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DAVID N. BAKER
NEA Jazz Master (2000)

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Lida: This is Monday morning, June 19th, 2000. This is tape number one of the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project interview with David Baker. The interview is being conducted in Bloomington, Indiana, [in] Mr. Baker's home. Let's start with when and where you were born.

David: [I was] born in Indianapolis, December 21st, 1931, on the east side, where I spent almost all my – when I lived in Indianapolis, most of my childhood life on the east side. I was born in 24th and Arsenal, which is near Douglas Park and near where many of the jazz musicians lived. The Montgomery's lived on that side of town. Freddie Hubbard, much later, on that side of town. And Russell Webster, who would be a local celebrity and wonderful player. [He] used to be a babysitter for us, even though he was not that much older. Gene Fowlkes also lived in that same block on 24th and Arsenal. Then we moved to various other places on the east side of Indianapolis, almost always never more than a block or two blocks away from where we had just moved, simply because families pretty much stayed on the same side of town; and if they moved, it was maybe to a larger place, or because the rent was more exorbitant, or something.

Lida: Tell us about your mother and father and your family life when you were small.

David: I lost my mother when I was four years old. She died of what at that time was called consumption. In retrospect we know that it's TB, tuberculosis. I was four years old. My sister was two years old. And a stillbirth or died very young [was] a brother called Michael. My mother – my recollections of her are reinforced by [the fact] that she was a very meticulous lady. I look at the pictures now of my sister and I as children, and all the pictures show us with little white outfits on, standing on our tricycles or whatever. So it tells me that. I have distinct memories of my mother chastising me when I was at age four, shortly before she died, for coming in just absolutely filthy in the afternoon. Then she found out I was helping the coal man put the coal into the chute that goes downstairs, and I remember her telling me she was sorry. "Muddy [mommy], muddy's [mommy's] sorry," I remember [her saying]. I don't have a lot of memories. I have that memory of her then, and I have a memory of her the night she died. I remember she hemorrhaged, and I remember her standing with her back against the wall, sliding down and sitting on the floor, reciting the 23rd Psalm. Those are really the only distinct memories I have of my mother.

My dad had moved to Indianapolis in roughly 1928. He'd been born in Kansas City, and . . .

Lida: Missouri or Kansas?

David: Kansas City, Missouri . . . and went to school at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, and had a degree in carpentry. [He] moved to Indianapolis. I have no notion what transpired across those years, except he met my mother. He worked for Goodrich Tire Company at the time. I remember that. We went through the latter part of the Depression – this is probably 1933 or 1934 – and I can remember a whole lot of times when we would have – my grandmother would go across the street to Douglas Park and pick dandelion greens. We'd have dandelion greens and just enough of a piece of bacon so that it had some kind of flavor. And I can remember a lot of days when we didn't have meals at all. This was a time when it was really rough, even though black people at the time – or "coloreds," as we were called at that time – used to say they didn't know there was a Depression, because there wasn't anything different from what it had already been.

But my dad very quickly realized that he was not going to have a real job in carpentry in Indianapolis, simply because it was a closed shop.

Lida: Racially closed?

David: Yeah, racially closed. Dad ultimately did as many blacks at the time would do. [He] went into public service. He worked for the post office, as did two of my uncles, who also worked at the post office. Dad then was drafted into the Army when I was in

junior high school – I mean into the Navy, where he served first in San Diego and then at Hampton. So he ended up back at Hampton Institute.

It was across this period that we saw Indianapolis, that I became aware of my environment, the fact that it was an environment which was almost exclusively colored people. The only white people I had any contact with were – during those years – were the people who owned the store where everybody always had a "can I charge it?" I forget what they used to call it. You ran a bill.

And the people who owned the hardware store – Armin Graul – and the insurance men. You played games with the insurance men. "We ain't home." Pull the shades when it was time for them to collect their 50 cents or quarter or whatever it was, across that time.

So, basically, that's it. When my mother died – by the time I was seven, my dad remarried. When he remarried, we moved about 10 blocks from where we were already living. My stepmother already had a son named Archie Tuft. We called him Tuffy. So we became a part of that family, even though we were – my mother had made [her mother] my grandmother promise to raise us. We actually went to court. Dad actually went to court, and of course they were not going to overturn a parental right. So we would spend weekends with my aunt, my Aunt Evelyn, who was my mother's younger sister. I still maintain a very close relationship with her. She would take us to the movies, and inevitably I would get sick on the streetcar, because I have motion sickness. She'd have to pay the tokens three or four times so I could get off the streetcar and go throw up. Then I would get to the movie – I'm probably now six, maybe seven [years old] – and I would end up getting lost when I'd go to the bathroom. I'd come back and holler from the back of the theater: "Aunt Evelyn! Where are you?" So I'm sure I wasn't the most popular kid around.

As far as musical environment at that time, I heard everything, all the kind of music that daddy liked. Daddy used to rave about Louis Armstrong's *Big Butter and Egg Man.* He thought that that was the greatest thing going. It turned out it was an important part of Louis Armstrong, except I couldn't have appreciated it then. I was too little, for one thing. And I hadn't any inclinations about music. What I was hearing was the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet on Sunday morning [and] *Wings Over Jordan*. I was very, very much enthralled with Grand Ole Opry. I knew Minnie Pearl and Gene Autry and everybody else of the singing cowboys.

Lida: This was all on the radio?

David: This was all on the radio. There weren't a whole lot of options. I don't even know if we had a record player at first. But on the radio you heard that kind of music.

There was a show that came from Gallatin, Tennessee, called *Randy's Record Shop*. To tell you how long ago that was, *Randy's Record Shop* took its advertisements from Negro enterprises or people who aimed their products at [us]. Their two biggest sellers were Nadinola Skin Whitener – which is kind of different – and Dixie Peach Hair Straightener. Everybody wanted to look like Michael Jackson would later on, when he had the whole thing done.

Lida: What kind of music was played on *Randy's Record Shop*?

David: On *Randy's Record Shop,* basically it was boogie-woogie, it was rhythm-and-blues. You heard Louis Jordan. You heard Bill Doggett. Some of the big bands. You probably would have been listening to Count Basie. And a little later, by the 1940s, Ruth Brown, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, and Nat – of course Nat "King" Cole. Nat "King" Cole was one of the groups that really was enjoying a popularity as a crossover group. That was music that was accessible to everybody, black or white.

The first piece I ever heard by Nat "King" Cole was *Straighten Up and Fly Right* and on the other side was *Route 66.* Once you had been indoctrinated to that sound, you really fell in love with the music.

But it was, again, a very sheltered kind of existence, because you lived in an entirely black world. We had no notion – there was no TV. The newspapers – there was a black newspaper called the *Indianapolis Recorder,* which still exists. It consisted largely of – its content consisted largely of what had happened all week that had already been in all the other newspapers. They simply pirated that and put it in there, except who got shot and who got cut over the weekend.

It really was, like I said, a very, very closed environment. We had no notion that there was another way to live. It just simply never occurred to us that what we had wasn't the complete world. There were two newspapers at the time – the *Indianapolis Star,* [the] *Indianapolis News* – three – and the *Indianapolis Times.* So consequently you had some that were on the far right politically, others which were more centrist. I would not have been somebody who followed probably the newspapers that much, even though I was a – I read voraciously, but it didn't – it wasn't about politics then. Plus, during those years, everybody who was a Negro was a Republican, because it was the party of Lincoln. We didn't have all the ancillary information now that we possess, but my grandmother and everybody else in that family would have been certainly Republican and that kind of thing.

At any rate it was a time that I heard music, as I said. I heard music in the church. Dad had to hide his blues records when the preacher would come. We'd have to put them downstairs or under the bed or somewhere, because my stepmother wasn't going to handle that.

It was a time when we could go to the skating rink. The skating rink – I remember the big hits on the juke box in the skating rink in the 1940s were *In the Mood* and *Tuxedo Junction* and [Baker sings the introduction to *In the Mood*] – that's *In the Mood.* I can't remember the other, but there was another Glenn Miller piece that was really big at the time. I spent my Saturdays at the barbershop from the time I was about eight or nine, hustling. I would go to the barbershop – me and Dwayne, my cousin, and Clarence, my other cousin. We would spend the whole Saturday waiting in line to get our hair cut, and then when it came our time, we would sell it [our place in line] for a quarter and go back to the back of the line. By the time we had done that for the most of the Saturday, we'd leave with two or three dollars in our pockets.

This was basically [an] idyllic existence on some – at some parts, because we spent time laying on our backs, looking up at the sky, and imagining all the different kinds of animals that were up there, and telling lies, the way young boys do, about girls and everything else that people tell lies about.

Lida: You had a large extended family in the Indianapolis area, lots of cousins and . . .

David: I think at that time it was very, very unusual that a colored family would have been dispersed. For instance, in our family, the only people who ever left were my Uncle Bus [Buster Baker], who was my dad's older brother – whom I never knew. I think the first time I saw Uncle Bus was in the casket, when they brought him there to be buried. But on my dad's side, my Aunt Connie [Connie Baker Paige], my Uncle Mon [Monroe Baker], Uncle Clarence [Clarence Baker], and all of their progeny. So I knew all my cousins. On my mother's side, my Uncle Johnson [Felix Johnson Lasley] was the survivor – her younger brother – and my Aunt Evelyn [Evelyn Lasley Lyles], who was her younger sister, and then all of their children. With the exception of Evelyn and Connie, they all had big, big families, and we were all very close. It was nothing for me to get on my bicycle and ride across town to see my maternal grandmother. It would take an hour to ride across town. It was that far. But we knew [all the relatives].

And you had the storefront churches. So I'm hearing music and all the other things that are the formative things in somebody's life. It never occurred to me that everybody didn't go to church all day on Sunday. My brother figured it out, but I hadn't figured it out, so I went to church from 9 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night. That was just the way things were done. We were in an environment where we were all Baptists. We were pretty arrogant, because our argument when people were Methodists – as kids – was, "Whoever heard of John the Methodist?" [laughter] It never occurred to me what a specious argument that was until a lot later.

I sang in the choir and in grade school. I had – the voice hadn't changed, and I tried to sing in the choir, and I had teachers who – at that time, everybody took music. There

was a music teacher in your building. Mrs. Wenlock was the music teacher in our grade, and when I went up a grade, Mrs. Perkins or whoever, but you sang. You didn't have an instrument until you got to junior high, because you didn't start instruments early in those days.

Lida: Your elementary school was?

David: I went to Francis Parker Elementary School, which was P.S. 56, which was – I lived at 2301 Columbia, and at the other end, at the end of the 23rd block – which was like, what? Two minutes and a half [away] – was the high school. My memories there [in elementary school] about music and stuff were [about] May Day. They don't have that any more, I guess, in schools, but at that time you had May Day. Everybody prepared programs, each grade level, where they did – they had a May pole. You made crepe outfits. You danced and did the things you did – a little saying. But every class in the school, which went from [grades] 1 to 6, had to do something. You did recitations and stuff.

I have vivid memories of – that they had just started vaccination programs. I don't know why these things are all of a sudden occurring to me, but I remember that they would – the vaccinations then were the scraping, and boy, then you always had – and I bet every one of you has the scar from the vaccination. I don't even know what it was for. Was it smallpox?

Lida: Smallpox.

James Zimmerman: Or polio.

Lida: Smallpox.

David: A little bit later, polio. The vaccine with that came a little later. But I can remember, that was a dreaded day. You didn't want to go in there and have – obviously, now, looking back, it wasn't any big deal, but at that time, it was a big deal.

You started to make your talent connections, or people who had similar interests to you.

Lida: You still have friends now, from . . .

David: Yeah, I have – fortunately, a lot of people have been survivors, and I have friends who I started to first grade with. That's a little unusual, considering that we're talking about 68 – we're talking about 40 – however – no, more years than that, because we would have been talking about when I was 8 or 9, and now – so we're talking 60 years ago – 60, or 62 years ago, of people who still are very good friends.

So it was . . .

Lida: You walked to school.

David: I lived one block . . .

Lida: Right. I mean, the schools were in the neighborhoods.

David: Oh yeah. There was no such animal, until we got ready to go to high school – busing – and it wasn't called "busing" then, because the term – that appellation for what was to be a social phenomena didn't exist at the time.

There were the friendly rivalries between – we were feeder systems into Crispus Attucks High School, because all blacks went to Crispus Attucks High School. It was – it started in 1927. It had been [racially] mixed schools up to that time, and in 1927 or so, D. C. Stephenson took over. He said, "I am the law." He was the man who was the main – major person in the Ku Klux Klan. He insisted that there be a school for black kids. Crispus Attucks was that school. It was going to be named probably after Thomas Jefferson or somebody like that, and at least the concession that they got, that it would be named after a man – the first black to die in the Revolutionary War. He was at the Boston Commons. His name was Crispus Attucks. So they named the school – that Crispus Attucks, that school. But then all the other schools that were the feeder schools into Attucks – from the east side, School 37, [School] 26 [actually it was School 56] – which went to the sixth grade, and they fed into School 26, which was John Hope Franklin School. The people there went in seventh and eighth grade, and for the ninth grade you went to high school, which was Crispus Attucks. Now, at that point, you were bused in. We came from the east side. The people on the west side, the people on the south side and north side, all then act as a feeder, so that at any given time, you might have three-, four-hundred people in your class at the high school, which made us a large high school.

But so much of what happened musically happened long before you got to high school.

Lida: Let's go back to that and start with your early musical interests and activities, and your friends that you played music with and listened to music with and you . . .

David: I'm not sure when [the time was] when I became primarily interested in music. I remember always listening to it. My stepmother didn't think it was appropriate for a boy to take piano lessons, so my sister took piano lessons and she hated it. So I would sit there and listen while she took piano lessons. We had a piano with the piano rolls. I did like that, because I could sit there and pump them piano rolls. I would do that to distraction, until my parents both would leave home and go somewhere else while I was doing that. My sister hated piano, but she took piano, and I listened to what she was

doing. I would come in and put the piano rolls on. I could see where the notes were and figure out what it was doing.

My dad tried to play. He had played alto saxophone when he was at Hampton. He didn't keep that up, but he did mess around at the piano, playing boogie-woogie. My hands were too little, really, to play boogie-woogie, but I would try to. I'd sit in there, and I would play *Coon John* and those pieces, and *Heart and Soul,* which everybody did, I guess.

Around that time I can remember trying to sing with my friends. We didn't do a very good job of that. But I did sing. I can still remember the bass part, which I sang in treble, of *Angels We Have Heard on High.* That is clear as a bell to me when I think back now, because I learned the bass part on it. But I was singing in high voice, so I don't know what that was about.

I'm trying to think. It seems to me that I didn't get really interested in trying to play an instrument until I went to school P.S. 26. At that time they showed – they brought us instruments.

Lida: About how old were you then?

David: Seventh grade. They brought us instruments and asked us what instrument we wanted to play. Sometimes they looked at us and looked at our physical equipment. If you had big lips, they wanted you to play this; little lips, they wanted you to play that, which was really strange. I guess that took some practical concerns. But I remember, one of my teachers, who will remain nameless, bless her heart, started me out on trombone, because I fell in love with it. I really wanted to play the trombone. As near as I can tell, up to that time, the rental fee was 50 cents a semester. That'll tell you how long ago it was. I remember that after about the first two weeks, she wrote a note home to my mother – [I mean] my stepmother – and sent the 50 cents back, saying I had no talent and not to bother with that.

