … What was the uh, the band was really

opening, I mean, by the mid-Sixties, the band was really like getting' open and Trane and Elvin were like goin' in this direction …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … of how, how people were sort of astounded, amazed by his work ethic and you know, definitely appreciated him as someone who had gone through all the stages … no one could question, Was he grounded in the tradition or not.

Walton: Hm.

Brower: Was there starting to be some uh, debate or discussion about where he was takin' the music?

Walton: Uh, no. Not at that moment when we played opposite each other. He would play uh, uh, uh … let's see, what's that song uh, *My Favorite Things* and uh *Naima* and uh, uh, his uh, his Bebop sort of like uh …

Brower: Was still there.

Walton: Yeah, yeah, definitely, yeah. It was just uh, what Elvin adding a definite new flavor. Elvin's playing was totally original in my view. And uh, a total fit for uh, for Coltrane, John Coltrane.

Brower: What about where McCoy was going?

Walton: Yeah, yeah, same thing, a perfect fit. It was a … they were making history.

Brower: Could you at that time have any sense of where he would go with this music?

Walton: No. No, we were thinkin' about ourselves, man. I mean, it's a good question, mind you, had I been an historian, but I was workin' with … where can I see the Walton's career with Art Blakey then. So I was enjoyin', just enjoyin' the music just like any other fan. What direction they were goin' in didn't, just didn't occur to me, like it would perhaps to you. But not to me. But uh, uh, I think it's a very valid question but uh, I'm just not prepared to give you much input in it because I can remember that I was so delighted to be in this group that I was in, you know. And such a, uh, first-rate group, you know, to be in the Messengers.

Brower: Let me, let me approach this a slightly different way. Off camera we were talking about your relationship with Billy Higgins and about how you, when you first heard him …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … and encountering, you know, 1959 is a sort of his, this watershed year, you know; you get *Giant Steps*, um, you get, you know, Ornette hitting New York …

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: … you know, this big, you know, sort of, sort of a horizon, sort of an horizon moment, so to speak, in the music …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … What was your perception of Ornette and Don Cherry and Billy Higgins when that hit?

Walton: Oh, just the uh, perception-wise, I was just totally blown away. I just uh, ever time I would come off the road uh, with J. J., I'd hustle down there to hear him 'cause they had quite a long-term engagement in those days. Uh, engagements were longer then, maybe six months or somethin'. And that's how long they were – or more – at the Five Spot, so I had a whole lot of opportunities to go and hear 'em. And I was just in wonderment at how they uh, it was like magic, you know, they had put this music together. Just amazing. Word had it Miles Davis went down and sat in with 'em, and people like Leonard Bernstein went down there to hear this new music. John Lewis of the MJQ reportedly uh, championed Ornette and his new approach. So uh, it was a, definitely a, uh, uh, a thing of interest, uh, a group that was making uh innovative uh, uh, uh steps toward uh, something uh, new.

Brower: Okay, of interest or of controversy?

Walton: Well, of interest to me as a musician. I said it wasn't much of a controversy uh, maybe that was in the press, could be. I remember … I hate to lay all bad things on the journalists, but uh, no, to a musician this is just something that you just enjoy, at least, I can't speak for all the musicians but I liked to assume the role of the, of the, just a listener, a fan, without tryin' to uh, diagnose the music or anything like that … uh, dissect or you know, analyze. [It's just?], wow, that's good, this makes me feel good. And so that's what uh, kept drawing me back over and over.

Brower: Were there things in the, in the, in the … were there, were there trends or styles or players in the quote-unquote avant-garde, new thing, great Black music, all those different terms that were thrown around in the 60s, that didn't make you feel good? That you felt …

Walton: No. I, I didn't uh, I didn't uh, uh run into any that didn't, uh, to tell you the absolute truth. I'm tryin' my best to think of some that uh, might of, uh annoyed me. Even Cecil Taylor, for instance, would be a, a prime example, something that probably should annoy me, but it didn't because we had, we both had keys to a gentleman named David Amram's apartment and uh he travelled a lot. David was a conductor and he gave us keys and uh whoever got there first had a shot at the piano. Neither of us had pianos of our own at that time. And so sometime uh he arrived and I was already there practicing my Bud Powell or uh Bebop or whatever you want …. And then sometime he was already there when I arrived practicing, Cecil Taylor. So uh, for that

reason, I think uh, we've always been uh, not uh, friends, but uh, uh, shall we say, uh, faithful mutual admirers, in a sense. Him to dare use uh, what I like to call uh … one of the names I have for it is just raw energy in, in his music, you know, just … and then that would just … just amazes me and still … amazed me and still does. And he's complimented me on occasion. And I have friends who know him and said, "Yeah, Cecil is quite selective, never heard him say a bad word about you." And I think it stems back from those days when we had those keys to that apartment.

Brower: That's interesting.

Walton: [laughs] [general laughter]

Brower: David Amram is an interesting figure.

Walton: Yesh, he still, I think he just turned eighty and they were celebrating his birthday at some event.

Brower: He's pops, he's popped, you know, a variety of places, kind of almost, almost, I want to …

Walton: Enigma?

Brower: … use the term "pixie."

Walton: Oh, okay. [chuckles]

Brower: You know, the way he kind of pops up and adds, is able to be a part of …

Walton: Oh yeah.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Walton: His interest is high, yeah. His interest is [his insight?]. I always thought of him as an intensely interested person in every, every aspect of uh … everything. [chuckles] [inaudible-overlapping voices] Firstly, musically.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] music [what they listened?] …

Walton: Yeah, right, precisely. Yeah, he turned out to be a good … He wrote, one of his first books he wrote – assuming he wrote other books – he always, every time I saw him, he would say, "Yeah, you're in my book. I got you in there." And we were uh on a gig uh, me and Sonny Rollins, believe it or not, were, were his sidemen on one gig up to a uh, sort of a, what do you call it? An exclusive uh, uh, women's college. Uh, the name of which is… escapes me. But it was a big name women's college we went to and played one day, one Sunday afternoon. And uh, Sonny Rollins had just returned from Chicago and he, oh man, what an interesting guy he was. He was sharp, too. He had on a tweed jacket. His feet weren't small; he had magnificent wing

tips on. He was squatting down and he was an imposing figure; he was, he was a tall … like Javon, you've mentioned was a … might have a sky-hook. [chuckles] And he was so comfortable with these uh, uh, what you would think might be snob … snobbish uh, students, you know. Uh, can you think of some famous girls schools? Vassar or something like …

Brower: Simmons might be one. Welsley.

Walton: Vassar?

Brower: Vasser.

Walton: You don't know that one?

Brower: I know Vassar.

Walton: It's, it, it was in the East, it wasn't far from New York, yeah. But anyway uh, he was uh uh, squatting down to oblige the people he was talkin' to at intermission, uh 'cause of his height, he would have had to lean over, so he squatted down, quite comfortably. And uh he was marveling at the talent of uh, uh, Clifford Brown. He'd been with Max Roach out in Chicago and he was recovering from an addiction uh, uh, and uh, he uh, decided to do it in Chicago. So he had just returned and uh, we played a gig with David Amram, me and Sonny Rollins. And uh, in David's book, uh, he uh, he seemed to quote some of the little things that happened at that gig. I wish I could tell you the title of the book. I don't remember.

Brower: We'll have to track that down.

Walton: [chuckles]

Brower: You know, you made a comment uh, and you did … you said "the ever-comedic Cedar Walton." Um, like last night, you, you introduced a song and said uh, "This is dedicated to all those who've come here to hear me tonight …

Walton: Oh yeah. [chuckles]

Brower: … young and foolish."

Walton: [laughs] Yeah. For some reason, people find that amusing. It's not really at the base of it, it's not amusing. But I think it's more of a surprise tactic. I think that's about the last thing they, people would uh, uh, oh, anticipate them beginning described as, you know, young and foolish.

Brower: How much is humor or wit? I think it's something that, spending time with you, just in the last day or so, that plays on words uh, kind of a dry wit, delayed humor …

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: …did-you-get-it kind of thing is a part of your personality, uh, something that you … it's just in your flow.

Walton: Yeah, uh, if you are asking me to agree with you, I do. [chuckles]

Brower: How does that work into your music?

Walton: Oh man, uh, just what you heard last night. I mean uh, if something occurs to me to say uh on a microphone, uh, mostly it's verbal, if that's the question you're asking.

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] [Does that?] work itself into your playing [inaudible-overlapping voices] ?

Walton: No, just the titles.

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: Yeah. The, the playing, the music uh, is, uh, is self-contained. The, the, the uh, if you uh, the uh, verbiage that you are kind enough to consider humorous is just something that uh I do naturally. I mean, uh, because it works … you know, I'm not, I'm not planning my uh, you know, my, my spiel, my uh shtick, my uh, you know, my act. I'm just talking, you know. I don't always get a reaction like I did last night. Sometime, in fact, like if … I can remember in Dallas, Texas, I said uh, "We'd like to play a very special standard entitled *Every Time We Say Goodbye, I Die* … my hair a little." Not a sound. Not once … You could hear, you could hear the gravel.

Brower: So you … Did you admit that you dye your hair?

Walton: Of course! [general laughter] Yes, indeed! In the words of the late uh, great uh, country-western figure, Tex Ritter, he said, "If the good Lord was good enough to give you hair, the least you can do is keep it dyed … keep it colored, or …." So uh, I have to go along with Mr. Ritter. [chuckles]

Brower: Well, if to a, um …

Walton: I love to say "color" my hair. I just use the word "dye" in, in connection with that song. [chuckles]

Brower: But that, that, this quality of uh, uh, let's say uh …to a degree on the bandstand there's conversations going on. There are uh people playing ideas that then get picked up and elaborated by other players. There's a kind of pleasure that happens in the recognition of these ideas and the exchange of the ideas and the development of the ideas, including quotations of other songs …

Walton: I see.

Brower: … that work their way into David Williams' was doing that last night.

Walton: Of course.

Brower: Is that not a matter of wit?

Walton: Uh, if you say so. Come to think of it, yes. Yes.

Brower: To me this is not just humor, it's a certain uh quickness um, the ability to respond in the moment and to keep the, the exchange going.

Walton: Right.

Brower: The repartee going. Um, seems to be a feature. Maybe it's generational uh, among musicians. I mean there's this common fund of ideas using some songs that people know …

Walton: Uh-huh.

Brower: … and the ability to sort of rifle through these things and make these associations. Um, seems to me … It's almost a private uh, is the audience, can the audience be in on the joke.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: Among … this is a level of communication going on there.

Walton: I'm glad you used the word "seems." It seems like that but we're doin' that for ourselves. That's another example of self containment and uh … If somebody in the audience uh catches it, that's great but that's not our purpose. Our purpose is just to entertain ourselves. [chuckles] So uh … [chuckles] Would you like one, sir?

Brower: Another one?

Walton: Yeah. And you?

Male and Female Voices: Thank you.

Walton: Nobody ever refuses these.

Female Voice: [inaudible]

Walton: Good?

Brower: You say the purpose is to entertain yourselves.

Walton: Well, in a … I didn't say entertain but I mean, those uh, uh, uh, devices, I guess you could say, those quotes that we use uh impromptu, so uh, we don't know they're coming all the time. [chuckles]

Brower: Is it, is it occasioned um, by something that's in the melody and the harmony that allows you to make the connection?

Walton: Uh, probably. Yeah. That's logical. Yeah. But we certainly don't know what's comin'. I don't anyway. I mean, nobody does. I mean, these are things that uh if you improvise and play in a group long enough … See, that's one of the uh factors in our performance that you heard, you know. We're a group that, that uh, are used to just, have become accustomed to presenting these, these, these pieces. So uh, anything might happen. When you see us laugh, it might be because somebody forgot somethin', you know. It's not always uh, uh because we're in pleasure. [chuckles] It's uh, and sometime it's pleasure too, see. But most of the time it's like Ah-Ha, you missed that, didn't you? But it's no way for the audience to know it because we do it all the time, and it's almost impossible to detect unless you're in the band, which nobody's in the band but us. [chuckles] I hope that answers your question.

Brower: It does. To a degree.

Walton: Okay. Good. I know you would limit me [?] if you had a chance. [chuckles]

Brower: The uh, so now you're speaking to the longevity in your associations. Yesterday, you said that nobody um, appreciates uh, you were talking about bass players, I think. You said, "Nobody appreciates a bass. Other than a bass player, no one appreciates the bass more than I do."

Walton: I was speaking of myself?

Brower: Yes, right.

Walton: Yeah. That's, that could be considered true. Of course.

Brower: So speak on your relationship with David Williams. In fact it was really you saying, I want you to elaborate more on that relationship because you really said that. Because if you understand how I really feel about the bass, then you must understand that it's saying something that David Williams has been with me over this expanse of time.

Walton: Yes. Uh, David tells me that he took a few lessons with Ron Carter when he came to New York among other things and uh, uh the way we met him was uh, uh, the late great Sam Jones uh, who played with us, uh, so long, uh sent David because Sam Jones had a quote-unquote tuxedo gig one night, and we were playing at this place named Boomers, and so here comes David Williams and uh, so after the first set, we were back in the … they actually had a

walk-in refrigerator. We used to hang out in there with all the beef [chuckles] and stuff hanging, and so David said, uh, "When do you want me to start the [set for you?]?" – 'cause we were goin' a little over thirty minutes. That's the first time I'd met anybody who uh, volunteered to start the set, you know, go up and start the set. Yeah. I said, Wow, to myself. That was quite a uh, uh, I think, uh, a credit to his character, musically. And then uh, his beat was uh impeccable, even though he's from Trinidad, he, he uh prefers that music. He's uh … I love his playing with us and uh, but uh, when you, when he does a production of his own, it's Caribbean and it's specifically Trinidad, you know, with the pans?

Brower: Uh-huh.