So I really didn't start until the next year, when I had a different teacher. They didn't have a trombone for me. All they had was a tuba. They gave me the E-flat tuba, which was a bastard instrument to begin with, but I fell in love with that thing. I would lug it home on the streetcar, because at that time they had both inter-urbans and streetcars. The streetcars ran on the tracks and so did the inter-urbans. But I would practice the tuba, and the place would – the thing would be packed. And they put me off . . .

Lida: On the streetcar?

David: On the streetcar. They put me off there several times. I remember one girl who was kind of a tough girl who went to high school, and she told me she would kick my

butt if I brought that tuba and played it on there again. I believed it, so I didn't do that any more. [laughter]

But I had that E-flat tuba. It's a wonder there was any connubial bliss, because my stepmother would go to her sister's, who lived – let me see see: [Baker names the streets] Columbia, Martindale, Arsenal, and Sheldon – lived blocks away. My stepmother would say [that] when she would hear me practicing – when she'd start home, if I was still practicing, she'd go back to her sister's. So Dad would get home from the Post Office [and] there would be no dinner, because she wouldn't come home while I was practicing. [laughter]

It was really kind of different. I finally did switch to – I played the E-flat tuba until I got to high school, and they didn't have an instrument for me. What I did was take a cigar box and put some holes in it and rolled up paper. I learned the fingerings to the marches from watching other people play. But I could sing the parts. And I can still sing the parts to *Stars and Stripes Forever* and those things. Mr. [Russell W.] Brown, who was the teacher there, said if I was that serious about it and I had all the fingerings, the first time one of the instruments came open, he would give it to me, and he did. He gave me the sousaphone.

But let me back up a minute. I think one of the other things that was very much a part of the formative stages for me was not only the barber shop, where I would sit there and make money, but also my cousin Walter, who was at that time welterweight champ of the state, or runner-up. He played bebop.

Lida: And this was his barbershop?

David: This was Walt's barbershop – and the swing stuff that led into bebop. He would play the music of Jay McShann and those guys. But then he also played the music of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. We're talking about now by 19 – this is by now 1945 or so. So I was hearing bebop all day long. I didn't know what it was and didn't really care about it. I can remember very vividly – this was the year that Notre Dame and Army played for the championship, and Johnny U – Johnny – no, it was Doc Blanchard played for Army, and they called themselves Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside: Glen Davis and Doc Blanchard. And for Notre Dame, it was Johnny Lujack. I can remember that's the year that my cousin Manson, who was the first junkie I ever knew – I didn't know he was a junkie at the time – came to my house. He heard me listening to Minnie Pearl and Gene Autry and all those guys. He said, "Junior, let me give you something to listen to," and he handed me these Lester Young records. I can remember that old dial [radio], and I put them Lester Young records under there and left them alone. He came back about two weeks later and he say, "How you like them Lester Young records?" I said, "Oh, those are great." He said, "Then you don't need these other ones," and broke up all my country and western records.

I never went back to it, because by that time, Dizzy was beginning his ascendancy. Everybody in the high school band, we bought the book of Dizzy Gillespie solos, which were in the wrong keys, I might add: the heads to *Bebop*, the heads to *Groovin' High.* It said, "Dizzy Gillespie and Paraparelli" [Paparelli], who put his name on it, too. Boy, we thought we were hot stuff! We could play these lines. I had a friend named Nelson Alvarez, who was from the Dominican Republic, and we learned them – by that time, Mr. Brown had let me have a trombone, and we learned them on trombone and trumpet. We couldn't play a thing on them, but we learned them.

So a lot of this stuff was starting to coalesce. At this thing we did this weekend . . .

Lida: The Indy Jazz Fest . . .

David: Indy Jazz Fest.

Lida: . . . in Indianapolis.

David: . . . I saw people from my high school band who learned those pieces at the same time I did, like Bill Penick. We learned these pieces. You could begin to feel this accumulation of information that had taken place. We were still really sad. Mr. Brown was, bless his heart – I went to Crispus Attucks High School. Let me just tell you a little bit about that school. Crispus Attucks High School had probably the highest per capita doctorate to student [ratio] of any school in the state, simply because it was the only school in – until you got up in "The Region" – up around Gary and East Chicago – and on the other end [of the state] Evansville, where you really had all-black schools. So consequently, we had – black history was part of the curriculum. That's an idea that would not become popular or even doable until the civil rights movement.

Dr. [Joseph] Carroll taught black history. We knew about the first heart trans – I mean, the first artificial hearts. We knew about Dr. Carver's experiments with the peanuts and all the things that happened there. We knew who DeSable was, and that he had laid out the city of Chicago. We knew these things, because they were a part of our training. We had a wonderful kind of a situation, because we had teachers who cared. Fact is, one of our teachers, Dr. John Morton-Finney, died only recently, in nineteen ninety – maybe [ninety-]six or [ninety-]seven, at [the age of] 105, and at the time he was the oldest practicing lawyer in the country. He taught French, he taught all the romance languages, and ultimately, at age 60 or so, became a lawyer and then got about five more degrees across those years. [Dr. John Morton-Finney, 1889-1998, earned eleven university degrees in his lifetime.]

So we had a wonderful education. And then we had the wonderful legacy of the people who had preceded us – to walk down the halls [at Crispus Attucks High School] and see

J. J.'s picture [J. J. Johnson] hanging on the wall or Jimmy Coe's picture hanging on the wall, and know – even though we didn't know what that was all about, we knew that they were some important people.

Crispus Attucks had not yet become a basketball power. That would come later. When I went out for the team – and lasted a week – if you shot anything but a two-hand set shot, you would be sitting on the bench with Fitzhugh Lyons, who was the coach, because he didn't believe – he thought that the jump shot and those things were aberrations.

Shortly after I left Attucks, or when I was at Attucks, Bailey Robinson, [who was] Oscar Robinson's older brother, and those guys were starting, [and] the coach changed to a guy named [Ray] Crowe. Then we started to become a basketball power.

But along the same lines, at that time, we were trying to think about jazz. Jazz was not something you would have learned in the schools. There were only nine high schools in the Indianapolis area. The other high schools did not play us in sports, except for the Catholic school – Cathedral [High School] – and one other school, because they simply wouldn't play black schools. However, when Oscar Robertson came along, and all of a sudden they were filling fieldhouses all over the state because other people would play us, then we became the hottest ticket in town. Oscar and others have theorized that [this] hastened integration in the schools, because when – [the] Indianapolis school system had never won a state championship. When Oscar and them won the state championship two years in a row, everybody was looking for somebody black, even if they had to paint their face black to play on the team. Just like Coach Rupp at [the University of] Kentucky when Western Kentucky won the NCAA championship. Rupp had said he would never play a Negro as long as he had that team, and when Western Kentucky – that was the [Kentucky] team, incidentally, that had Pat Riley and those guys on it – when Western Kentucky won, that hastened integration, simply because it's a practical kind of concern, too.

Back to the music part of it. At Crispus Attucks we had a wonderful music department. We had a guy named Norman Merrifield, who was head of the department. Russell Brown was the band director. [The] orchestra director was [Mr.] LaVerne Newsome, who's the only survivor of the bunch. Mrs. Birch was the director of choirs. They had no – Mr. Brown was probably the only one sympathetic to jazz. Mr. Merrifield, who taught theory, [had] a wry little sense of humor. You would hand in a particular assignment until it was perfect. I would do these harmonizations of the chorales. I can never forget him writing on one of mine, after he got it the third time, "In baseball, even three strikes are out." So we didn't – never did get that one.

But Mr. Brown was somebody who wanted us to learn how to play all kinds of music. So Mr. Brown went out and bought these stocks [stock arrangements of popular songs].

You could buy them for 25 cents. He bought stocks like *Jumpin' at the Woodside* by the Count Basie band, [and] he bought a lot of the pieces that were played by Andy Kirk and those things. And we butchered 'em. We didn't have full instrumentation, and we had – he put together the group called the Rhythm Rockets. We would practice out of a book called *The Jay Arnold Swing Method.* That was some sad stuff, but it taught us how to count. We would be over there, and Mr. Brown would be sitting there and he'd say, "Count, boy. Count, boy." He would stop you from patting your foot. He'd say, "Don't pat your foot. You'll beat your brains out." So we would play these things. I can remember now Gaston Cooper, Palmer Jenkins, Bill Penick, George Bright, David Young – so many of these youngsters who went on to have big careers, but largely because of Mr. Brown, Mr. Newsome, and those guys, and the fact that Mr. Brown wouldn't even charge us. We would have lessons over at the Y[MCA], and Mr. Brown would sit there and beat these doggone things.

And we were some stubborn people. I was going with a little girl who everybody thought I was probably going to marry – Trili Stewart. We – it didn't work out for us. I sat by her. She played piano, and I think Trili must have also doubled flute. We were playing the Morton Gould *Pavanne,* the one that goes [Baker sings the melody of *Pavanne*]. The bass line goes [Baker sings the bass line to *Pavanne*]. But I'd been listening to Eddie Heywood and *Begin the Beguine,* and he played [Baker sings the *Begin the Beguine* bass line]. I was determined that's what was written there [on *Pavanne*]. Mr. Brown said, "Boy, that's not the way the bass line goes." So we started again, and I go [Baker sings the *Begin the Beguine* bass line again]. This happened about four or five times. Now I'm getting really irritated, because I'm sitting next to Trili, and she's looking at me, and I'm, you know, the boyfriend and the whole thing. I'm just stubborn as a bull. [laughter] Mr. Brown finally stopped me. He said, "David, I don't understand you. You run into a wall, and the wall doesn't move, and your solution is to get back further, and run faster, and hit the wall." His other favorite saying was, "Sit down, boy. You're rocking the boat," when you would not be taking care of business.

But it was a wonderful experience. I can remember we played my junior prom . . .

Lida: With the Rhythm Rockets?

David: . . . with the Rhythm Rockets. That was a – I mean, we were a *sad* band. We played *The Man I Love* on blues changes. My dad worked at the post office. At 9 o'clock, the Columbia streetcar would pass Crispus Attucks High School going back out to the east side, so . . .

Lida: This is 9 o'clock at night?

David: Yeah, when Daddy was on the streetcar. So we started – after the prom started, we must have started playing about 8:30. Daddy said he passed the school at 9 o'clock, and it looked like a fire. The people were coming out the bathroom windows and everything, trying to get out of there [away] from the music.

We realize now that it was sad. This is a time when they began having the jam sessions. We would learn nursery rhymes, so we could come in and try – we couldn't – at that time, the prevailing key was B-flat. Now – at some point along history, it changed to F. But B-flat was the key. We would stand over in the corner at the football games and play [Baker sings a swing riff that later became part of *Intermission Riff*], because that was easy to learn.

Lida: *Intermission Riff.*

David: *Intermission Riff* of Stan Kenton. But we would go to the sessions, me and Penick and the guys.

Lida: Where would those be?

David: At all the places that were – that [the] Indy Jazz Fest [program] listed. Honoré's had a jam session . . .

Lida: These were the clubs.

David: All the clubs along Indiana Avenue [also known as "The Avenue"]. There must have been probably 20 clubs. Each of them had a jam session night. You would go – some of them had the same night. We would go from one club to another, playing our blues and then leave and go to the next club and play blues.

We had no more business than the man in the moon, most of the time, playing these clubs, because you had people like Pookie [Alonzo] Johnson; and Jimmy Coe; and Wes, Buddy, and Monk Montgomery. These guys were the pros. The youngsters were me and Slide Hampton and guys like us.

Lida: This was while you were still in high school.

David: We had just started high school.

Lida: So you were still a little kid.

David: And none of us had any business being up on the stand with these people, but we didn't know that, or at least we weren't smart enough to know it, so we would go there. By this time we were also going over to the Hampton's house to practice. They

had a family band. There was 12 of them originally. By the time I knew the family, there might have been 8 left – 8 or 9: Slide, Budge, Lucky, and Duke, and the sisters were Aletra, Carmelita, Dawn, and Virtue. So there must have been 8. Then they would fill in with the people around the city. That was me and David Young and the guys.

Lida: So it's the mother and father and 8 children plus.

David: No, no. There were 12 children to begin with, but there were only 8 by the time I knew the family.

We'd go to their house in the day[time]. They would make a big old washtub – people don't know what a washtub is now. But they would have these washtubs, and they would fill it up full of Kool-Aid with a big old block, a 50-pound block of ice in the middle. We would dip in there when we were learning [the music].

None of us could read. The trombone parts said [the positions]. All the family doubled all the instruments. Slide picked up the instrument left-handed . . .

Lida: The trombone?

David: . . . and he thought that's what you were supposed to play, how you were supposed to play it. So everybody [in the family] who played the trombone in the band, when they would double [they] played the trombone left-handed.

We learned to play and would go to these jam sessions. We would get off the streetcar coming from the east side. When they would see us coming – because at Honoré's – it stopped right in front of Honoré's. When they would see us coming – don't care where they were in the tune – they would stop until we had come in and left, because we were – we really couldn't play. We would be up there playing. Once I bought a valve trombone that had a C slide which would put it in its regular key, and a B-flat – a B-flat slide and a C slide. The B-flat would put it in the regular key. I was trying to figure out how to play in these hard keys by changing my slide and putting the other slide in. I remember they were playing *Zing Went the Strings of My Heart* in D-flat. I didn't have any business up there. It never occurred to me anything had a form to it. It was Buddy Montgomery, Wes [Montgomery], Sonny Johnson, and Leroy Vinnegar. I started playing, and I was lost. I couldn't find out where we were, [and] I couldn't find the key, but I couldn't quit, because then they would know I was lost. I played, and I looked up, and the drummer got off the stand. And I was still playing. Finally, one by one, they were getting off the stand, until there wasn't nobody on the stand but me, tears streaming down my face, because I didn't know – I had no more business than the man on the moon being up there to begin with.

So it was a learning experience for all of us to go from session to session and try to just figure out what we were going to do. I switched to bass trombone because of ego, because they already had a full trombone section, and it bothered me to have to play down in the section, so I bought a big horn. So that I – then it was legitimate for me to be down there.

Slide, probably – that family was as – there were a number of families that were equally talented that we knew from the beginning. We were too young to get in the clubs to begin with. So when Slide, David Young, and the rest of us would go to clubs, we would try to bluff our way in first by wearing the beret and the glasses with no glass in them, and [had] eyebrow pencils. We'd draw mustaches [with them]. Sometimes it would work. Sometimes we would get in. Sometimes we couldn't get in.

But it was a cornucopia of musical events. For instance, at the Sunset Terrace, which was right across the street from the Cotton Club – this is right at the end of Indiana Avenue. When you come down Indiana Avenue, Indiana Avenue ended at a place called Lockefield Gardens. Lockefield Gardens was the brainchild of people who were taking advantage of the New Deal. FDR was the President. They started a number of what basically were welfare initiatives. One was the WPA: Works Project Administration [*sic*: Works Progress], and that produced a lot of great art. It produced a lot of music, because it was like what the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] does, except it was on another kind of level. So, the WPA, and the other was the CCC camps, the conservation camps [Civilian Conservation Corps]. Young blacks and whites would join these camps, and they would get paid for working in the summer or whatever.

Lockefield Gardens was one of these initiatives that was for low-income housing, and it was beautiful. It was at the [end of] Indiana Avenue. It's kind of ironic that it fell into, finally, decay, and when they rebuilt it – they rebuilt it now, and it's condominiums, $250,000 a year, so it's run the full gamut. Fortunately one of the things that is there is Jimmy Spaulding's older brother [John Spaulding] has a – he does sculpture with [musical] instruments, and he has a wonderful sculpture right out in front of Lockefield Gardens.

At any rate, on the corner of – of there, which is also where you go into – where the hospital is, too, you have these two places where everybody came to play. I remember hearing [John] Coltrane for the first time there, Charlie Parker for the first time there . . .

Lida: Are we still talking about the Sunset Terrace?

David: The Sunset Terrace and the Cotton Club.

Lida: And the Cotton Club.

David: . . . and J. J. Johnson. I remember when J. J. came there with Illinois Jacquet. It was Illinois Jacquet, Russell Jacquet, Leo Parker on baritone saxophone, J. J. Johnson on trombone, and a rhythm section. We would stand out in the back where we could hear them from behind and listen. I can remember Coltrane playing alto [saxophone] in Dizzy Gillespie's big band there.

We would have all the after-hours clubs. This is still the time of blue laws. The after-hours clubs were – and they – and these were changing. Probably one of the earliest was the Sky Club. The Sky Club was a place where they had tap dancers – I remember Flash and Flash there – they had comedians, female impersonators, jazz groups. You could go up there and jam after you got off from your regular job.

This was a beehive of activity. When you walked down Indiana Avenue – which really wasn't a long stretch anyway. It was from Ohio [Street] . . . Indiana Avenue – Ohio is the big street downtown which borders the place where Indy Jazz Fest takes place. From Indiana Avenue – from Ohio Street, it's about five blocks. Then you're at the Walker Theater. At that time Indiana Avenue – at that place it veers to the left, and then it goes all the way down to where the hospital [is] and then Lockefield Gardens.

So we're talking about probably 15 blocks, and in those 15 blocks, all the history of Indiana Avenue was made. There were probably 15 [or] 20 clubs that had jazz six nights a week. You heard Jimmy Coe. You heard Wes Montgomery. You heard Slide Hampton later on. All of these people were musicians that you would hear, and all of them in their formative stages. But at the same time we had all the visiting players. Everybody thought, when Dexter Gordon came to town, or Charlie Parker, or Gene Ammons, that we were going to field our own team, and that would be Pookie Johnson and these guys.

Lida: And what years – about what years would that have been?

David: These would be high school years. This would have been 19 – between 1946 and 1952 or '53. This was the halcyon years of "The Avenue." Now during the swing years you had this, because Indiana Avenue – or black musicians playing there – this was all the black area over there, where Madame C. J. Walker started her dynasty.

Lida: Cosmetics . . .

David: Her cosmetics.

Lida: . . . industry.

David: In the early 1900s, this is where Noble Sissle would have been plying his trade. There were all these clubs – again, a completely closed society. Later on Noble Sissle would team up with Eubie Blake to write the first important – I think – musical in this country, a musical called *Shuffle Along* in 1920.

So there was this history. There were – the older people would have been Roger Jones, Eldridge Morrison, Jimmy Coe, who now is approaching his 80th birthday – the guy you guys [Ken Kimery and James Zimmerman] met yesterday. This would have been Glenn Douglas. This would have been the Johnson brothers. We knew all these people primarily by reputation, because we were too young. When we got a call to get a chance to sub in one of their bands, it was the greatest thing ever, because it was a chance for us to start – and my first experience was with the Eldridge Morrison big band. This is the band that J. J. had played in, a band that Jimmy Coe had played in.

He asked me at that time – by the early '50s he asked me to transcribe all the stuff from the Neal Hefti – the Basie album called *Atomic Basie.* I remember transcribing all those things for $15 apiece, and copying the parts. Copying the parts and everything. That was 15 bucks. I won't attest now to the authenticity of the transcriptions, but I did the best I could at that time, because at that time you didn't have any way to slow a record down. You took them from 78s [78 r.p.m. records] and you'd just wear the record out, over and over and over. Fortunately we had one [a record player] by that time that was electric power. When I was little, you had to wind them up. When I was – oh, I don't know – 7 and 8 [years old], my grandmother would let me stay up when Evelyn, my aunt, would have teenage parties, and I would get to stay up and wind the Victrola. I'm sure my grandmother had another agenda, because I was also kind of the babysitter, because they weren't going to try anything with me, because they knew I'd tell. So I would stand there.

My aunt would send me to the [drugstore] six blocks up to 25th Street, from where we lived on 30th. She would send me up there to buy peanuts and jelly beans for the party. She had me convinced that if I ate any of the jelly beans or the peanuts, when I got on the scale, she could tell. [laughter] I believed that up to the time I was too old for her to send me up there anymore.

I would stay up at that time – this is when I was really a kid – and turn the Victrola. I would hear those tunes, like Peggy Lee singing "[You] had plenty money, 1922" – *Why Don't You Do Right?* I would hear Al Hibbler, *Don't Get Around Much Anymore.* I would hear all this music that they danced to at the time.

So all these things – I had no notion that there would come a time that they would be a part of the fabric of my life, but they were all there. I don't think any of us had any illusions that we were going to be anything but – we knew we wanted to be musicians, but we didn't know what we wanted to be in music, because there were – it was pretty

much a closed field if you were going to do it, but everybody knew that they were going – just knew in their own mind that they were going to be famous some day. So you – we went through the whole thing of trying to figure out – and if your name got in *Down Beat* [magazine] or *Metronome* [magazine], whew, boy, it was tough. I can remember the first time I ever saw Carl Perkins's name in *Down Beat* or the first time I saw Leroy Vinnegar's name in *Down Beat.* These were our home-town boys.

I had been regaled with the stories that Monk Montgomery told me ultimately, later on, and it was verified when I read it in other accounts – see, Monk Montgomery started – he was the first person, the person that they really had in mind when they invented the Fender [electric] bass [guitar], because they [the bass players] couldn't compete with Earl "Fox" Walker, who was the drummer, and then later Sonny Johnson, the drummer with Hampton.

Lida: Lionel Hampton.

David: With Lionel Hampton. So they asked him [Monk] to test this bass. I'd swear that both Sonny Johnson and Fox Walker played with aluminum sticks. They would have to change the drum heads after every set, because they would destroy them. So they gave Wes – asked Monk to try out the Fender bass, because it would give you the volume that matched.

I remember the story Monk told me about – they're playing, I think, in Boston, or playing where there was a harbor. They had come in after Louis Armstong had played, because Lionel was late getting there. Louis had broken it up 'cause he had to keep playing. Then he was followed by another band – Illinois Jacquet's band. Illinois played *Flying Home* and took care of all of that music. So when Lionel got there, the music was – I mean the people were worn out. They weren't interested in . . . He tried everything. He sang. He beat on stuff like he always does. Finally, Monk is standing up right over the harbor, and he told Monk, he said, "I'll give you $10 if at the end of the tune you jump into the harbor with the bass." Monk jumped into the harbor, and the place went wild. When he came back up, soaking wet, they get to the same place at the end of the tune again, and he gave him $10 to jump in there again. [laughter] And I found out later that it was the truth.

There were a lot of things that were part of the growing-up process, particularly up through high school, because that was the time that was so exciting. You told – I can – my yearbook says that, I said in my yearbook that I was going to be a teacher. I don't know if teaching was in the front of my mind at the time. Certainly my models were all teachers, the people that I knew musically, because I didn't know anybody who played classical music, except the people who were part of the NANM, the National Association of Negro Musicians. They would sponsor – they're the people who sponsored the people like Marian Anderson and Jessye Norman and all those people

who aspired to be classical musicians. At that time it really was mainly aspiration, simply because there was no way to go beyond it.

Lida: So coming through that school system, you got a good grounding in music theory, you got a good grounding in playing your instrument, and you had the opportunity to play in a lot of different kinds of ensembles, as well as what you were doing outside of school to try to learn to play.

David: Yeah. There was a lot of activity. We had a really strong music department, so I had a lot of good training. There were a lot of things I didn't get. An orchestra in a black school at that time probably would not have had much in the way of strings. We didn't have any bassoons during the whole time I was in school, so I played the bassoon parts on trombone or on tuba or whatever else.

So there was much that was laudable, but there was a lot that was missing, things that we didn't have access to. We had hand-me-down materials that other schools discarded. The school system was set up in such a way that they would give us that equipment. Like very recently, as you could tell when we were at Crispus Attucks this last – when I went to do those things this year, they got hand-me-down stuff from other schools, and the other schools had all of this state-of-the-art equipment. Attucks has still got stuff that is primitive, almost. So a lot of that hasn't changed. But still, there were golden opportunities.

Lida: I remember you telling me one time what a thrill it was for you to get music that had had J. J.'s name on it.

David: Okay, but that was a different context, when I played in [the YMCA band].

Lida: Ah, okay.

David: When I played in – almost all the kids who aspired to play some jazz and really wanted to get a variety of experience, played in the YMCA band. The YMCA band was at that time a little like – if you've ever seen the Amos and Andy show, where the guys walk around with the epaulets on their shoulders and the whole thing and get to travel – the YMCA band was like a Shrine band. When they needed some people – and it was a thrill to sit in the section, and at the top of the part, it would say "J. J. Johnson," or it would say "Jimmy Coe," or it would say "Roger Jones" – people that we had idolized – and we realized that we were playing this dog-eared music that had their name on the top of it.

So there was always this sense of continuity, because we knew what we came from. Our teachers believed that we could be anything we wanted to be, despite all of the obstacles and all the things that were in front of us, and they accepted nothing less than that. At

that time, of course, the worst thing you could get caught doing would be smoking in the rest room. Or, I remember in the eighth grade, a friend of mine, Robert Hudson, who is a preacher now – somebody said something to him, and he called him a "summich." Mr. Barton, the shop teacher, told him – he said, "Boy, you don't use that kind of language in my shop class." And I remember Robert balled his fist up. Mr. Barton had just got out of the Marines, and he told him – he said, "Boy, you got the time I count to five to open them fists." Robert said, "I ain't opening nothing." "3 – 4 – 5!" and boy, them hands came open so quick! I see Robert now. I say, "Robert, you ever call anybody 'summich' anymore?" [laughter] because that was about the worst word we would ever say. Now that – I don't think that would have raised anybody's eyebrows.

It was a time of higher – we were held to a much higher standard. We were told, when we left, "Don't act a nigger," which at that time simply meant, don't let that stereotype be the pervasive influence that people see. We conducted ourselves in ways – like, for instance, if you – you haven't read it, but it would be nice to read sometimes, the books on the Attucks [High School] dynasty. They wouldn't let us have a parade when we won the [Indiana] State [High School basketball] championship. We could only parade through the Negro neighborhood, because they were afraid it would cause riots. They would tell us, "Don't celebrate too much, because people will think we're being arrogant."

So we had very rigid standards we lived to. We came to school. You dressed. You came with a tie on. And it would never have occurred to us to go to church without having a tie. You called it your "Sunday" suit.

So there were a lot of things that acted as beacons and as gyroscopes for us. The extended family is something that people don't think about now. When you – when I was growing up, whether it was music or otherwise, everybody was your family. Everybody was your family: the teacher, the block – people in the block. If you got caught – if they saw you doing something you weren't supposed to do, you'd get swatted on your butt, and then, when you got home, you were in deep trouble again.

Lots of times you didn't have a phone, because people would go – they'd come in and they want to use your phone. We would – people would say, "Can we use your phone?" You'd say, "Yeah, but just leave a nickel on the table when you leave." So, if you didn't have a phone, they would go down and tell your daddy on you. I can remember Miss Geraldine, bless her heart. She was cross-eyed. Miss Geraldine, she would see us acting a fool, or she called it "cutting the fool," and she'd say, "Boy, is you a fool?" and you'd say, "Yes'm, I am." Then by the time you got home, the grapevine already had it, and you were already in deep trouble.

Of course it augured well, because basically, in a musical situation, where you're talking about this kind of coalescence, where it's always you're dependent on the people you're playing with, and you learn that sense of responsibility. That's why it is so gratifying when we do these – say, for instance, the Indy Jazz Fest – to see the people come together who haven't played together. Many of them haven't touched their instruments for years, and of course there's going to be the attrition that takes place when you don't play.

But it still was a very, very exciting time, going to high school in Indianapolis around that time, and the clubs that existed that would not – that situation would not atrophy until urban renewal.

Lida: So you really didn't get a lot of help from the older musicians. They pretty much tolerated you when you came in, or did they really reach out and try to help you, some of them?

David: They helped in a way, by imitation. They did. Wes [Montgomery] didn't read [music]. Consequently you would play, and he would tell you, "You'll hear it." You got it by imitation. To a certain degree, that's probably one of the most revered traditions.

With Slide and them, they were very gracious to us. We'd write down – I can remember seeing Slide's [trombone] parts, and it would say, "third position high," "second position low."

Lida: Rather than a note.

David: Rather than a note. So you learned both ways. On one hand, Mr. Brown was teaching us out of the *Jay Arnold Swing Method*, but on the other hand, in the street, we didn't have it. I can tell you something that was – when Freddie [Hubbard] was studying with me, I tried to teach him to read [music]. We'd get done with his lesson. I can remember the day we learned – he had a lesson on Saturday morning, and the sessions started at 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon.

Lida: This is Freddie Hubbard?

David: Freddie Hubbard. I can remember the day we learned *Donna Lee*. We spent until we got that baby where we could play it at some ridiculous tempo. Then we decided we weren't going to let them know that we had practiced it. So I dropped Freddie several blocks from the thing, and I went on there, so we got there at different times. Then at the end of the session, Freddie said, "Do you know *Donna Lee*?" There were a couple of other horns on there. I said, "*Donna Lee*? I don't know. Let's just play through it quietly." We acted like we had never played the piece before. Then we set the

tempo and tore it up. [laughter] So there were all the subterfuges, all the pecking orders and things.

There were people like – when Wes made his – when Freddie's first album – I'll never forget. It was Wes Montgomery – the Montgomery Brothers and Five Others. They recorded it next [door] to George's Bar, where all the sessions used to be. They did Wes's music and stuff. I remember they did *Billie's Bounce.* That had Freddie and Punchy Atkins and Wes and Buddy [Montgomery] and Monk[Montgomery] and the other guys on it. We all aspired to play. We were very proud when [Leroy] Vinnegar left. Before he was out there [in Los Angeles] for good, he had a big hit with *My Fair Lady* with Mia Farrow's husband.

Lida: André Previn.

David: André Previn and Shelly Manne. I remember Leroy telling me much later that – obviously, and it was justified, because sidemen don't get royalties. The royalties go to the leader or to the people who write the music. I can remember starting to get a little bitter then. Leroy said in an article, "Can't work in L.A. unless you're a man, a friend" – or whatever it was, because it was Shelly Manne and His Men, Shorty Rogers and His Giants – yeah, yeah, "a man, a friend, or a giant." [laughter] It probably had some truth to it.

At this time we were beginning to have some proliferation, guys going out to play.

Lida: When did you first know that this is what you wanted to do?

David: Probably in high school. I was aware of the fact that I wanted to play. I knew that I was probably going to play jazz if I played.

Lida: Because of the situation in the symphony orchestras at that time?

David: Not even that. I hadn't even thought about that at the time. Later on, when I got to high school – I mean to college, I thought about that. But I knew I wanted to play jazz. At that time there was so much activity, it was realistic. Even well up into the early 1970s, it was realistic to assume that you were going to play in a jazz group if you could play. Cats – it was no big thing. You knew that the jazz groups existed. When Freddie went to play with Sonny Rollins – Sonny told me once that Freddie walked up to him in the Crown Propeller and told him, said, " I'm the baddest trumpet player in New York." Sonny said he wasn't at that time, but he was an awful good player, and he ended up playing with Sonny.