Walton: Miraculously entertaining. If you think you like us, wait until you hear his stuff. But there's no market for it, you know. There's no radio station except one station in Brooklyn that uh, uh broadcasts uh, music from Trinidad. Um, maybe four hours every Saturday or something like that. And Dave goes on there all the time. In fact when he did his latest production, he was on there [chuckles] and uh, you, you, you, I presume that noticed his accent. Have you not?

Brower: I [inaudible].

Walton: Minimally?

Brower: I've never spoken with him.

Walton: Oh yeah? Actually? Okay.

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Yeah, to say hello to, right. Okay. Well, he has a distinctive accent, uh, Trinidad. I'm used to it now.

Brower: My good friend …

Walton: His wife too.

Brower: My good friend Whitmore John was here last night. He's a Trini too.

Walton: Oh yeah, right.

Brower: [inaudible] [worked with him?]

Walton: Oh yeah, they, they conversed. They're inseparable when you, when you, uh, when, when they come together. And uh, Dave's uh father was a bass player. And uh, his name was …

They referred to him as John Buddy which uh, I guess was John Williams, but uh, John Buddy was a bass player. And uh, uh, they named their children … Their sister's named Mary Lou for Mary Lou Williams and his brother's named Noble for Noble Sissle, and David, I guess, is for perhaps Dave Brubeck, I don't know. [chuckles] But uh, David was the only one who didn't have a musical name that leaps out at you, you know. Mary Lou Williams, I mean, how can you … that's right to the core in my view, and uh Sissle … Noble is uh somebody my father used to talk about: Noble Sissle, you know. Even though he'd never heard him, he just heard of him, you know. Eubie Blake and those people. Sissle and Blake used to have uh … I'm digressing again … used to have uh reviews on Broadway and they were … There's a book out, *Sissle and Blake*. You can see how successful they were. These … you see these old cars would look like uh, maybe, uh, a, eight cylinders or something … long convertible cars. Have you seen pictures of them? I know you … I don't think you've seen 'em in person because you don't see them drivin' around. They're too big. You know, in the days of, these days of smaller vehicles, a little too large. But anyway, there's a book named *Sissle and Blake*. You can see … you can even … they even have the payrolls in there, everything in there, of their reviews and uh, incredible book, especially photographically of that uh period. And uh, so uh, we were talkin' about David Williams and his uh brother was named after Noble Sessle … or Sissle. Is it Sissle or Sessle?

Brower: Sissle.

Walton: Sissle, yeah. Unusual name, I think. He might have been from Trinidad too. But uh, anyway, it's one of the names I heard from my father. But anyway, David has an impeccable beat and it fits perfectly with Mr. Jones on drums. Uh, I'm in Heaven, uh, you know, don't have to die, I'm already there. [chuckles] Because if I do pass away, I might go in the other direction, of course. I'm uh, I'm joshing now. I don't know. Heaven is probably right here on earth.

Brower: They do't have enough asbestos for you.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: You brought … Billy Higgins and Sam Jones were sort of … the trio.

Walton: Right.

Brower: And then it became....

Walton: David Williams after Sam's demise, yeah. Sam recommended David to us.

Brower: What was it in uh Sam Jones' playing that brought you …

Walton: Oh, same thing. Impeccable beat. Sam had had a marvelous career with uh Cannonball, Thelonious Monk, and finally Oscar Peterson. So …

Brower: What did the bass player have to give you to fit?

Walton: Oh, just the beat and the harmony. Just harmony and beat. I can't think of any other qualities of feeling, uh, enthusiasm. And I was lucky enough to uh have received all of those from Mr. Jones, Sam Jones in this case. And so, he'd just gotten tired, he told me, of all that, you know, highfalutin' business with Oscar Peterson, and go here and go there. I happen to know that, God rest his soul, Mr. Peterson wouldn't let you just have a lunch, you know. It had to be a uh, uh, uh, um, you know, a big event, you know, with, say, twenty-five dishes on uh, you know, you had to, you had to eat some of everything. So uh, I think Sam tired of that, that uh, but nothing against Oscar, I mean, if you feel like eating a lot. But to force or try to force that on, impose that on other people, is not, is not that fair. But I didn't hear that from Sam actually. He just, Sam told me he was tired, he was tired of all the politics that goes into the [Norman Granz?] thing and uh, whatever that was. I didn't know what it was, and he elaborated minimally, and but, it was a guy named uh, Alvin Queen who, who was the last drummer with Oscar Peterson, who elaborated on these big dinners. He would have to hide from us 'cause he would call him, say uh, you know, and just on these enormous dinners ever day, man. So, I'm actin' like I'm uh angry about it, but there's no reason for me to be angry [chuckles] 'cause I wasn't invited. [chuckles] I wasn't around. But that's how uh, much of an impression Mr. Queen had in tellin' me these stories. He couldn't stop talking about it. Occasionally … uh, Alvin, incidentally lives in Geneva with his uh wife who is Swiss and uh, so he, he, uh, of course when Oscar died, we, I'd always had an affinity for his playing and uh, we hook up a lot in Europe uh when I go there. [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Brower: You and Alvin?

Walton: Uh-hm. Yeah. Alvin's comin' here to New York now with uh, with a group. He likes organ groups. He likes to have an organ in his group. Javon has appeared with him in a place named uh, Jazz Standard. Comin' up very soon this month. And I told Javon, I say, "I'm gonna get a front row seat. I gotta hear this." But uh, Alvin is quite a character, excellent drummer. He fits in with our uh mode also. Modus operandus, [inaudible] operandi. And so, I uh, I uh, uh, uh I digressed again, I think. Uh, where were we? Talkin' about Sam Jones and what does a bass mean to me?

Brower: We were talkin' about … originally I was talkin' about your trios, the personnel in your trios …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … and what it is you are looking for in these musicians.

Walton: Well, I, I, uh, it's a case of not necessarily looking for something, but knowing it when you see it, when you hear it. Higgins, for instance, is a drummer who, when it's time for the downbeat, he's on fire immediately. There is no buildup. There was no buildup with Higgins. He was on fire, his ear was tuned uh, and just uh impossibly almost to the uh, surroundings

musically, you know. He would catch on fire immediately. I always admired that about him. There was no buildup, you know. Bill Jones is like that too, to a degree, because he came up on the Higgins uh on the [inaudible] in uh Los Angeles. But uh, Higgins was a pianist's, trio, a trio's player's dream. His uh uh intense ability to listen to you, listen to the surroundings, and to tune into them immediately, whereas other drummers uh, take a while, you know, to, to catch up, so to speak … compared to Higgins. His was the most instant uh interpreter of uh the trio repertory that I'd ever had the pleasure of playing with. We played uh a lot, we had a lot of music together. I was very happy with that association, especially in view of the fact that he appeared on the scene with the likes of Ornette Coleman. Then he moved over to uh, you know, the Blue Note sessions, uh, Sidewinder and all those things, things with me, and uh, so uh, I couldn't be more pleased, couldn't have been more pleased with, with his work.