We were people leaving here. I went to the West Coast, after I started to college. I went to the West Coast when I got out of college to try to make my fortune. But all of those things led into – where we are now is high school, in our talking.

Lida: When you played with Eldridge Morrison professionally for the first time, were you still in high school?

David: Oh yes, still in high school, and not a very good player, I might add, but then neither were most of the people either. I didn't read well. I could read classical music, but when people started talking about cut time, I was still trying to beat my foot in 4, and it wouldn't work. I'd be lost most of the time. Sometimes they were tolerant. Sometimes they were not.

I can remember when we were in high school, Slide and I, playing on the Eldridge Morrison band up at the Indiana Roof, and he was playing stocks. I never will forget. There was a stock that had a little thing that went [Baker sings a rhythmic melodic that has a sudden upwards leap], and for some reason or another that hit a funny bone. As fast as I could stop laughing, then Slide would start. It was ridiculous. For about four tunes, we were convulsed. Every time we would start to try to play, one of us would start to break up, and then the other would break up. We went out for the break at [the] Indiana Roof. When we came back, there was two other trombone players in the chairs. [laughter] I kid Slide now about that.

But high school was a very important time for us. This was the time when we had really made decisions about we would like to be professional players, knowing there were going to be opportunities, opportunities that now don't exist.

Lida: After high school, what was your plan?

David: I'm not sure I had a plan. When I was in high school, I worked at night. I worked as a bus boy at a place called LaRue's and another place called The Plantation and several of the clubs. So I worked – when I would get out of school, I would go straight there at 4 o'clock. I would work from 4 to midnight, and then I would take my tuba or trombone, and I would go sit in until 3 in the morning and then get up at 7 o'clock and start school again. I can remember Mr. Morton-Finney – I was taking French, and the only people in the French class were me and a guy named Gaston Cooper and Dolores Pervine, because we were the only ones who had made it to advanced French. He's in the middle of a lecture, and I would go to sleep, because I was so tired all the time. He said – I remember him saying, "Mr. Baker, don't you ever sleep at home?" And while he was talking, I went to sleep. [laughter]

It's funny. I did not see Mr. Morton-Finney for the years between 1949 – because this was 1949 – I didn't see him again until I was well established down here [at Indiana

University] as a teacher. This must have been 19 – 1980, maybe. Now Mr. Morton-Finney by that time is 90-something. I saw him at a reunion, and I said, “Mr. Morton-Finney, I’m . . .” He said, “I know who you are, boy. Do you ever sleep at home now?” [laughter] I thought, this is really great, but it was really just another thing.

So I worked at night, but I played. They would let me play at the supper club. Denny Dutton was playing there. This was a really swanky supper club.

Lida: This was LaRue’s?

David: LaRue’s Supper Club. I would come up there. I would have my little busboy jacket. They let me play *Lullaby of the Leaves* with the band. They thought that was something, because they would let – and unfortunately there I had another friend working there – a busboy – who had a wonderful voice. He was very, very dark-skinned. Denny Dutton would have him sing and walk behind him when they did *Me and My Shadow*. I’m not sure that we would have accepted that now. But the people were starting to realize . . .

Then I would go out at the end after that to the supper clubs and to the after-hours clubs and sit in. I remember a situation where – Buddy Montgomery has a very fast temper, and Monk, too. Wes was the really mild one. Buddy was playing vibes at this [place] called The Plantation. This dude was drunker than a skunk, that kept messing with Buddy. He said, “Boy, I want you to play such and such." And Buddy's playing. “I want you to play such and such." Finally he reached up and grabbed one of Buddy’s . . .

Lida: Mallets?

David: Sticks – mallets. While he was holding the mallet, Buddy let go of that mallet, and reached over, and knocked him unconscious. I don’t think he missed more than 2 measures. [laughter]

So there would be all kind of things. I got – I finally got fired, because I would call – at the supper club where I was working, at that time they had music on the top floor, but on the bottom floor where the other dinners – up there there was entertainment, but downstairs, there was Muzak, and I found out you could call Muzak and request pieces. So I would call and request *Straighten Up and Fly Right,* and there was a very, very beautiful trombone solo on an Ellington piece. I would call these things, and they got hip to the fact that it was me calling.

Finally – because I would practice – as a matter of fact, my uncle who just died, Spencer Paige, was there at the time. He played Hawaiian guitar. We would practice, because I would get off – we’d finish the luncheon – on the weekends, I’d finish the luncheon, and then I would just stay there until time for the dinner to start and have to

set up the bar and all that stuff again. We would practice. And then it would get to be strange – trombone and Hawaiian guitar.

This was a time when it was really a learning process, because I played all day. Then I got out of there, and for one year I went to Arthur Jordan [Conservatory of Music], which is [at] Butler University.

Lida: This is after you graduated from high school? That was . . .

David: I graduated, and I went there one year and met a lot of people who would be – because at that time they took a quota as far as blacks. I went there. It was Oliver Bell, Jimmy Coe, Trili Stewart, Reginald Duvall. I never got to play in the big – they had a big jazz band which was really quite good. I never got to play in that band, but I did make contacts and good friends while I was there, even though I was ultimately asked to leave, because I danced with a white girl at the Christmas dance. They let me know they were very unhappy with that. I didn't have enough sense to take low, so I got kicked out of Butler. Mr. Polin, Dr. Roscoe Polin, who was my teacher – one of my teachers – interceded and got me . . .

Lida: At Butler?

David: Yeah. No, no. He didn't teach – they didn't have any black teachers at Butler. He was my high school teacher, but he was also president of the National Association of Negro Musicians. He interceded and brought me down here [to Bloomington, Indiana] and got me into Indiana University, which tended to – turned out to be something really good for me.

So my second year, I came to Indiana University. But during '49 I was already taking some lessons from Dr. Tom Beversdorf, coming down anyway, driving down – not driving down, having somebody drive me down, because I used to make a lot of money at LaRue's. It was no big deal, even though I was only a busboy, to make $100 or $150 in an evening, because these were big spenders, and the waitresses had to give us a percentage of what they made, because we were the ones who carried the trays of food up three flights of stairs. We would work – so I made a lot of money. I was a miser. My brother would wait until I was asleep and steal money from under my pillow. Sometimes I would have so much money I didn't know that he had stolen it.

When I was still in high school, we – no – yeah, the last year I was in high school, we went on tour with Slide Hampton – the Hampton family band – no – yeah, it was the Hampton family band. No, it wasn't. Slide was in there, myself, [Bill] Penick, [Gaston] Cooper; and we went out with a cat named Mr. Hubbard – Mr. Hibbert. Mr. Hibbert took us out, and we played, I think, a week or ten days at these dirty-ass clubs down South. We came back, and I'm taking off from my regular job, which was at LaRue's,

where I was making sometimes $150 a night, so I was loaded with money. When we get back, Mr. Hibbert –and that's the way cats did you then – They would call you for the pay-in, and crush the money, and put it in your hand, and then put you out of the car. I looked, and we had made $20. Then on top of it, somebody stole my wallet.

So we had a whole bunch of experiences where we went out with the band. Benny Barth was on that band. Benny and Sonny Johnson. Two drummers. We did a lot of playing in a lot of different circumstances in preparation – even though we didn't know it at the time – in preparation for what was going to happen.

Lida: And that's where we'll pick up in just a minute.

David: Okay.

Lida: I know you graduated from Attucks High School in '49, and then you went to Butler, but this also is a time when you were out touring with other bands. You just had talked about the experience that you had being out with Mr. Hibbert.

David: I wasn't touring with a lot of bands. It just turned out that the band that Slide and them had was a band that I was a part of. We did the tour – a couple of tours with Mr. Hibbert, and we did local playing. But this is a time when my main job – and it overlaps. My last year or last two years in high school I was working at LaRue's as a busboy, because I had to earn my living. Dad and them were not able – in my family, everybody had a job. I worked as a busboy there and at the Plantation Club and at a place called Spencer's. I continued to work there after I went to – when I started at Arthur Jordan [Conservatory]. When I started at Arthur Jordan, it meant I could walk right out of the back door of Arthur Jordan into LaRue's, because they were back to back in the next lot. All I had to do was walk right across the thing. So I could practice and stay there.

But what was important is that now I was around other musicians. See, I played the baritone horn at Butler. I played the trombone, too, but I played mostly the baritone horn. I was in the concert band, and I was the only black in the band. But I played baritone horn under Mr. Nilo Hovey.

Lida: Arthur Jordan was affiliated with Butler University at that time.

David: As it continues to be, except now that it's absorbed into the school.

Lida: It was originally, I think, called the Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music, or something like that.

David: That could be. I can't remember. But keep in mind, this is also the school that produced the Four Freshmen. The Four Freshmen had all been students there. They came from Columbus, Indiana, and came there to go to school, and then ultimately became famous under the auspices of Stan Kenton and others.

At Arthur Jordan I continued to study and play the baritone horn. I can remember trying to learn to play bebop. My colleagues there included a guy named Joe Mitchell, who just died a few years ago – [a] wonderful trumpet player; Oliver Bell, another trumpet player; [saxophonist] Jimmy Coe. So there was a fairly large contingent of people who were interested in jazz. There was a big band there led by a guy named Jimmy Lewallen. He was a very, very good writer. They produced a lot of people who were – had good careers.

It became doubly important for me, because, first of all, despite the extreme prejudice that existed there, I made a lot of friends. One of them was responsible for that short stint that I had on the Kenton band. His name was Don Kelly. Don Kelly was a wonderful bass trombone player. When Don Kelly had to take some time off, despite the fact that this probably was not the way it was usually done, or pro forma, he recommended that I take his place on the Kenton band for that – rest of that tour. So that was my stint on the Kenton band. It made me some connections that would help me as I got further into my career, because when I was on the Kenton band for that short period of time that Don recommended me in his place, I met Curtis Counce, who was a big help when I moved to L.A. I met Mel Lewis. One of my Indianapolis friends, Lee Katzman, was on the band. I met Pepper Adams. So these were people who would be beneficial to me later on, because I was only on the Kenton band to complete a tour. I joined them in St. Louis, and I did the rest – finished the rest of the tour with them, which was a fairly short tour.

Then I moved – stayed – went to Arthur Jordan, and for that year at Arthur Jordan, I got to hear a lot of good music. Fact is, Slide Hampton, Maceo Hampton, Buddy Montgomery, and all of them would come over there and listen to the band; and fact is, Slide and Maceo and them wrote some pieces for the Arthur Jordan big jazz band that Don Kelly and them had put together. I can remember Maceo didn't realize that trumpets had a different range than French horns, and he had the French horns written up where you write trumpets. In a French horn, a high C is a very big note, and he was writing G above the high C for the trumpets. So that was kind of different.

But it was a nice experience. I traveled. I got a chance to do the run-outs, the tours that we did with the Arthur Jordan band. I was the only black in the band at the time. I can remember getting to Chicago and getting to see people and hear people that I wouldn't have heard otherwise.

At the end of that year I left to come to Indiana University. But during that period, like I said, again I met a lot of people. And I can remember when I was out with – I'm trying to think who it was with, whether it was the Kenton band or – I don't remember for sure, whether it was him or Maynard [Ferguson] later on – that Pepper [Adams] took me to some of my first clubs in Chicago that I was interested in hearing – where I was interested in hearing the jazz.

This would have been 1949, 1950, even though by this time I'm ready to come to I.U. [Indiana University]. I get to I.U., taking some classes in '49. Then in 1950 – I'd have to look at transcripts, but around 1950, then I became a full-time student at Indiana University. That represents, really, the major breakthrough for me, even though I came in under duress, because after getting kicked out of one school, you really have to have somebody in your corner. And it turned out that I did have somebody in my corner, with Dr. Roscoe Polin.

So Dr. Polin brought me down here, got me in school. I thought everybody in the university had perfect pitch, because I went into the theory classes and the theory classes were very advanced – very advanced students. I began taking trombone lessons with Dr. Beversdorf, as I had in '49.

But around that same time, across that period at Butler [University], I also began playing in the Indianapolis Philharmonic as a bass trombone player. That only met once a week, on Mondays. I met Ernst Hoffman, who was at that time the director of the orchestras here at Indiana University. I played in and continued to play even in that orchestra after I came down here to school as a student. I switched primarily to trombone when I got here, even though I still played tenor tuba and French horn – I mean baritone horn – in the brass choir, and actually did a stint for a semester with the concert band here as a tenor tuba player.

Jazzwise, what's happening? It was a hotbed of activity down here in 1951, '52, and '53. Jerry Coker is here, Al[an] Kiger, Joe Hunt, David Young, George Bright, a guy named Ed Haley – a wonderful alto player – Al Cobine, Max Hartstein, Al Plank. All of these guys were down here in school. So you had all the different factions of people who thought that the cool thing was happening, what was happening on the West Coast, and other people who thought that that had nothing to do with jazz. We had jam sessions down here almost daily. I can remember in 1952 or '53 – can't remember for sure – those years kind of blur – that Cannonball [Adderley], Junior Mance, and Nat Adderley would come up from Fort Knox – or was it Fort Campbell? I can't remember – in Kentucky. They would come up for jam sessions. Leroy Vinnegar, Dick Dickenson, Benny Barth, and those guys would come down from Indianapolis, and we would have jam sessions with all these really great players. But even with – when they weren't coming up during the week, there would be jam sessions with, like I said, the likes of Jerry Coker and guys like this. Jerry ultimately would leave school and go with

the Woody Herman band. There were so many good players, and players who really understood how to make music, that this was a very, very big period of time.

Around this time there was a band that was formed by a guy named Fred Dale, who moved here, who would later work for MCA, the booking agency. He decided to put together a band. He put together an all-star band – he didn't call it an all-star band, but it was an all-star band that had Kiger in it; it had Buddy Baker; a guy named Lou Ciotti on tenor saxophone; Jerry Coker; Al Cobine; a piano player – first of all Al Plank, then I think later on it was John Mast. The bass player – it varied, but at one time or another it was Bill Takas. At another time it was – I just can't remember those details at the moment. That band was a band which Fred Dale entered in 19 – seems like it was 1953 – in the Metronome All Star contest. It was the very first – near as I know, the very first collegiate contest, and it was done by tape. You sent in a tape, and your band was adjudicated and decided who was going to be the best band. I think we ended up tying with the jazz band from Westlake [Westlake was a college in Los Angeles], which was a band which had Jimmy Cleveland and some of those guys in it – Lanny Morgan, who would later be in Supersax and later on the Maynard Ferguson band when I was on there.

So that was a great band, and that band did play a lot. We traveled, we played a lot of gigs, and we entered that contest and won it. But when Fred decided to make the album – the recording that was going to come out of it – he couldn't take everybody to the West Coast. So what he did – I wrote one of the arrangements. I did the arrangement on *Mean to Me*, which was really kind of a lift over the way Wes and them played it, with hits and things. So he took Lou Ciotti, himself, and then they used professional musicians on the West Coast to make the recording.

But the band continued to work, and out of that grew the band that we took to Lake Hamilton. That was the Fred Dale band. This lake, Lake Hamilton, is outside of Fort Wayne, Indiana. That was a heck of an experience. I think we worked there for six weeks. It was Al Cobine again and Al Kiger. These are the people who would ultimately be in the George Russell sextet. We played there, and on weekends – our night off – we would go over to Detroit. I met Claude Black, the jazz pianist. [The] first time I ever heard Elvin Jones was on one of those things over to the – a club called The Flame. Really, really great players. I met a piano player named Johnny Griffin, who I would meet later on – not the tenor saxophonist [of the same name].

So we went over there and played at Lake Hamilton. Lake Hamilton was not terribly gracious to black people. But I was the only . . .

Lida: It was a resort, right?

David: It was a resort. I was the only black on the band. Back to the Kenton band, too. At that time, I think that might have been the most blacks that Kenton had had on the band at one time, because he had me and Curtis Counce. It was a very, very good band then. And then the band that we had with Fred Dale was a very good band. Fred Dale tried to set us up, because he then was also booking for MCA. After we won that contest, we thought we'd probably go someplace, but it did not work like that. We did just that one summer, and then Fred went into booking full time. He played trumpet on the band. But we met a lot of people, heard a lot of people. A lot of people got to hear us, and the big picture and the article in *Metronome* magazine did a lot to let people know who we were.

So we're now at Indiana University. I had a chance to get an undergraduate degree and a master's in music education. I think it laid the groundwork for me for real professionalism, because I played bass trombone in the orchestra. At that time, the school couldn't have been more than – I don't know. Maybe the music school might have had 250 people as opposed to the 800 music majors now. I'm sorry. 1800 music majors now. What happened was I got a very good, solid classical foundation. I played in the orchestra. I played *Parsifal* I don't know how many years running. I studied bass trombone, with the assumption that I would probably be a classical bass trombone player. Unfortunately, reality set in when I went up to interview and audition for the Indianapolis Symphony. I can remember Koussevitzky, who was the conductor of the orchestra at the time.

Lida: Was it Fabien Sevitzky?

David: I mean Fabien Sevitzky. He had dropped the "Kous" – he was part of the Koussevitzky family. But I remember Fabien Sevitzky telling me after I had auditioned that I was probably the best bass trombonist that they were going to hear, and certainly the best one that they had heard up to that time, but I realized that this was an exercise in futility, that in fact no board of trustees – any more than they're going to do that now, if they can avoid it – is going to hire a black in a symphony orchestra.

So it was a dose of reality for me. But it also was a time when I began to reestablish the priorities. I knew that I could make it as a jazz player. I had really worked hard at it. We didn't have any formal instruction, but we were learning by playing all the time. Being around people like Coker, who was probably much more advanced in his thinking and hearing – and Kiger – than I was at the time. So it was a good time for me, learning the instrument.

I moved to L.A. . . .

Lida: Let's go back, just for a minute, and talk for a minute about Bloomington, too, because at this time the town was completely segregated. The university was completely segregated. So you weren't able to live on campus.

David: No. I guess I hadn't even remembered that. In 19 – the early 1900s – [no] 1950s, the basketball teams had just been integrated. I think around 1948 Bill Garrett, a young black from Shelbyville, Indiana, 6-foot 6[-inches tall], was the very first black to play in the Big Ten [conference]. He played center at Indiana University. That pretty much integrated that, but the facilities still were segregated. We had one place in the [student] union [building] where we could sit to eat. We couldn't live in the dormitories. We couldn't go to any of the restaurants in town.

Lida: [You] couldn't get your hair cut.

David: Couldn't get hair cuts. So it was a completely segregated situation here. But we had a man who was such a visionary, a man who stood astride this university like a colossus. His name was Herman B. Wells. Dr. Wells began to systematically eradicate those anachronisms. For instance, I can remember when he integrated the – George Taliaferro had played on the football team. He made All-American and later played – I don't remember whether it was with Chicago . . .

Lida: I think he was with the Baltimore Colts, wasn't he?

David: Baltimore Colts. So we had some isolated instances of integration. I can remember the first tour we took with the orchestra. I was in the orchestra, and we went to play at Carnegie Hall. But we had to pay our way by bus clear there. I can remember them calling ahead, for all the stops that we were going to make – because we had a hundred-piece orchestra and another maybe 150 people who were in the choir, because we did *The Dream of Gerontius* or one of those big works, Brahms's *Requiem* or something. We went in one restaurant en route there, and they refused – they were going to – they had already ordered all the dinners – and they refused to serve me. Dr. – the conductor of the orchestra, in this particular instance . . .

Lida: Was it Ernst Hoffman?

David: Ernst Hoffman said, "If you're not going to serve him, you're not going to serve anybody." They were left with all those meals, and we got back on the bus. So it was kind of a – in that way, the official policy was that we couldn't live in the dorms, so we lived in homes. Then I lived with the athletes. For instance, part of one semester my roommate was Milt Campbell, who won the decathlon in 19 – whenever the Olympics were.

Lida: ’52 Olympics. [He won the silver medal in the 1952 Olympics and the gold medal in the 1956 Olympics.]

David: Yeah, and he won the decathlon. We were very, very good friends. I was good friends with most athletes, because we lived in the same houses, because they couldn’t live in the dorms.

We played a lot. Fortunately that segregation didn’t seem to extend into the social realm. We played fraternities. That’s how we made our living while we were here. We played – and we all – all the bands – all the jazz groups were [racially] mixed groups, because first of all there weren’t that many blacks here. But I played in a group that – the Fred Dale band, and my small group that I played in was a mixed group. There were all mixed groups and things. So that didn’t really pose a problem for us. We had jam sessions at the place called Trees Center, and we jammed in the various fraternity houses on weekends after we would finish gigs. So it was a very, very comfortable situation from that particular standpoint.

I stayed on after I got my master’s in ’54 and continued to work in Indianapolis, playing gigs with Wes, and with Buddy, and with Slide and those guys, but at the same time I was continuing to work toward an advanced degree here.

In 1956, I guess it was . . .

Lida: And then – forgive me for continuing to go back, but I wanted you to also make the point that the jazz activity that was going on here was not as a part of the School of Music, because . . .

David: I assume that anybody who knows anything about jazz education understands that no schools . . .

Lida: Right.

David: Jazz education is a relatively young phenomenon. But at any rate . . .

Lida: Right. This is something you all did on your own.

David: Jazz was – yeah. It was an extracurricular activity and . . .

Lida: And [you] couldn’t rehearse or practice in the School of Music. You had to have other places where you could . . .

David: Yeah. We had – as all the other schools, anything you did was extracurricular if it was jazz. It was sometimes accepted, but more often than not it was against the grain

of what was happening, because people tend to protect those things which they value most highly. Classical music was one of the things that was valued most highly, so it was protected. But we played jazz. We played, and if we got caught playing in a practice room, probably we would lose our practice-room privileges. I can never forget practicing one day in my room, and I was practicing learning *Straight No Chaser.* Ernst Hoffman, who comes definitely out of the Nikisch-Furtwangler schools of conducting – he was not going to make a big stink about me. He hears me practicing, and I see him look in the glass window. He walks away. He comes back. I'm still trying to learn *Straight No Chaser,* because it is so oblique to try to learn it. He comes back. And this happens several times. Finally, when he couldn't take it any more – I'm going [Baker sings the melody], he walks in and he says, "Mr. bass trombone player, if you must practice it, the melody goes [Baker sings the famous French horn melody from Richard Strauss's composition *Till Eulenspiegel*]." [laughter]

Lida: He thought you were trying . . .

David: He thought I was trying to play *Till Eulenspiegel.*

So there were a lot of comical relief moments there. We were back and forth. We went to yet another place to play in about 1955. We went up to Traverse City [Michigan] with another group from Indiana University. This one was a group that had Oliver Bell, a wonderful trumpet player. It had David Young on tenor saxophone, Bill Boyd on baritone saxophone. It had a guy named Gene Hudson on drums. A lady named Toni Zale, who was the niece of the boxer Tony Zale, on bass. Jack Mason was the leader of the group. [It] had Jim Houston, who would form a lot later his own . . .

Lida: Publishing company.

David: . . . publishing company, playing baritone [saxophone]. We went up there, and we played at Traverse City for, I think, six weeks. It rained every night. We were playing on a minesweeper that was converted. So they went broke, and we finished up there.

But we played jazz and continued to play around Indianapolis. I was playing with Wes [Montgomery] much of the time. If I wasn't with Wes, it was with the other small groups. In small groups. I had a group that I called the – what was it? – the Modern Jazz Septet. We worked and played the gigs. So I was doing all right with that kind of thing.

But then I decided to move to L.A. I had watched and seen – Buddy Parker had gone to L.A. and done well. Leroy Vinnegar had some hits out there. It looked like that was the way to go. So I packed up my trunk and my trombone, got on a train, and went to L.A., because I knew Curtis Counce. I knew Carl Perkins, the great jazz pianist. I had made some other connections. I had met Jack Sheldon, who was a trumpet player at the time.

When I got to L.A. – I think I got there with about $9 in my pocket, and I'm supposed to try to find a way to live there. I figured, hey, it'll be easy to do. It was not easy to do. Fortunately, I would always manage to show up at the people I knew's house at dinnertime. [laughter]

I had met – no, this was before then. But at any rate, when I got to L.A. I made the rounds. I joined the [musicians union] local 47. Most of the days I had to choose between eating a meal or having money to get the streetcar or the bus to go to the union to practice. I would go to the union and practice, because the lady didn't like me practicing in the house where we lived, which was understandable. So I practiced and sat in with bands and played with whoever I could. I met a lot of people and I started making jam sessions.

Then, I got a call – because it was going rough, man. I can remember I went one whole time for several days without eating. Then I tried eating macaroon cookies. I couldn't get them down anymore, so I had to start putting vaseline on them. It was dreadful, trying to eat like that. I ended up, when I did get a little money, I went down to a pancake place, and they thought I was a junkie, because I hadn't had anything in my stomach, and I just simply fainted. So I'm laid out there, and they figure I must be a junkie because I got an instrument. It turns out what was happening was just my stomach had not gotten used to . . .

So when I did get a call – I got a telegram from Lincoln University in Jefferson City [Missouri], asking if I would come and fill in a position for one year for a friend of mine, Marshall Penn, who was the trombone teacher there, but whom I had known at Indiana. So I thought, well, I can always come back to L.A. and try it again later on. And I had met – I had known Stan [Kenton] and he – even though I had only been with him a short time, he tried to help me when I was out there.

Lida: Stan Kenton.

David: Stan Kenton. So I get back on the – I get on the train, and I come then to Lincoln University. This must have been 19 – maybe '56. Maybe 1956. I got there on a weekend, and I didn't have – the trunk was coming behind me. So I had my trombone, and I got there with basically a jacket, a suit coat, my pink pants that I was wearing, and a flowered shirt, which represented California. I got in on a Saturday and picked up a key so I could go to the studio, and a storm hit, a winter storm, and it hit on that Saturday. Sunday, the snow was so deep – and I'm there with just my suit coat, right? So, Monday morning it's time to go try to teach. First of all, the guy who was [Dean of the Music Department], O. Anderson Fuller, made it very plain to me when he came over to the building – it was a new building at the time – and I'm practicing – I'm playing *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You* or something, and he came in to me and told

me, “We don’t allow no jazz in this music building.” And he’s my new boss, so I understood.

So that Monday, I’m getting ready to go to school. You have to come down what they call “The Foot,” because the school is up on a hill. We pass The Foot, and there are all these cats hanging out at The Foot. Now, it’s – it snowed two feet deep.

Lida: And Lincoln’s an all-black school, right?

David: It was an all-black school, but it had some white students.

Lida: Most.

David: By that time, they were accepting some white students.

So I’m coming past The Foot, and they’re all these brothers hanging out with their topcoats on and their Russian hats. One of them is Julius Hemphill. Another one is a cat named Carl Solomon, and Monroe Nash. These are all incipient jazz players. So, I’m coming there, man. Now they’re standing in their topcoats, and I’m in my pink pants and flowered shirt and my suit coat. So I’m walking past the greasy spoon, right?, and I hear somebody go, “Ahem.” I keep on walking. “Ahem,” and it’s Julius. And he – I hear him say, loud enough for everybody – all his partners to hear, “If anybody got a topcoat today, they got it on,” and them cats fell out. They were just laughing. They thought this was the greatest thing they’d ever seen. Then they got to school and found out I was the teacher.

You got to understand that the black schools, it’s not – they were not terribly affluent. So I’m teaching theory; I’m teaching private [lessons to] all the brass students; I have – I’m an assistant to the band person; and I’m teaching orchestration. So, these guys are in all my classes. And Julius is trying to Uncle Tom now. He’s trying - he's gonna get on my good side [laughs].

I was a hard-ass, because it was my first teaching gig, and I just assumed that everybody did it like Indiana [University]. So, first of all, I ordered a bunch of books for them, for the orchestration class. And I never will forget, there was a guy named Leroy Ingram. Leroy had just got out of the Marines. A lot of guys were there on the G.I. bill. Leroy had just got out of the Marines. Leroy is probably 6-foot 6[-inches tall], and he’s a fairly robust dude. So the very first week, I’m giving whole books as assignments. I remember giving about a 50-page assignment that one night. And so I come into the orchestration class, and people haven’t done the assignment. I’m acting like I – by this time I had borrowed a coat from Marshall Penn that had the corduroy on it, so now I’m officially really a teacher. So I've got my back to them, I’m looking out the window, and I’m railing about, “I don’t understand how people can not do their assignments.

This is just beyond me. What do you want to be when you get out of here?" I'm going on and on, and I hear somebody go [Baker makes a gasping sound]. I look around and it's Leroy, and he's crying. Now this dude is 6-foot 6, just out of the Marines. I'm trying to clean this up by now, because he's really – his feelings are hurt. I looked at him, and I said, "What is this about?" He said, "Mr. Baker, we take other classes besides yours." [laughter] I tried to clean it up.

At any rate, we all got to be good friends. I played in a group – put a group together with – that we called Smokey Smith and his Harlem Aces. We used to go over to Columbia, Missouri, where Missouri . . .

Lida: . . . University of Missouri is.

David: . . . University of Missouri is. We'd play on Sunday, and we would play rhythm-and-blues and stuff.

Julius and I got to be very good friends. We used to have to have every Thursday – I mean, each teacher had to have somebody give or play on recitals. And Julius and Carl Solomon and a guy named C. I . Williams – C. I. made a bunch of nice recordings. He died – Charlie Williams – he died several years ago, a good friend later of Ted Dunbar and the guys. Julius wrote on the back of one of his albums about me and them pink pants. I remember standing in line at the dinner – because it's like at Howard [University]. They have home-cooked food – good stuff – the yams and things. I'm standing in the line. By this time my clothes had come, and I didn't have on my pink pants. I was fairly conventional. I hear these teachers in front of me in the line talking about, "Have you seen that new nigger on campus? Come in here wearing pink pants and stuff. He must really think he's something." They're going on and on. They don't know it's me. I'm sitting there – I'm standing there in the line to eat, and they're going on and on about this – me and my pink pants and the whole thing. About that time, one of the other teachers from the music school came in and said, "Hi guys! Have y'all met the new music teacher?" [laughter] And it was fairly embarrassing.

But what I tried to do was get these kids involved in playing jazz. I even did a transcription of some of the stuff from [Stan Kenton's] *Cuban Fire*, because they were going to put on an evening – a concert of – it was going to be jazz, and it was going to be a lot of stuff. And fact is, I did – I sang the calypso song – the banana. What's the banana son*g* of . . . ?