Brower: Uh, coming back to something uh you touched on yesterday and the approach that Blakey had, you know, from loud power, loud bottom, and these drummers, lot of snare drum, which Blakey did play, but lot of, kind of details, lot of cymbal work, real different energy, real different way of shaping the music, coloring the music, and pushin' the music.

Walton: Yeah, well Art Blakey was the leader, so I mean, he emphasized in his own way and uh this context requires uh, uh, a slightly different approach, you know. A more uh, sensitive … not more sensitive, but uh, more delicate approach, shall we say, especially the trio playing. And uh, I heard some recordings with uh Thelonious Monk, and uh, Art Blakey and uh Al McKibbon, and you can hear Art's uh trio of uh playing on there, but that's all I can think of, recorded-wise. And you'll see, you'll hear a different Art than the bombastic with the sextet playing, larger groups.

Brower: Oh, there was one other uh composer I wanted to ask you about that struck me as interesting that you touched on which was Stevie Wonder.

Walton: Oh yeah. Well, this uh, it's almost impossible not to like his uh, uh, compositions, his performances and his compositions. I found myself recording uh a number of his pieces, uh, [Walton sings] *My Cherie Amour*, da-da-da da-de-de-da. I remember I did that on one occasion. And uh … well, one of my most, big favorites is from the animation, the uh, *Another Star*. And uh, did you ever hear us play uh, quartet uh, [inaudible] … it's not in our book this, this week, but uh, we have a version of that which comes from that version, if you uh ever …

Brower: *You Are The Sunshine Of My Life*?

Walton: Yeah, I probably did.

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Yeah, possible, yeah. Those pieces are hard to resist because it's just like some of the Beatles' pieces. They are not in the jazz genre, but uh, it's in the uh, uh adaptable. And uh, it's fairly common in the, in the jazz community, I think – to borrow from another genre. I wish I could elaborate more but I just …

Brower: But well, you know, uh, more the younger players who came up with that music are hearing it and playing it than say, musicians of your generations. That was the music of my youth.

Walton: Oh.

Brower: It wasn't the music of *your* youth.

Walton: No.

Brower: But yet you, your ear is drawn

Walton: Yeah. Well, uh, I wasn't that old when I first heard uh Mr. Wonder. I was in my 40s or 50s, and uh, I found it very attractive, these pieces. And uh, *Songs in the Key of Life*, you know, I mean, that's a double LP. And of out of all those songs, I picked that one.

Brower: What are your listening habits?

Walton: Uh, what are my listening … I don't know. What I do now is uh, uh, uh, listen to, believe it or not, there's a guy named Jonathan Schwartz in New York. Comes on Fridays and Saturdays on like a PBS station. And he plays, he loves vocals, you know, but he does play Bill Ev… uh, Tony Bennett and Bill Evans, those things, and he plays some unusual … and he plays Os…, he loves Oscar Peterson. That's his favorite, seems to be his favorite jazz pianist. Had the pleasure of meeting him the other night and he uh was at an event uh, that uh, was uh, celebrating the voice of a lady named Hilary Kole who did uh, say, a CD that each track involved uh, uh, a jazz pianist, uh, accompanying her. So uh, that was quite an event.

Brower: Is it … are you at a point now where uh, you've heard so much music, you've played so much music that you pretty much don't need to um, where silence is of value to you?

Walton: Oh well, no.

Brower: And really just hear what you …what's in your head?

Walton: Yeah, well you picture me as a man, as a person who uh, is, uh, totally involved in music. I'm also uh, totally involved … I have an office uh, at my residence, you know, that I do my own bookings. So that takes up a uh, uh, uh, you know, the emails? And different things like that. I have, I like to do that too. A lot of musicians don't, not only don't like to do it, they might even uh, it could be described as hating to do it. And uh, I find myself being attracted to this process of booking. And of course it eliminates uh, and makes the commissions impossible. And uh, I thought I'd give you a minute to uh, work on that one. [chuckles] But, uh, so uh, but I mean I have, I don't mind it …

Brower: The Co-Mission Impossible part.

Walton: [chuckles] Yeah. Uh, I, I don't mind an agency booking me somewhere. That's entirely … and in fact sometime I have to call if I have a hole in my schedule. For instance, in November I'm going uh, uh to Europe, uh, first gig is in Helsinki. There's a Birdland there. And there's one in Hamburg. And then we, we uh, we segue into London at Ronnie Scott's. So uh, that one I can do, I can do. I can't do that within my office, except to call Mary Scott who was the wife of Ronnie Scott. She lives two blocks from me, and she, she arranges those gigs. Am I digressing again?

Brower: [inaudible]

Walton: Well that's what I do, do, besides listen to music, deal with music all the time. I deal with my schedule which is [inaudible] on October uh, 13, 14, 15, I'm playin' at a place uh, in uh, uh, it's called Beirut in Lebanon. So, that, that takes some doing, you know, uh, uh, different permits and things like that, contracts and uh …

Brower: Well, I was actually interested in working with you until you said 'Beirut' so that conversation is over.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: [inaudible].

Walton: Oh yeah, that's, that's a no-no? I shouldn't … I should …

Brower: No, it's good for you. [inaudible]

Walton: Oh. But, you wouldn't go there.

Brower: Probably not.

Walton: Yeah, well, tell me why you wouldn't go, if you don't mind.

Brower: I'm afraid shit might happen. Is that on tape?

Walton: Oh my God.

Brower: [not understandable] [laughs]

Walton: Yeah, I, I've thought of that too.

Brower: I mean I have a friend who does USO Tours all the time.

Walton: Oh.

Brower: Don't you want to go to Iraq with me? Or go …

Walton: Oh no, no. Iraq … I don't think Iraq is a, is a good idea.

Brower: I prefer my living room.

Walton: Right. Well, I've agreed to it now, taken the deposit, so I gotta go. So uh, if you …

Brower: Are you required to return it? [inaudible]

Walton: [laughs] No, this is about the air ticket.

Brower: Well, this is, comes to something else: that is your activity level is very high. Uh, both recording schedule, I mean, 2009, uh, that's an old recording. I mean, you have a very high level of activity.

Walton: Eeee, well … in, in the, in the instance, in certain instances, yes. But my uh, in person uh performance is way higher in the uh occasion than uh the recording. I'm, I'm basically uh, playing uh in person now, you know. And uh, I record when I get ready to uh on the High Note, as you, as you saw the label there that I gave you. He's willin' to uh do the uh distribution and everything, but uh, uh, there's a lot of instances of streaming music uh that uh is uh very interesting. Rather than have the actual CD, you can stream it. And uh, to tell you the truth uh, I'm not an expert on that but uh, I can see uh the recording industry going in that direction in, in instead of … I either just get uh, the uh, the CD uh of a product or … on the Internet … from some place like Amazon or something, instead of going in the store. Because the jazz departments now … the last time I went in the store … were limited. But maybe not in all stores. I don't know. I'm not that kind of fan, you know. Some of the younger uh musicians that I meet, they spend a lot of time in record stores, tryin' to do research, tryin' to find some early me or something, you know, if either uh … early everybody, you know. So uh, I don't have time to do that. I'd ruther try to get bookings. I love to get bookings. And uh, not to have to pay anybody or give anybody any part of that uh revenue. But I mean that's a … has a certain bit of selfishness to it, but uh, it also gives me something to do that I like to do. And uh, with the uh help of my wife who, uh, we're in the stage of doing all nineteen, 2009 income taxes now. So those kind of things uh she was busy … 'cause I have payroll taxes, you know. And I have to turn them all in. But I have an excellent accountant who uh Javon recommended to me. His name is Jack [Korn?]. He, he's amazing. He can do it, boom, that quick, the whole income tax. [chuckles]

Brower: So besides managing the business of your life …

Walton: Right.