Lida: Harry Belafonte? *Banana Boat Song.*

David: Day-o. I did – the teachers were all doing – they were doing their whole acts, and I was in [the show] with the shirt tied around and . . .

I chased everything. They told me who I could date, because I was single. They said I could date anybody who was a senior. Now at the colored schools at that time, particularly places like Lincoln and some of those schools, they had what they call sundown hours. The girls had to be in at sundown. You could not ride in a car unless you had permission. It was very, very stringent. [It was] bad enough at I.U.[Indiana University], because they had to be in at 10 o'clock.

But when I got there [to Lincoln] – and here are all these fine sisters, boy! – they explained to me very quickly that I could date seniors. Naturally, when they said I could date seniors, I wanted to date everybody else. And, man, I just went mad. I'm chasing ladies all over the place. [laughter] Them cats would be watching me, spying on me and stuff like this. [laughter]

I was playing gigs on the weekends with Smokey Smith and His Harlem Aces and really trying to teach the kids to play jazz. I had one brilliant singer – I had a number of brilliant singers. The lady I married [Eugenia "Jeannie" Baker] was a very, very excellent singer. But I had a lady named Frankie Weathers, whose real name is Felicia. She became the biggest soprano in Europe with *Salomé* and with many of these wonderful things.

Lida: [A] great opera star.

David: Yeah. So I flunked her out and brought her to I.U., because – and I flunked a guy who was – flunked her out, and she came to I.U. to study. Then one of my students, a tuba player who was there, John Smith, is the guy who is the new president of Fisk University, but I had him as a student, and he came here [to Indiana University] also.

It was a time of growth for me, because I practiced three, four hours a day, because I knew what I was – what I wanted to do as a jazz player, and this was just a one-year assignment. I was aware of that, so I did all the practicing I could. But it was such an exposure to be around C. I . Williams and Julius Hemphill and them, because these guys were – had just gotten out of the army, so they were – the only difference in age was probably two years. And all of a sudden, to be surrounded by people who could really play already. All I had to do was try to polish them.

So I was there [for] this [one] year, and I met Jeannie, my wife-to-be [who was white]. We had – they had miscegenation laws [in Missouri], which meant you couldn't marry [across the color line]. In most states in the United States you could not marry. Chicago and New York were two states you could – I mean Illinois and New York were two states you could marry in. So we went across the state line to Chicago and got married, and when we came back, the vigilantes were looking for us. I'm serious: the vigilantes. It was very tense. We'd given a ride up there to one of my colleagues, and he cut the thing out of the paper when it was in there the next day, that we got married, so he

could bring it back and scream on us. And he did. When I got back, it was a question of just finishing packing up. Jeannie stayed down there [in Missouri], and I came back up here [to Indiana University] and got re-enrolled in school to try to finish my doctorate. Now we're talking about 1957.

In the meantime, two different times in the summer I had gone out for a week or so with Lionel Hampton, when there was time to do that. Lionel – the working words were that Lionel hired and Gladys [Hampton] fired. So Lionel – if you sat in with Lionel and played pretty well, Lionel would probably hire you, but if you look up, there'd be 10 trombone players, because he done hired everybody. So I would stay with him probably a week or two weeks, and I was with him, I think, two or three different times. One time out at Brooklyn College, I remember – that was later, when I fell off the back of the stage, and he didn't even know I was gone. [laughter]

But when I got ready to come back here, it was to go to school. Jeannie decided she would stay down there until I was reasonably established with a job. So I moved back to Indiana. At that time I had my first group of young students. This was now Freddie [Hubbard] – the people that I had when I did my student teaching at Crispus Attucks in 1953. Now when I came back, Charles Tyler, Freddie Hubbard, all those guys became the first crop of my jazz students.

Lida: Even though Indiana University wasn't as expensive then as it was now, was it difficult for you to pay for school?

David: No.

Lida: Because you were working all the time, weren't you, as a player?

David: My parents couldn't help me [financially]. They couldn't help me. There was no way they could do that. Even though dad and my stepmother were always very supportive of me, they really couldn't help me. But at that time I could live – where I lived, it cost $10 a week for room and board. We would go through the thing of, you could have as much [food] as you wanted to, except of the meat; but guys would get so they would take a little pin and put it in to see when that same piece of meat was going to show up again, because it was economical. So it might be three or four days. Then that same meat that we didn't eat then, somebody would put their little mark on it, and that meat would show up four days later. It was still edible and everything. This lady made it possible for a lot of people to stay alive. $10 a week for room and board. I worked gigs, and gigs at that time paid $13 for the gig. So for $13 – if I played two gigs on the weekend, I was ahead, because I had paid my rent. I was El Cheapo. My idea of a date was to meet the girl after she'd already had dinner and meet her *in* the movies. [laughter] So there was no problem about that, if I was going to do that. This was before I had gotten married, that I was in school. But once I'd gotten married and Jeannie was

still down there, I had come back to school and was really serious about trying to finish that doctorate. Then Jeannie moved up here, I think, that fall.

Lida: That was fall of ’57?

David: Probably ’57. [Our daughter] April was born about a year later.

Lida: August of ’58.

David: August of ’58. By that time I was really starting to work a lot. I formed a big band with Al Kiger – well, all the people who were available here. Jerry Coker had gone off now to greater things. He had played with Woody Herman. Fred Fox was out playing somewhere else, teaching.

At any rate, it was a time when I was trying to really finish this degree, but I wanted to still play, so I put together a small group – again, the jazz septet, and we were working. Then I had the big band which was going to start trying to play. I’ve got now the tapes of it, and it would really peak around 1959 or 1960.

Lida: How – what was the reaction – obviously the reaction at Lincoln [University] was very negative to you and Jeannie getting married. How did both of the families feel about that at that time? Was that – was their reaction fairly typical, do you think, of the time?

David: Of course. My parents probably could have cared less. Dad was cool about it one way or the other. But her family was very negative. Plus, I was – when I was at Lincoln, I think I was making – my first gig paid $3,000 a year. Jeannie and [her family] owned [a place] like a Dairy Queen. But they served good food, so she of course was feeding me, too. And she had a car. I didn’t know how to drive. So she had a car, and she would sneak food out – bring me all this great food – and I was eating good, man. So I bought me a car when I had been there . . .

Well, first, the second week I was there, I got food poisoning at the greasy spoon. I ate some pork, and they ended up pumping my stomach. It turned out that same week that they did me, Julius and those guys – they had been in fraternities – and them cats had stolen a pig. They didn’t smoke the pig. It was after a football game, and they just did the pig. They were all in the hospital, too, with trichinosis. [laughs] So they didn’t have to ask, “Who helped steal the pig?”, because all of them were there.

So it was really a great experience playing, a great experience, but her parents disowned her at first. They were going to have nothing to do with her. They didn’t – they knew when she got back that we had gotten married. Then when Jeannie moved up here [to Indiana], they had nothing to do with her until April was born. Then, of course, all [of]

that dissipated immediately, and they came up. Fact is, the last time they were in Indianapolis was the year before her dad died. My dad died that year – this is ’64 – and her dad died [in] ’65. By that time, all that enmity had disappeared. We – the family – I became very, very close to her mom, as I still am.

So it was very, very nice. I was still playing – and fortunately she made it possible, because she worked while I was playing – leading the band in clubs. That was pretty sporadic kind of work.

My big band – 1959 we won the Notre Dame Jazz Festival. That was a band which was smoking. Out of the band – because I had it down here [in Bloomington] – we were invited to come up to Lenox School of Jazz. Gunther Schuller was in – playing French horn in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. While he was down here, we entertained them with the big band. He heard me, and he wrote the article – I took him up to hear Wes Montgomery at the Missile Room. That’s when he wrote the article called *Midwest Renaissance*.

Lida: *Indiana Renaissance*.

David: *Indiana Renaissance*. It was about my big band and about Wes Montgomery.

Lida: That was in *Jazz Review*?

David: In the *Jazz Review* [September 1959]. Down here, he had written a – when he wrote the article, he talked about some of us that he was really interested in. We ultimately got invited – I got the Dizzy Gillespie Scholarship and some other people got scholarships for us to come to the Lenox, to the School of Jazz in ’59.

I took him to hear Wes while he was here. He couldn’t believe that. It was Wes Montgomery, Paul Parker, and Melvin Rhyne. They were playing at an after-hours club called the Missile Room, which was right across the street from the Walker Theater – well, right across the street there was a funeral home, and then the next one was the Missile Room. I can remember him talking about Wes – "Wes, Wes this, Wes that" – and of course, he wrote the article.

I also remember, prophetically enough, a discussion we were having then, after he had heard the band, about the direction of jazz, where it was going to go. We all talked about, maybe it will be 12-tone music next. What will it be? None of us could have guessed what would happen next. In 1959, David Young, Al Kiger, Larry Ridley, Joe Hunt, and myself out of that band went to Lenox. Ornette Coleman showed up. When everybody was guessing how do you get rid of playing changes, Ornette solved it in the most immediate way. He stopped playing changes.

I had played – let me see – playing up there – coming out of – before we went up to the School of Jazz at Lenox, I was working my own small group, which had George Bright, and it had a guy named – oh, I can't remember, [and] Kiger was in that band; and we were working at a place called Babe Baker's over in Newport, Kentucky, behind the Platters. We were working behind the Platters, and I'll never forget the night this blind saxophonist came in from over in Cincinnati and asked to sit in. He played three saxophones at once. It was – at that time he was Roland Kirk. [Later he would take the name Rahsaan Roland Kirk.] I just remember being so dumbfounded that somebody could actually do that. They were making jokes a little later about him having won the big-band section of [the] *Down Beat* [awards] by himself. But he came in, and he sat in with us, and he played really beautifully. Lanny Hartley was playing piano with that group. We left from that gig in Newport to drive up to Lenox, because we were invited there that year. I just remember it took us forever, because we were driving a raggedy-ass car that Kiger had. We'd have to stop and get gas and oil at so many places. So we got to Lenox late. We were coming up there as the fair-haired boys. We were going to be the heroes. Gunther had raved about us. We could all play. We figured, boy, when we get there, we're going to turn that place inside out. Unfortunately, Ornette got there two days before us and upset the place. There were people who were pro-Ornette: George Russell, Jimmy Giuffre, Max Roach, John Lewis, Percy Heath – the members of the Modern Jazz Quartet. They were all very tolerant. Now you have to dig this, because basically at Lenox, at that School of Jazz, the faculty included, on trumpet, Kenny Dorham, Dizzy Gillespie (in and out); on trombone, the trombone teacher was Bobby Brookmeyer – oh, also on trumpet was Herb Pomeroy and members of that Berklee School contingent. The piano players were Bill Evans and John Lewis and Dick Marx? – [I mean] Dick Katz.

Lida: Dick Katz.

David: The bass players were Percy Heath and Tommy Williams – not our Tommy Williams [who plays trumpet in the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra]. The drummers were Max Roach, Heath – I mean Connie Kay – and there were a couple of other drummers whose names escape me at the moment. The theory teachers were Bill Russo and Gunther Schuller, and the history teacher was Marshall Stearns. So this was a fantastic faculty. There were the ones who were lined up on the side of Ornette and the people who were not. I was of course anti-Ornette, not – I realize now it had nothing to do with the music. I was just drug that he got there before we did, and all of a sudden I realized we were old fashioned before we ever had a chance to be famous or anything.

It was a very, very interesting six weeks. I fought tooth and nail with George Russell every day, because George said, "When Ornette gets to the Five Spot" – which – they were going to open there. Because I heard Ornette on the one record he had done, the one record that had been released, called *Something Else*, and he said, "When he gets there, he's going to change the way people think about jazz," I wasn't ready to accept

that, so every day in the class I would start the argument again. “What are you going to do if you don’t play changes? What are you going to put in its place?” We would go through this thing. Finally George – I would take up the whole class with me arguing.

Ornette and I got to be friends. He and Don Cherry. Billy Higgins didn’t come with them [to Lenox], nor did Charlie Haden. They used – then they broke the groups up, except for Ornette and Don Cherry – broke them up and put all the people who had come from different places in different groups, so they’d get the opportunity to play [together]. I was in Gunther Schuller’s group along with Mona Neves and a guy named Nico Bunick on piano. Larry Ridley was in the group with Steve Kuhn and Ornette and Don Cherry. That was the group that Max Roach and John Lewis ran. Kenny Dorham had a group that had David Lahm and a bunch of others. In any event, it was all stars. You wouldn’t believe the people who were there.

That first year was a revelation for me, because I really did start to learn and understand what George was talking about. So when George – at the end of the six weeks, George called me and Kiger and Joe Hunt and David Young in and talked to us and said he was getting ready to form a sextet. Would we like to be a part of this sextet? But he had first said he was going to do a recording and said we could come up and do the recording with him. He did a recording called *Jazz in the Space Age.* That was with me and David Young and Al Kiger, because he was using the drummer who used to play with Milt Hinton – Osie Davis – I mean Osie Johnson on drums. It was – Bill Evans and Paul Bley were the two piano players, even though neither one of them had big reputations at the time. Osie Johnson, Milt Hinton, and a big band that included all the major figures in New York at the time. I was added to a trombone section that had Frank Rehak and Bobby Brookmeyer. He brought us up there before he ever put the sextet together. I remember we were making that album, and it was, you know, kind of out. I remember very much Bobby Brookmeyer and them saying – because my part was a bass trombone part. I had about a six-octave range on the bass trombone, so it wasn’t a big hassle. But it meant everybody else was really high, too. I remember Bobby Brookmeyer and Frank Rehak came up to me and said, “Tell George these parts are almost impossible to play. Go in there . . .” They went on and on. I was thinking of not to tell George in front of people. So I waited until we got into the urinal. I’m standing next to him, and I say, “George, Bobby and them said to tell you, these parts are almost impossible to play. They’re so high.” I was just being – saying what they told me, and friendly. George shook it off, and he turned to me and said, “David, somebody in New York can play those parts.” He left and walked into the room. I went back and told Bobby Brookmeyer and those guys. That ended that discussion.

Then George said, “Look. I’m going to put a group together.” This is 1959. George came out – flew out – drove out to Indianapolis. They had just built the new YMCA out on Fall Creek Boulevard, and it was luxurious. So George moved into there, him and his little VW. I’m playing at the Topper by now, and I’m playing – because we had to get

off from the Topper to come up there [to Lenox] – and so we're playing six nights a week. George sat in with us every night, because I didn't have a piano player. It was just saxophone, trombone, drums, and bass. He sat in and began to teach us his music.

Let me back up a minute, because . . .

Lida: Kiger wasn't playing in that group, too?

David: No. It was just a quartet. We added those people.

But before that, in 1959, before we went up to Lenox, we had won the Notre Dame Jazz Festival. We took – I took my big band up there that had David Young and all those guys in it, and we did the Notre Dame Jazz Festival. I think we were [named] the best overall group or the best big band there or whatever. This was where you saw the beginning of the Paul Winter Consort, because all these guys were up there.

George knew these people from having heard the tape of my band, so when he got ready to put the group together – because we had just simply taken off from the Topper, where we had been playing to full houses every night and gone up there to do that. I had even made an album called – an all-star album with the trumpet teacher from . . .

Lida: Don Jacobi.

David: Don Jacobi. So when we went to Lenox, and then he – George came out to Indianapolis, we started the sextet in all earnestness. George rehearsed us every day. We were already playing every night. He turned it into the George Russell Sextet. When we became the George Russell Sextet, George then took us to New York. We opened at the Five Spot opposite a group of – that had Jim Hall, Billy Osborne on drums, Jimmy Giuffre on saxophone, and Buell Neidlinger on bass. We played any number of weeks opposite that group at the Five Spot. On any given night, you'd look over there and there would be Miles [Davis], J. J. [Johnson], [John] Coltrane, and Sonny Rollins, not necessarily – even though they were curious about us, but because it was George Russell's group. So they would come and hear us every night. I can see this vision now of Trane always standing against the wall, with one foot up against the wall, leaning against the wall, eating Sunkist raisins. It was really very, very beautiful.

Let me back up, too, to one kind of cute thing that happened when we were at Lenox. This is in '59. First of all, Bobby Brookmeyer decided he couldn't stay there if Ornette was going to be there, and listen to this. I have this image again of him riding out on his motor scooter and his trombone, going back to New York from Lenox, shaking his fist like Beethoven did at the world, because he couldn't deal with Ornette.

Also, while we were there, Mingus came up. Two things that were really important: Mingus came up there. I didn't know he was there. They decided to have a jam session. This is 2 o'clock in the morning, and it's a jam session.

Lida: Maybe we should break for just a second.

[momentary interruption of the recording]

David: They decided to have a session at night. It's 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. It was at the potting shed, which was one of the – no, it was at the Inn. At the Inn is where the visitors stayed, because this is a resort area. This is Tanglewood. There's a girl named Stella who sang, and she asked us – no – I don't remember what her name [was] – yeah, and she asked to sing *Stella by Starlight.* There wasn't no piano player, so I said, "I'll play," but she sang it in a key that I didn't know it in, and I really didn't have the kind of facility to get around. So we start to play, and it's miserable. I'm messing up changes left and right, and I hear a voice from the back say, "God damn it. If you're going to play, at least play the right changes." I started woofing, "What do you mean, 'play the right changes'? I'm a musician." Blah blah blah blah. I look up, and standing in the doorway in thongs and a robe is Mingus. Mingus had just gone through that thing in the courts when he hit Jimmy Knepper in the chops. When they arrested Mingus, Mingus told the judge, "Man, I was just playing. That's part of my act." I had visions of getting the crap beat out of me. I went to Uncle Tom-ing, telling him how much I enjoyed his music and the whole thing. [laughs] Later on I would laugh with Mingus about it, but I was scared to pieces, man.

But back to the School of Jazz. The School of Jazz was a thing that was headed basically by John Lewis and Gunther Schuller; and I'm trying to think of the guy who actually ran it, who was not a musician. It was an idea that they had that they wanted to bring all these major teachers together and have a jazz school where you had practitioners, people who really were players. They put this together. I'm not sure if this was the first year for it or the second year, but it was the year that we all came, my band. It had Nico Bunick. It had Mona Neves. It had – if I could name all the people, every name you'd recognize as somebody who went on. It had the vibe player who died. He wrote that wonderful bossa nova, one of the first bossa nova albums. Gary McFarland. Gary was there as a student. We were all students. Gary had been in the Army with Buddy Montgomery, and I didn't make the connection until I met him.

So it was all these people and then all these great, great teachers. We met all day and sessioned every night. Then the final night we played, and they covered it in the magazines, and they made some acetates from it. I guess now there's a commercial recording of it. So the School of Jazz was probably the prototype for what a school of jazz could be.

That first year was prophetic. It ended up for us with the George Russell Sextet. We began recording almost immediately. We did *Jazz in the Space Age* with the big group that he had. Then we did, I think, *Stratusphunk.* That was for Riverside. We did, for Decca, *Jazz at the Five Spot – George Russell Sextet at the Five Spot, George Russell Sextet in Kansas City.* Then we did – that was for Decca. Then for Riverside we did *Stratusphunk.* We did *The Stratus Seekers.* We did a number of albums for them.

There was a lot of activity. We went out and played in Kansas City at the Street's Hotel. We played at Birdland. We played at the Five Spot again. We had a lot of work with the band. That band stayed pretty much intact. This was the band with Kiger, David Young, and myself on the front line, and George Russell, Joe Hunt, and Chuck Israels on – playing bass. At some point across that we went back to Lenox the next summer, this time with our sextet, the sextet intact, like we had been working. So we were really a part of George Russell's thing. We were still – we went as students, but we were now an organized group. This time at Lenox the students included Freddie Hubbard, Don Ellis, and all of these kind of guys, so it was red hot up there then with all these groups playing. Of course the Modern Jazz Quartet was in residence again. Max was there again. Dizzy. You name it. It was dynamite. The trombone teacher was J. J. Johnson this time. It was the first time I had a chance to study with J. J. So it was like – and I'll later give you information on some of these other – some of the other people. But the George Russell Sextet played there that time. The school lasted, I think, maybe one more year, or maybe that was the final year. It was too good. Most of the people came there on some sort of a scholarship, because it lasted so long.

I meant to tell you: the very first week – the first summer we were there, one very amusing thing – you all know that this was the year that a *Kind of Blue* came out. I'm hanging out, because George let me hang out with him. So I go over there, and we're sitting in the lounge of the Inn itself, and Miles and them show up. I think Miles came and he split, but Kenny Dennis stayed, and Bill Evans stayed. Bill had the reel-to-reels of a *Kind of Blue.* So they put on a *Kind of Blue,* and we're hearing it for the first time, period. Nobody had heard it except the people who were there at the recording thing. I'm listening, and I'm listening, and everybody – the cats are hanging – I'm one of the junior people that they let be there. I listen to the whole thing, and they get to *Freddie Freeloader.* When they get to *Freddie Freeloader,* now it's my turn to speak. I turned to Bill Evans, and I said, "Bill, that's beautiful. That's the best you played on the whole album. It's great, just great." I'm going on and on. He said, "That's Wynton Kelly on that cut." All the way up to the time he died, when he would see me, he'd say, "How you like my playing on *Freddie Freeloader*?" [laughter]

So it was really kind of different. This was a crossroads. Miles had come up with Kenny Dennis. Kenny Dennis is the drummer on the album called *Legrand Jazz.* Kenny Dennis – great, great player. So that was a golden time for us. Jeannie was still working, and it allowed – Kirsten is . . .

Lida: April.

David: I mean April – is an infant. But let me back up – yeah, because it's coming later. Basically, that takes us up through 1959, '60.

But let me back up to something that really turns out to have a major impact on my life. In 1953, coming back from Lake Hamilton when we played up there, I'm coming back with a drummer named Ray Churchman. We had been up all night before, hanging out. We're coming back, and I'm sleeping in the front seat with no seat belt, because seat belts – you didn't have seat belts at the time. I'm not sure whether a tractor hit us or another car hit the car, threw me – I don't know – some 25 feet out the front window, through the front window. I was in a coma for a week in a place called – it's where the Quayles live.

Lida: Huntington.

David: In Huntington, Indiana [the hometown of former Vice President Dan Quayle].

Lida: Indiana.

David: I woke up in the hospital after a week. [Baker points to his left arm] This arm is – these scars and things – was taped to my body. A lot of damage had been done. I'm not even sure they thought I would live or not. I spent the summer – much of that summer in the hospital. I thought everything had recovered even though I had to stay with my aunt because I couldn't do anything for myself at the time. I was living back at home, because this is before I had gone to Lincoln. I thought everything was cool. I started playing again. I played with George Russell and everything. But toward the end of 1960, I started having trouble with speech, trouble with trying to play the horn. On examination by the doctors, they found out what had happened is that I had been playing on a dislocated jaw for almost seven years. What had happened is inevitable: the side that was dislocated had atrophied and the other side apertrophied. So one side got smaller, and one side got larger. All of a sudden I'm wearing acrylic braces that I had made – the dentist made, so I could keep my teeth apart, because when I would play, the teeth would just simply clamp shut, trying to protect my face. So all of a sudden, [when] the metal would get anywhere near my face, it would get spastic. So I played for, I think, two more albums before it got so bad that I couldn't play. And I can remember the day that I won the New Star Award on trombone in *Down Beat* was also the day that I found out I was going to have to quit playing.

So I'm in a hospital in – at Passavant Hospital in Chicago. I spent off and on the better part of a year going back and forth, either as an inpatient or outpatient. There were some moments where I really – because I couldn't play. I had no instrument that I could play.

I did write my first book – a set of exercises based on the Lydian concept, on George's stuff. Toward – I don't know – after about five or six months, I suppose, they suggested – the doctor who was treating me . . . Well, first of all, they wanted to go through – when nothing else was working, they had injected what they call sclerosing fluid. What that does is, it's an acid, and it scars the tissue. Then, when the tissue heals, it pulls it back into place. [My] face [was] swollen up as big as a basketball, almost, and the pain was just incredible. I stayed there. It didn't work. They were going to talk about severing the buxtinator [buccinator] muscles, which are the muscles which open and close your mouth, and then see if they could retrain other muscles to do the job. Fortunately, the doctor that I was with said, "No. We're not going to do anything that is irreversible."

So I spent time in and out [of the hospital], and there were a lot of funny situations. I remember once they told Jeannie that she could bring my trombone up and see maybe if I could play a few minutes a day, to see if maybe it would start to come, where they could overcome this. They said I could play up to five minutes. They were remodeling the third floor [of the hospital], and I'm on the second floor. The doctor said, "Why don't you go up on the third floor, because that's the thing . . . " And I'm going to go up there, but it's the [floor where the] psychiatric ward [is]. So I go up there [and find] a room which is vacant. I go in there and start to play long tones, and I see these eyes over the window. And I see the eyes over the window again. The guy comes in, and it's obvious to me that he's one of the inmates up there. He says to me, "Can you play *Over the Rainbow*?" I explain to him that I'm in the hospital because I can't play. My face is messed up, and it's going to be months before I – see, I just have to play these long tones for five minutes. He was so attentive. When I got done telling him why I couldn't play, he said, "All right. Play *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes.*" [laughs] Man, I got off that floor so fast, you wouldn't believe it.

So there were some lighter moments. Then I got out of the hospital. I started thinking I have to have another instrument, so I decided I was going to play piano. Jeannie was working at Cadillac – Hoosier Cadillac in Indianapolis. I started practicing piano eight hours a day. I practiced eight hours a day. It only took me about six months to figure out that piano wasn't the instrument that I needed to play. So then I bought a bass, and I started to play the bass. That came pretty quick. Mr. Brown, my band teacher from Crispus Attucks High School, said, "Bass is not challenging you enough." He went out and bought a $15 cello and put it back together from a pawn shop and gave me the cello. [laughs] Whew! And I've never forgiven him, even though I love him, even for that.

All of those things were things that were happening across that interim, after I came back from teaching and when I first had the big band. The big band was really something. I've got the tapes. Fact is, that version of *Screemin' Meemies* is my big band that's on that tape.

Lida: Did you first start writing when you had the big band? And was that when George first heard your writing?

David: I don't know if George knew. He heard the writing on the big band thing that I gave him when all – you know – because when I was getting ready to go up to Lenox, they had a tape of that. But I wasn't into writing seriously because my energies were for playing, and so I had not taken seriously writing at all.

Lida: Because you had written some wonderful things for the sextet, some of which were recorded then later.

David: That was after I got in the band. I hadn't written anything for the sextet. It didn't exist.

Lida: Right. Yeah. Okay.

David: When I was coming out of the hospital, I hadn't done any writing. I wrote some stuff for the big band in 1959.

Lida: That's what I was . . .

David: . . . things like *Screemin' Meemies.* I had written some of that stuff when I was – actually, that short time I was with Kenton, and I had sent Quincy [Jones] a copy of the – of *Screemin' Meemies.*

Lida: Yeah. That's what I was getting at . . .

David: But I wasn't into serious writing until . . .

Lida: . . . when you started writing.

David: . . . until after I had the – until I had to be in the hospital. Then I came out, and I had to do something to occupy my mind. So I wrote – did some writing then. Not serious again, but mainly it was those things I did for George Russell's sextet. I wrote *Kentucky Oysters* for that group, I wrote *War Gewesen*, and some of the pieces which George still plays with his bigger group . . .

Lida: I just didn't remember if George had asked you to write those . . .

David: No.

Lida: . . . or if you had brought those in.

David: No. He always welcomed music. I had at least one piece on each of the things [recordings] that I'm on. A couple of the things I had two pieces on. I wrote a piece called – it was – it came out as *Lunacy,* but the name of it was *Stone Nuts.* He said people would have misunderstood what that meant. So we changed it to *Lunacy.*

Lida: Yeah, because he liked your writing very much. I was just curious where he had first heard your writing.

David: I'm not sure he liked the writing all that much, but it was part of filling up what the band had to do. So, we played that.

And, oh, I've got to tell you one of the funniest stories I can ever remember. When we were in the Five Spot the first time – [the] Five Spot was owned by the Termini brothers. They owned the Five Spot and they owned the Jazz Gallery. The Five Spot is 5 Cooper Square. Two blocks down and around the corner was where the Jazz Gallery was. We're playing at the Five Spot, and [Thelonious] Monk is playing at the Jazz Gallery. If you were playing either one, you had a pass to go to the other one. So we would go over and hear Monk every night. Monk hadn't come to hear us yet, but he's a friend of George Russell's. After about – I don't know – the third or fourth week, I'm playing one night, and I've got my eyes shut. I look out there, when I open my eyes, after I finished my solo, and there's Monk with his arms crossed and his hat on. He didn't say anything, but needless to say, I'm nervous. So when I come off the stand, he just looked at me, and he said, "You do look a little like me." Somebody had told him that I had looked like him. I had the beard and the whole thing. This is 1962.

1964, I had switched to cello. We're playing in Cincinnati at the ballpark. Down in the pit is where you warm up. I'm with Jamey Aebersold and – I forget who all's with us – Dickie Washburn . . . I'm down there warming up, and I hear a gasp. I look behind me – now I've had no contact with Monk except that one time. I'm warming up and I look back, and it's Monk and the Baroness Nica von Rothschild. Everybody's looking. Monk walks over to me, and he says, "But you're uglier than I am." And I – Jamey and them are saying, "What was that all about?" I told them, and it was so – because it was so out. Later on I got to know Monk well enough to know that that's his whimsy.

Across that time we were playing – in '64, we were playing in the schools with Jamey Aebersold, and starting to do that after the thing at – after I had to quit playing trombone. Maybe I should start to talk about the cello, because I'd started switching – when I came from trombone and tried bass and tried piano, then it took a while to really get cello going. I can tell you if I went to bed with my hand open, I would wake up with it swollen open. If I went to bed with it shut, it would be swollen shut, because I was playing all day, trying to just get enough chops to play – to have something to play.

Lida: Of course starting a string instrument when you're older . . .

David: Yeah, it's really a bitch.

Lida: . . . is really quite a challenging thing physically.

David: It's a challenging thing on every level. But it was a time that so much was going on in Indianapolis at the time, even though I was a beginning cellist, everybody – Elvin [Jones] was coming out there, hanging out, during the summer, playing. Chuck Carter was there. Kiger was there. Willis Kirk, the drummer the other night, was there. David Lahm had moved to Indianapolis. Paul Plummer and all the guys that had been a part of the different versions of the George Russell group were there. And so all of those cats were coming out and we were having jam sessions. I'll show you clippings and stuff. Man, we were having jam sessions and playing all the time, so I was growing by leaps and bounds.

Cello is not a user-friendly instrument, for one thing. It was kicking my butt nine ways to Sunday, but I was playing with everybody, so it was easy to really begin to grow.