Brower: … and your music …

Walton: Yes.

Brower: By the way, how do you handle your, whats the publishing side that controls your music

Walton: Yeah, well I …

Brower: Is that the Harry Fox thing?

Walton: Yeah. That's one of 'em. Uh, BMI is another one, Broadcasting Inc. Yeah. They uh …

Brower: Do you have your own publishing companies?

Walton: Yeah, of course. No, just one. Just … I have **a** publishing company, Bernita [?] Music.

Brower: And how long have you …

Walton: Oh man, let me see. Quite a few years. And uh, one advantage of that is that every October, which happens to be now [chuckles], they give you a … if they can see uh to their uh whatever monitoring system they have that you, uh, uh, uh, your recording, your compositions, uh, are being recorded, either by you or by somebody else. They can see uh, uh, uh a loss, a down, a downward uh direction or upward direction in that. And accordingly, they give you what they call a guarantee once a year. And this is my month. So I smile every October. [chuckles]

Brower: Besides Herbie and his comment [inaudible] …

Walton: Harry Fox collects for another part of your output.

Brower: Who else uh, gave you guidance as to what to do as a musician on the business side?

Walton: Oh well, Benny Golson, uh, the late Gigi Gryce, to a degree, and then uh, uh, I'm tryin' to think of some others, uh … uh, this is a constant discussion between uh me and musicians all the time, you know, how to uh manage your uh, uh, the ownership in the instrumental music simply means uh, as compared to uh, I mean uh, uh, if you have a publisher, if you publish uh, uh, uh a novel, for instance, uh, then uh you uh usually uh turn in a few chapters to the publisher and if they like it, they'll give you an advance to finish it. That's the concept I have of publishing a uh, uh, uh a book. But in uh instrumental music, jazz, that simply means ownership. You just own it. So uh it's a, it's a big uh difference, you know. You have to get it on the record which I was very fortunate, me and uh quite a few others uh were very fortunate early on to get uh these pieces that we'd uh composed uh onto recordings. And then uh the revenue can begin.

Brower: How big is your body of work – compositions?

Walton: Uh, I'd have to research that one. It's not small though. I mean uh, it's not, there are people who have done more, of course. I'm not up with Ellington with the two thousand plus compositions recorded, but I might be up to two hundred, which is uh, I'll settle for that for the moment. But uh, that's a good question. I saw uh a list of uh my works in the program of the Playboy Jazz Festival just uh – what month was that? – either August or September. And it just happened to show uh, uh, uh, my stuff took up a whole page. I was surprised. I had forgotten a lot of these things that I had recorded. And they had 'em all in there, more than anybody else on the program. But I mean uh, that wasn't necessarily accurate that I'd done more than anybody else, but … there were people on there like George Benson, so one of his pieces might uh have uh, uh, uh gone at a revenue of all of mine, you know. [chuckles] So, that's the way that works uh, it's uh, uh a matter of quantity not quality.

Brower: How important is it to you to be recognized as a composer?

Walton: Oh man, how important to me is it? Uh, that's uh, uh kind of a question that answers itself. It's very important to me. I mean uh, but recognition you're talkin' about, right?

Brower: Yes.

Walton: Well, I mean uh …

Brower: The acknowledgment of the work. I mean, you've been doing it for a long time.

Walton: Yeah, the acknowledgment of the work uh, is, uh uh expressed when uh somebody records it, likes it enough to record it, in my uh, uh, uh, uh, my uh, uh, uh version of uh being appreciated. I think that's what you were getting at. Uh, acknowledging it and everything. Acknowledgment is somebody likes it enough to record it. And uh I've been blessed with a; number of recordings of say uh, a piece to … one of 'em is *Bolivia*. A lot of people … I think that's the most recorded of mine, my pieces. But there are a few more, a few more, and uh, so uh, that's part of my uh output, the composition and then the presentation of the composition.

Brower: I mean, when we think of Monk, you think of Monk the composer. You think of Cedar Walton, you may think of more as a player, what I think sort of silently or – not silently – but um, maybe under the radar, uh, to a degree, um you have amassed a really significant body of compositions.

Walton: Right. Yeah. That's uh, uh something that I'm quite proud of. Uh, and it was something that uh, uh, that uh, I decided to uh develop, you know, on my own uh writing pi…, diggin' 'em out the piano sometimes in various ways, you know. Hearing notes uh, just going from a title sometime. One time I remember I saw the word "mosaic" on a [chuckles] on a billboard and then I went and wrote a piece … I had a piece written that was unnamed, so I named it *Mosaic*, so

there's all kind of combinations of uh, uh, uh productivity in the, in the uh uh field of uh composition.

Brower: Did there come a point when you decided that I want to make a mark as a composer?

Walton: No.

Brower: Or was it just something you …

Walton: No, it was something I liked to do. Since I was six or seven, I liked to pick out tunes. I didn't know uh I had no, like I know now, what I was doing. I just know I liked to do it.

Brower: I know you like to get the checks. We talked about the surprises …

Walton: [chuckles]

Brower: … you know, this has come up consistently as we've talked. Uh, but how important is it to just be on the bandstand. I know you like to get the gigs.

Walton: Yeah. Just uh … How important compared to what? Uh, getting the checks?

Brower: Compared to retiring, compared to not doing something.

Walton: Oh, no.

Brower: … compared to …

Walton: This is not a sport, I mean. You can, you can play 'til you are uh in a wheelchair, which I think [sounds like: sun-ra] did. So I mean, uh, no, it uh, you don't, you don't uh retire. Well you could, I guess. Ahmad Jamal says that every year, says, "I'm retiring." Well he never does. He hasn't yet. Where to retire to? I mean, stop playin' the piano? Stop uh, uh going around having people listen to you and uh uh and your group play your music, or your versions of other people's music? That's a utopia to … in my view and the way I look at it. That's uh about the uh best uh thing that could happen to a person uh, uh, that's trying to be a creative artist.

Brower: You are a newly minted NEA Jazz Master and you come in with Bobby Hutcherson and others, close friend, collaborator. How significant was it for you to get that recognition, to be named an NEA Jazz Master?

Walton: Oh, very proud to receive that and uh, uh and uh, uh that's one reason I hate to see 2010 end because I'm a, I was selected for the 2010 and I just got two more months and then there will be a … I won't be a jazz, a new Jazz Master anymore. [chuckles] But it was a wonderful ceremony uh. Sorry you couldn't be there. Well … you weren't there, were you?

Brower: I was not.

Walton: Yeah. I was able to play my piece, which you may or maybe heard last night, *Dear Ruth*, written in dedication to my mother with uh the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and uh I'm very proud to uh …

Brower: Did you orchestrate it?

Walton: Yes. I did. Yeah. And uh, and uh it was uh, at the last minute as I was walkin' – of course we rehearsed, but at rehearsal I was gettin' lost, you know, uh, my uh, my chords were overshadowed by the orchestra. So I said, "What can I do?" I mean I was in an unconscious dilemma and then on the way to the piano at the performance, after I made my little speech, I had to go back to Ellington. You play it way up high in octaves and it cut right through. So I was very proud of that decision, a last minute uh decision. Reminds me of the invasion of Normandy … No, I'm only kidding. [chuckles] Nothin' to do with that. But uh, that was a uh uh uh, a bright moment in my uh memory uh, recent memory. It was quite an occasion. Yousef Lateef was brilliant uh, everybody else, too, that I, I tried to remember some of the other recipients uh, um, Bill Holman uh, uh Annie Ross – she did a beautiful song – and uh, Kenny Barron. He elected to play a solo. He played, just played a beautiful original piece uh by himself. So uh …

Brower: Muhal.

Walton: Oh yeah, Muhal. He came … well, see, they uh did it uh alphabetically so Muhal was first, and he had a very exciting, innovative piece. Oh man, it was dramatic because it was uh … you could see Wynton kind of uh chuckle he would cause because his approach was totally uh, uh different from most conductors, you know. He, he was, he started the piece and then he walked off stage lookin' at his watch as if he was gonna time uh how long they would play in his absence, which was a few minutes. And he came back. Well, he started first on the piano by himself. Then he got up and he started and then he walked off, you know, like he was marching [chuckles] for the watch. It was, it was incredible. And uh, so uh, that was a nice … All my family was there uh, all my offspring and everything. In fact uh I was uh announcing a … I was introducing people who had met my family. I said, "This is the uh cast to uh *All in the Family* … *All My Children*, I beg your pardon. You, you'll excuse me [chuckles]. So uh, it was a bunch of us there uh … My granddaughter, she's the only New York resident, the rest of them live places like North Carolina, Philadelphia and uh St. Louis.

Brower: You mentioned your family, obviously your mother has been a persistent thread … You played the piece last night, it's on the 2009 album. Uh but, you haven't introduced us to your immediate family.

Walton: Right.

Brower: So, why don't you do that.

Walton: Well, uh my first marriage was uh back in the days when I was with uh J.J. Johnson in the uh '60s, I think it was. Yeah, '60s. When I was with Art Blakey and … and that marriage uh uh produced uh three children – two boys and a girl. The two boys were born uh just about two years apart, very close, you know. Uh, not quite two years, but say uh, a year and eleven months apart. So uh, when one of 'em's birthday changed, they are the same age for one month and then it changes, you know. So, then the girl, her name is … Uh, their names are Carl and uh Rodney Walton. And uh both named for friends I had encountered in my youth along the way, and I just picked 'em out. I, I was uh not very patient with pickin' out names. I just tried to think of somebody I'd known and uh, so uh, I still have no regrets. Their names slowly became them, you know, fit them. And my daughter's name was Cedra which is a, I guess you could say uh some kind of … It's not an anonym. What do you call that? Acronym? When you uh combine, instead of C-E-D-A-R, she's C-E-D-R-A, Cedra Walton. And uh, then about another union, you … last but not least, uh, her name is Nyesha Walton and uh, that's a combination of Naima, which was John Coltran's wife and Iesha which was uh McCoy Tyner's wife at one time. So I can see the name of Nyesha. But now there's hundreds of Nyeshas I see, read about in different uh instances uh situations. So uh, and uh, I just always felt that uh in the days when I was mostly a sideman and uh, uh, you could say strugglin', to a degree, with this not-so-small family, um, I managed to raise uh, raise them quite uh … none of them have ever been arrested, [chuckles] you know. That's one way to look at it, of course, uh, and uh, uh, two of 'em uh graduated uh, uh college uh now, the granddaughter now has graduated college, so I'm, I'm proud of that. And uh, the uh …they are gainfully employed uh, so uh, I'm uh, very proud because I always had this thing runnin' through my head that you can't raise a family and be a jazz musician. Not in New York. Forget about it. Something's gonna go wrong, but it didn't. I just kept right on … I know there were times, I remember my sons saying uh, "Naw, I don't think I want to be a jazz musician," because we weren't doin' that well. We weren't … we were eating but we weren't uh living luxuriously, you know, so to speak, by comparison. But now, they, they're, they are uh uh among my uh biggest supporters, you know. They were very proud to uh, be uh present at this ceremony. And I was proud too for them to be there.

Brower: Have you made provisions, or, or how does your um, this body of work that you've created, that will continue to earn money? In perpetuity.

Walton: Right.

Brower: As you say.

Walton: Well uh, we uh, in my uh current wife, who did not uh, was not the mother of any of these uh offspring I'm tellin' you about, uh we, we are uh, her cousin is a great uh lawyer that does wills, so we're tryin' to figure that out as we speak. But that has not resolved yet, to answer your question directly and uh somewhat bluntly. We haven't worked that out. But uh, that question almost answers itself. Upon my uh demise uh, everything has … is, is to continue and uh, uh, I'll be gone so it'll work out, it'll work itself out. I just hope there's not … It's not enough, I don't think, for anybody to fight over, but you never know. I saw uh an instance uh, the late John Hicks uh, his family, uh, uh, I didn't even know John had been born in Atlanta. I thought he was from St. Louis; that's where I met him, but he was a preacher's son and so he moved around and his father, his last church was in uh in New York. And so uh, and then I noticed a lot of his

family members uh had come up from, I think, Atlanta, and there was uh, uh dissension among his family about … They had thought that he had uh, uh gleaned uh considerable amount of revenue from his work, but uh, uh I don't think there was enough to around, but I don't know why, though, because I wasn't … John was always doin' some… He was a terrific pianist. That's uh what I'd rather say about him. But on that subject, I did see some uh uh uh, there was some alleged bickering about the uh, uh, the uh, the uh, estate. And uh, I don't know how that's going now because this was a couple of years ago. But uh, there could be some bickering, but uh I, I'm uh, uh, uh in the process now of uh getting a will and uh that will stipulate where everything goes, if there's uh, uh, you know, a … presuming there will be something [chuckles] you know, to go out to everybody.

Brower: You, you uh, you know, soloists, trios, sextets … and now with your award, quartets and all these small group configurations, are we going to see Cedar Walton orchestrate his compositions for larger presentations? Is that something that you would see doing?

Walton: Uh, yes, but not that anxiously. I like the small group concept, context. I'm more comfortable with that. But uh, John Faddis was uh good enough to invite me out to uh the Chicago School of Music where he uh presides and has an orchestra, and what we did was … *Dear Ruth* was the only one I orchestrated. But uh Frank Foster had a marvelous uh orchestration of uh *Firm Roots* that uh we borrowed, we were able to rent them from, you know, and Rufus Reid had about three uh we used, and uh, it seems like there was somebody else who … Oh yeah, there was a guy in the, in the Air Force uh that had uh produced a wonderful arrangement of *Bolivia* that uh the Monday Night Orchestra has in their book uh at the Vanguard, uh-hm. And their version was thrilling, so we had enough material but I didn't orchestrate it all. I just orchestrated *Dear Ruth* … 'cause orchestration uh is uh something I do uh when uh, if there's a paycheck over there – I hate to admit this uh, America [chuckles] – I'll write and then pick up the check. So, back to capitalism. I like the small group. I really do. I'm not hiding from the orchestra, I just [chuckles] uh, I'm not avoiding uh uh uh the big uh the big band. Some people can do it all uh, she-knows, uh, uh, uh, Roy Hargrove, he has a big band. Uh, uh there's another big young trumpet player from New Orleans. Uh …

Brower: Irvin? Mayfield?

Walton: No, trumpet.

Brower: Wynton?

Walton: No, no, no.

Brower: Robert Mayfield has an orchestra.

Walton: Yeah … no. But oh, there's one more, and I never forget his name. Uh he's a kind of a chubby guy. He plays terrific trumpet and uh … But he has an orchestra too. Uh, uh, oh man, this is embarrassing because I know this guy so well, and I always make myself remember him … by … 'cause the syllable of his last name, one of the syllables of his last name, but uh …

Female Voice: [inaudible]

Walton: Huh?

Female Voice: I can't think of it either. [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Walton: Yeah, you know who I'm talkin' about. He's got a round face …

Female Voice: I worked with him.

Walton: Yeah.

Female Voice: He worked with Alan.....

Brower: From New Orleans?

Female Voice: Yeah

Walton: Yeah. [inaudible-overlapping voices]. His father plays bass. [inaudible-overlapping voices].

Brower: Oh, Nicholas Payton.

Walton: Yeah. Nicholas Payton. That's an example of … Oh man, I heard his big band. It was terrific. But uh I didn't go in that direction yet but uh, don't give up on me. I might, I might go into that, uh, it's something I, I really enjoy doing and especially at this stage where you, you, you put uh, it's easy to do uh now for me than it was earlier.

Brower: I'll give you the title.

Walton: The title of what? The band?

Brower: The album.

Walton: Oh, you thinkin' about recording. I thought you meant a career in uh big band uh performance.

Brower: I mean, you gotta, you know, that's another paycheck. You must know every producer …

Walton: [chuckles]

Brower: … and then you know, for every composition, you'll get somethin' …

Walton: [chuckles] Yeah.

Brower: … the arranger will get somethin' …

Walton: [chuckles] No … no …

Brower: … you know, it's not back in Columbia days so it would be more.

Walton: No, no, it won't be more. It'd be less. In fact that doesn't exist anymore.

Brower: Why do't you call it "Wow".

Walton: W-O … W?

Brower: [inaudible-overlapping voices] That's your favorite word, Wow!

Walton: Oh, oh, okay.

Brower: ...called Wow!

Walton: All right.

Brower: Pop art [inaudible].

Walton: All right.

Brower: Wow!

Walton: Okay, well uh … I'll uh …

Brower: Call it *WOW!*

Walton: [chuckles] I'll uh send the uh, uh … back off from your enthusiasm because I can't compare with that. [chuckles] But uh, thanks for the, thanks for the suggestion. I'll uh, uh duly note it because I, that would be, that would really be a good step forward for me, you know. 'Cause it seems like I, I've, uh I'm, I have so much material for this size group you heard. Uh, it, it's time to make a move if I'm gonna move, maybe expand these pieces and uh see what I could do with that. But of course that would take me away from my booking, you know. I might have to give somebody a commission. [laughs]

Brower: [laughs]

Walton: So …

Brower: [Get?] software.

Walton: Yeah. [chuckles]

Brower: Get software to do it.

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: I'll find you some software.

Walton: Oh, I appreciate that. Yeah.

Brower: It would actually be more efficient because you'll have more time … You'd be like, Oh, I can still make that money …

Walton: Yeah.

Brower: … and I can go over here and make some more money.

Walton: Well, I … [laughs] I love … [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Brower: More surprises.

Walton: I love the way that you uh envision income from this uh, uh, uh, uh, this form of art, you know. [chuckles] To listen to you, there's a lot of it, you know. You enlarged, you've taken what I've said and multiplied it by 200 or something. And uh, I don't want you uh to uh disillusion whoever investigates this tape that there's a lot of money involved [chuckles] in this, in this enterprise. It's uh, it's just enough, you know, for the city. [laughs] [general laughter]

Brower: That's all it has to be.

Walton: Yeah. [chuckles]

Brower & Female Voice: [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Brower: 'Cause you can't take it with you.

Walton: No, man, uh in the words of Art Blakey, he never saw a Brinks truck follow your hearse. [laughs]

Brower: Just ask the Pharoah.

Walton: [laughs]

Brower: You took ['em, didn't you?]?

Walton: Oh yeah, I suppose he did uh …

Brower: But [inaudible] …

Walton: You think it was Euros or American currency?

Brower: No, it was something that preceded all of that..

Walton: Probably, yeah, probably bricks. [chuckles] Right in [there?] with Brinks. But uh, yes, that's a good suggestion. I, I'll make a …

Brower: It's sort of like what's left for you?

Walton: Oh yeah. Well …

Brower: What you do is sufficient unto itself. Obviously, people enjoy [being?] busy.

Walton: Yes, especially if you don't do it too much. [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Brower: But what else is on your horizon?

Walton: Uh, yeah, uh, just uh enough of myself, you know, I'm just uh uh, if I got lucky enough to hand down something, I'm proud to do that but uh I'm quite thrilled that uh somebody as far away as Beirut would want me. But even, even I'm gonna play alone, I'm not takin' this group, mind you. Just gonna go there and play it alone uh, two one-hour sets, three nights and uh I, I can't wait to … Those kind of challenges uh excite me. I say, "What the hell am I gonna do?" I mean, I gotta sit down and I gotta play, but uh, who are these … What kind of people are the Lebanese people? Uh …

Brower: It's very cosmopolitan.

Walton: So yeah, I saw a [C?] on the uh …

Brower: It's like Paris.

Walton: Yeah, the computer showed me that, the way it looks.

Male Voice: Except bombed out [inaudible].

Walton: Yeah. Well uh, we'll have to see can I survive that uh. Very often I miss the bombings by one day. I was in uh Israel and uh we landed in Tel Aviv, and uh we uh went uh to Jerusalem to play in a big library. This was a trio. And uh the uh promoter was a piano player so I was lucky. He, he liked me. And so, and then we went back and when we left Jerusalem, the next day we read about a bombing, and then we played in Tel Aviv that next night in a big hall and it was magnificent. And we flew back to America and on the newspaper, bombing in Tel Aviv. So we, I have uh, uh, uh a reputation, so to speak, of missing them by one day. But of course I didn't stay in that place uh three days like I [will be?] in this one, like I play it like uh like, like the uh, the game plan is to stay in this place three whole days, so I'm uh … You'll be the first one I call when I land back on these shores with uh, with a thanks for your reassuring uh, uh and convincing uh warning uh … if there, if there's such a thing as reassuring, convincing …

Brower: Just because I'm skittish doesn't mean you have to be.

Walton: Oh, okay, well thank you for that uh … I'll take along with me.

Brower: I'll admit it man, I'm a ninny.

Walton: Well, okay. All right. Uh perhaps if you could do uh, uh six sets on the piano, you might consider going. [general laughter] So uh, that's uh, that's my next move uh. No, that's right, there's a … a guy conceived of a, a Jazz Masters group consisting of [inaudible] and Cedar Walton, and we did some things in Europe uh, on the, uh, uh festival circuit last summer. And right after the ceremony that I was describin' to you with the piece *Dear Ruth*, we did uh, uh, a week, uh five days in uh the [Dizzy's? Disney's?] Coca Cola which is in the same building. And then we did the Playboy Jazz Festival I was describin' how that, that uh …

Brower: Was Willard Jenkins orchestrating that?

Walton: Uh …orchestrating?

Brower: Any of the Jazz Masters [inaudible] Jazz Masters?

Walton: No, no. A gentleman named uh … Well, this is just two, two of us Masters: Hutcherson and Walton. So uh, a guy named … Actually, Bobby Hutcherson's manager. His name is Maurice Montoya, so yeah, he put that together.

Brower: Duet or was …

Walton: No … with David and uh uh Bobby's drummer whose name, name uh escapes me right now. Uh … Eddie Marshall. He's a very good drummer. But he's always been in the Bay Area. He's always, he played with Bobby for years. So it's a very compatible group and uh, he's, he's sending us out one more time to uh Philadelphia later on this month uh, on the 9th to be exact. Then I'll be finished with that group, you know, 'cause Bobby, you know, Bobby has a group and I have a group, so that's enough of that. We, we did a lot, you know.

Brower: Tommy's [?] All-Star was another …

Walton: Yeah, that was an adventure that was good, positive. [Big Harold Land and Higgins and we all had a great time. Curtis Fuller. That was magnificent. So through the years we've come up with combinations that are very pleasant and uh, uh bookable, you know. So, glad to say that we, we, we went to Japan, Europe and so we went a lot of places in this country and outside this country. So uh …

Brower: Okay time for parting shots, but you can't take them at me.

Walton: [chuckles] Time for what a shot?

Brower: Parting shots.

Walton: Oh yeah.

Brower: Just a few little [inaudible] time when you can't like talk about the fact that I can't play piano or can't …

Walton: Oh, you can't make those comments, okay. And uh, so uh, should I presume that we are at a conclusion?

Brower: Uh-hm.

Walton: Okay.

Brower: Another two minutes and we want to be done by 12:30, so …

Walton: Yeah. Well uh, if uh you would uh be interested in uh what I would have to say to uh a student of the music now uh, uh because I do get a lot of questions uh, people uh, in uh uh generations that precede me uh, uh: How should I pursue this or that and uh and uh one basic thing that I say is uh, just keep striving for excellence. And uh, and choose a path and, and, and, and when you do choose a path in life, you're the only one in there. And if you make the mistake of decidin' to change paths, there's people already in that other path. So, you best stay on … It's almost guaranteed that you reach your goal if you start out early enough, if you stay in that one path. That's what I did, so I have to say, I have to believe that. I never varied from my path and so now I can work in D.C. [chuckles] and uh go to Beirut and uh. D.C. is much safer, according to you. [chuckles]

Brower: Depends on what part you're in.

Walton: [laughs] So uh …

Brower: Probably the same in Beirut.

Walton: Yeah. Well …

Brower: Depends on where you …

Walton: Yeah. And the timing and everything. But uh I consider this a great honor to uh speak uh in behalf … not speaking in behalf of the Smithsonian, am I? No. Who am I speaking in behalf of?

Brower: Cedar Anthony Walton.

Walton: Oh, okay. Good. So, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the uh archive department. Is that right? Uh of the Smithsonian because it's a very important uh uh uh place in our country that preserves uh things that uh uh the Institute itself uh uh considers valuable and uh uh … uh historic enough uh to uh preserve. So, I'm grateful to be able to speak on my, on behalf in this context. It's been a pleasure meeting with you uh uh, Bill and Ken and uh until we meet again, I don't suppose we'll … That's why you tried to get all in 'cause we'll never have to meet again. Is, was that the point? [laughs]

Brower: No.

Walton: No? Okay.

Brower: No, I, I would hope that we've opened a door that we could continue to walk through.

Walton: Oh, to add to this. Oh man.

Brower: I would love to.

Walton: Oh well listen uh, I'm available. I, I'll be in my office waiting. [laughs] Just like you. I think he's … Ken, did you send me uh an email, you think? I think so.

Kimery: I sent a fax.

Walton: Oh, a fax, yeah. Yeah. Fax is becoming outdated now. I mean, it's, I think, but uh not to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Kenneth E. [Bearing?]. Is that close?

Kimery: Yeah.

Walton: That sounds almost German. No? Okay. Sorry. [inaudible-overlapping voices] …

Brower: … bunch of money?

Kimery: Yeah, [he] gave the Museum 80 million dollars, so he got his name on the uh letterhead.

Walton: Oh, that's not you?

Kimery: No, I'm on the bottom there.

Walton: Oh.

Kimery: I'm also Kenneth.

Walton: Oh, okay. Ah, man. I was … [inaudible-overlapping voices]

Kimery: … 80 million dollars.

Walton: Yeah. How 'bout that? Billy Taylor, Shirley Horn, Elvin Jones, wow. Well, one thing uh they all have in common: We're old. [chuckles] Right? [chuckles] Which uh, you know, so you're givin' us uh recognition uh beside our uh accomplishments uh, uh that include uh, uh, uh, stayin' on the planet. Right? And being able to elaborate on uh, uh, your, uh, uh, uh, achievements and uh non-achievements or half-achievements. Whatever? Right?

Brower: Well, it sets the record straight.

Walton: Right. Exactly. That's a good way to put it.

Kimery: [whatever it might be?]

Walton: Uh-huh.

Male Voice: That's what the first person, interviews are about.

Walton: Right. Uh-huh. Well, I've certainly uh found uh this to be a, a surprisingly uh, uh, uh pleasant opportunity for me to uh express myself from the beginning of my uh music uh explorations to the present time. And I think it's very fortunate that I was able, to be able to perform here in uh Washington, D.C. and uh for you to uh be able to witness that too, and we can use that as a point of reference, which is, gives it a new uh, I mean a, a nice uh point of view, vantage point, I think.

[END OF INTERVIEW]