I need to back up again to that time just before Lenox, because that's the time when Slide and those guys were all coming back to Indianapolis. We were playing at the Jazz Gallery, and we were playing – this was during the time I was at the Five Spot – I mean, at the Topper. We were playing all these things. This would be 1958 and '59. We were playing everywhere. When Slide and all those guys would come back, we would play and do tapes.

I was trying to think. It seems like . . . Well, I can remember that I also doubled piano. My piano playing chops were very, very bad. One of the times Slide and Freddie came back at the same time. They said, "Look, we" – it was a night I had off at the Topper, and they said, "Would you play piano for us?" I said, "I prefer not to play piano, because I don't know piano well enough." I had learned to play piano over a weekend, when we had that group, when Slide's band – this was when we were out of high school. I learned to play piano between a Thursday and a Monday. This would have been 19 – I don't know – 1949? Maybe 1950. The piano player got busted or disappeared, and Slide – we had two trombones – and Slide said, "One of us is going to have to switch to piano. It's my group." So I switched to piano, and on a Thursday Slide took me over to the Y[MCA]. Between Thursday and Tuesday I learned enough piano to play gigs.

So when he came back, him and Freddie were playing at a place called the 16th Street – no, it wasn't the 16th Street Tavern. It's the Tro – not the Tropic Club. Yeah, it was the Tropic Club. I said, "Slide, I'd rather not play piano." Him and Freddie – because they're longwinded to begin with – they start to play, and we play a blues. After about

20 minutes, I've run out, so I start playing every substitution you could think of and every chorus was a different set of substitutions. It was behind Slide. The place is packed. I hear Slide say over the microphone, "Give me a break! Give me a break!" [laughter] I apologized later, because it was – it was like running the gauntlet. We laugh about it now. That was just before I had quit playing the trombone, when I was still there.

We're back to switching to cello. The reason why I brought it up is because then Wes and these guys took me under [their] wing. I remember Wes telling me, when he heard me practicing – now we've got to back up. This same time, but it's back just before I switched to cello, Ted Dunbar moved to town. Ted Dunbar is a wonderful guitarist from Port Arthur, Texas. Ted came to Indianapolis probably in 1959. This is when we were still at the Topper. He came down and sat in. I remember being so knocked out, because he played with his thumb, just like Wes did, but he had arrived at it independently. He told me, he said, "David, I came here so that I could be around Wes and I want to study with you." I said, "Fine." He was a pharmacist as well as a player. That's what his training at Texas Southern [University] was. He knew the members of the – what is it? The Jazz ? [Crusaders]. The group that had – they had a bunch of hits out of – where Hubert Laws went to school. The Jazz – the Jazz – they changed their name, dropped Jazz from it.

Recording engineer: Messengers?

David: No, it wasn't the Messengers. It was the Jazz – it's still – trombone, tenor [saxophone]. Anyway, I'll think of it in a minute.

So anyway, he had grown up with those guys at Texas Southern, and he came up there as a pharmacist, because that's what his degree was in.

Recording engineer: Crusaders.

David: Jazz Crusaders. Thank you. They called themselves just the Crusaders after that.

He came and sat in with us, and I became really enamored of Ted's playing. We got to be really good buddies. Fact is, when – he would sit in with us almost every night. Then we started playing a lot of gigs together. Later on, after he had gone to New York and was on the faculty at Rutgers, we tried to get him. We offered him the job here [at Indiana University] as a second faculty member [in the Jazz Department].

I've got to tell you another cute story. Ted would come to my house, and we would play all the time. But then he would go over to Wes's house. Wes didn't practice, but he would go over and play with Wes. Wes didn't show up for about three days. I remember Ted came to my house, and he said – he told me, said, "David, let's go down to the 19th

Hole, where Wes is playing tonight." The implication was that he was going to teach Wes a lesson. I said, "I can't go tonight, Ted," I said, "because I've got too much to do." So about 10 o'clock, which would have been the end of the first set, Jeannie said, "Are you coming to bed?" I said, "No, I'm going to wait until Ted calls." She said, "He didn't say nothing about calling." I said, "He's gonna call." About 10:15, 10:30, the phone rings. I pick up the phone, and he says, "David, this is Ted. Why don't you stop me when I go down there fucking with Wes?" [laughter]

And, you know, Wes would be smiling at you and be killing you, just be killing you. For me, as one of – he was one of the senior people. He's the one who told me, if you're going to play with an amp, practice with an amp.

So this was a golden time, even though I had just switched to cello and it was still killing me. There were a lot of things I didn't know that you couldn't do on cello, so I did them. It was only after I started trying to study formally and found out you couldn't do them, that I couldn't do them any more.

Lida: Do you find that the fact that the cello and the trombone play pretty much in the same register helped you be able to hear the things that you had been hearing before, or was it just a completely different experience?

David: I don't think that it can be 180 degrees, that big a dichotomy. No, it didn't help me. It didn't help me. It turns out that what I play sounds like what I played on trombone, because it's the same register . . .

Lida: Right, that's what I . . .

David: . . . but it didn't help at all. It didn't help at all. It wasn't anything – you either can hear or you can't hear. I didn't realize I couldn't hear until I switched to cello, because on trombone I knew physically by my tactile senses where every note was on the instrument. You tell me where to play a B-flat, I can put it up to my face now and tell you where B-flat is on my face. But I didn't have that. I didn't find out when I started playing the cello, until I'd be playing the cello, and I'd play a line, and it would be a minor third higher than what was written. I didn't hear that it was a minor third higher, because I had no point of reference. On trombone, I could tell you where I was on the instrument all the time.

So the big adjustments were, first of all, I ran into a number of teachers who thought, because I already had a reputation as a trombone player, that I didn't need fundamentals on cello. They would tell me about musical things, like "Play this note longer. Play this note softer." I went through a series of teachers, all of them cutting me that kind of slack. My playing wasn't getting any better until finally [Leopold] Teraspulsky, my first probably real teacher other than Mr. Brown . . . George Gaber, the percussionist down

here, and I had gotten to be friends. I told him I needed help. He said, “Look” – I hadn’t come down here to teach yet. This was ’64.

Lida: This is Indiana University we're talking [about].

David: Yeah, I hadn’t come down to Indiana.

He said, “Let me see if I can speak to Leopold Teraspulsky and see if he’ll take you as a student.” I said, “That would sure be a help.” He said, “He wants you to come down and play for him,” and that’s on Saturday I came down here. I go over to Mr. Teraspulsky’s house, and he’s sitting on the hassock. He said, “Play something for me.” So I started to play the *Elegy* by Fauré. I've got my eyes shut and I’m just playing [Baker hums] – and I look up, and Teraspulsky’s got his hands over his ears on the hassock, rolling back and forth like this. [laughter] He looked up, and he said, “My God! How can you play like that? Can’t you hear what you sound like?” I was destroyed. He told me, he said, “I’ll tell you what. I’m going to take you as a student as a favor to George.” He said – and this is September – He said, “It’ll be December before I ever let you put your left hand back on the cello again.” I came home, and for about a week I was just floored. I just couldn’t play. Then I said, “Damn you. I’ll show you.” Three weeks later, I was back playing with both hands. But he had to undo all this wrong shit that I had put together myself, because I didn’t know you weren’t supposed to do this stuff, and you can’t do this, and you don’t do this.

Finally – I made a lot of progress under him. He left. I came here in ’66 as a teacher, and he [was] still here. I took lessons for about a year, and I'm playing enough that I think I’m making [progress] – but then I hit another impasse. Then I went to a lady named Helga Winold. I started to tell her what I needed. I said, “Here’s what I need.” De-boom, de-boom, de-boom. She said, “No no. You don’t tell *me* what you need. I tell *you* what you need.” That was the really major breakthrough for me, because she went back to the fundamentals that Terry [Teraspulsky] had laid down and made me actually do the fundamentals.

But that’s ahead of the story, because we were just at the end of my switching to cello. It was really nice. The real drag was that was the year, like I said, that I quit playing the trombone, that year me and Slide tied for [the] New Star Award and J. J. [Johnson] won the established award, so that all three trombone players in the [*Down Beat*] awards that year were from Indianapolis.

It was really traumatic, man, because at that time I had no instrument that I could really play well enough to play music. I had all this music in my head and no way to play, no way to express myself. So I started writing. I started writing simple things at first. I wish they could go back and destroy virtually everything that I wrote across the first 20 years I wrote as a composer. I wish they could take the stuff out of the books. They

don't. I have to – I hide sometimes, or act like I really meant it. I've got to tell you – and then we need to take a little bit of a break. Later on, I wrote a piano sonata. I wrote it on a train going to Atlanta and coming back. That's where you saw that picture of me with the leather suit. I wrote it on that train, because I was going through a thing around that time, about flying. This piece I wrote, and somebody discovered it. All of a sudden, people are playing the work. I don't know what that piece is about. There are two or three – I've got two doctoral dissertations downstairs that have been written on this piece. It was recorded. It's on the last – this new CD called *Dark Fires.* I look at these analyses and I'm sure they're right, but I don't have the vaguest notion what that piece is about. I listen to it, and I say, "What is that? Why? What's going on?" And boy, now there are these learned documents, these dissertations, and people are recording the work; and I keep thinking, boy, I wish I could have done that under an alias. But I didn't do it under an alias. I can give you copies before I leave, because it's so funny.

Can we take a break?

Recording engineer: Absolutely.

[The recording resumes]

Lida: Maybe we could talk for a few minutes about your compositional activities: how you got started, how you became interested in being a composer.

David: The business of being a composer sometimes isn't always a conscious choice. When you need music for groups that you're working with, one of the logical places is to look inward. Who's got a better vision of what you want to do than yourself?

During 1959, when I was at Tanglewood, one of the things I had a chance to do was to study with George Russell. Not only was George the leader of the group, but George was also our mentor. He taught us how to play his music, and he exposed us to a concept – perhaps the only concept I know that has come out of jazz where every aspect of the music is rationalized in a meaningful way. The Lydian concept is the only theory I know that leads practice rather than follows practice or codifies practice. So George taught us a lot about how music works, how to handle tension, how to use the material that came out of basically a folk kind of music, but to use it in an intelligent way. I don't think it took hold in my writing while I was still with George. Certainly the things that I wrote, some of them on the surface show the manifestations of George's music. Others do not.

I'm going to digress and tell you a little story. While I was with Quincy [Jones] overseas, we were in Germany. A guy named Eric Vogel, who wrote for one of the major magazines there – I don't remember which magazine it was right offhand – but he asked me if I would come on – he said, "I hear you speak German." I said, "Yes, I

learned German in college, and I've had a chance to use it on occasion." He said, "Would you like to come on Sudwestfunk radio and talk to me?" I said, "As long as I don't have to deal in any kind of technical questions." He said, "I won't ask you any technical questions." So we start. We go on the show. All the guys are tuned in. They're going to listen. The very first question he asked me – and he asked me in German – please discuss in some detail the aspects of *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization for Improvisation* by George Russell, after which followed a minute of complete silence. When he realized that I wasn't answering, I hear in the background [Baker sings da da dee da dee da dee da, dee da –the melody of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*.] They had gone to music. That was the end of the interview.

So, I can talk about this in English, but I can't speak about it in German. With George, George showed us how to move the music. I to this day don't understand how anybody can be self-taught with the Lydian concept. I learned it from George and was able to understand what it is he wanted and use that, which helps me organize my thoughts and my thinking. I also helped expose Ted Dunbar to it. That is the one thing that we did together almost consistently.

How it begins to manifest itself – the first time it shows up, I think, in my own writing, happens on the death of my father. My dad died in 1964. He was 57 years old. [He] died from emphysema, the demon cigarettes again. I wrote a piece, a cantata, based on the 22nd Psalm, the one that has the – [it] prophesies what will happen at the crucifixion: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It's a multiple movement work – I think 12 or 13 movements – with string orchestra, jazz band, solo singers, and what have you. In there I did consciously try to use the concepts and precepts that George Russell had put forth. I consider that probably my first really serious composition, not that the others weren't serious, but I mean one where it has to be organized over a particular and protracted period of time. That was 1964. We performed it at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. I used, in my orchestra, almost all my teachers – Mrs. MacArthur, Russell Brown, LaVerne Newsome – as a part of that orchestra. I was able to then draw on my colleagues or soon-to-be-colleagues at Indiana University – Jerry Coker, Jerry Greene, and others. So that was probably the first composition of any real substance.

Lida: What was the medium? I know it had chorus.

David: It's what I said. It had orchestra – string orchestra – it had choir, and it had jazz band. It had all those things. The text was drawn from the Bible. Everything is from that particular version of the 22nd Psalm.

I began to write more things that are thought to be liturgical jazz, simply because that was all in vogue then. I wrote a votive mass for the Catholic Church, which was

commissioned by them. I wrote another mass for the Unitarian Church, and a number of smaller works that were strictly liturgical works.

Then there is kind of a hiatus where I got more involved with playing and writing for the jazz band. Perhaps the next major step forward for me was my first concerto. I had the good fortune to be on faculty with Joe [Josef] Gingold. Joe Gingold, along with Dorothy DeLay, [were] probably the two most important string teachers of our time. They, between the two of them, have taught almost every concertmaster or concertmistress in the country, if not the world. So Joe came to me, and he played me a composition by Bill Russo for violin and jazz band. He says, "This is a work I'd like to think about doing, but I'd really like to have a work of my own." I said, "Let me take a shot at it," and I wrote a concerto for violin and jazz band [1969]. We performed it here shortly thereafter [April 1970] and then gave a second performance during one of the black music seminars which were so common at Indiana University because – and I'll come back and say something about that in a moment. Subsequently it was recorded by [violinist] James Getzoff. We did it with Ray Brown and major musicians in Los Angeles area at the big theater there – one of the big theaters there.

Now maybe I need to back up just a bit and talk a little bit about what happened on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. When Dr. King was assassinated, we were at a church – at a rehearsal of the church choir that I sang in. To our dismay – it happened on a Thursday night, but on the Friday, to the dismay of everybody here, when we started to try to find some music by a black composer to play, we found there was no music, no chamber music at all. Out of that grew the Black Music Center [at Indiana University], which was headed by Dominique-René de Lerma. I was the Associate [Director].

We began then to do a number of interviews for a book which ultimately you [Lida] and I and Dr. [Herman] Hudson would publish – I mean, would come out on Scarecrow Press [*The Black Composer Speaks*]. [Lida's note: None of those interviews were published in *The Black Composer Speaks*. We did different interviews for that book.] It also marked the beginning of a host of seminars around the country, if not the world, to try to begin to address these kind of cultural concerns, as well as political and sociological concerns, too – omissions, if you will, more than anything else.

Out of that emerged a whole spate of black composers who were either lesser known or not known at all. For instance, the Black Composer Series, which Columbia [Records] put out, but which was underwritten really by other sources – and those other sources provided the money by which Paul Freeman would then produce this relatively large series of works, which was ultimately reissued by the Music – was it the Theory Society? Music Society? I can't remember what it's called. The Theory Society or whatever it's called [Society for Music Theory]. It uncovered works by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Hale Smith, T. J. Anderson, Olly Wilson, and a host of others.

I think what happened as a result of that is that you saw a lot of activity. There were the formulation of various Black Studies programs around the country, many of which, once the pressure was off, disappeared. But at least here, even though we did not keep the Black Culture – the Black Music Center – it finally went over to the Black Culture Center and then died a quiet death, but now there are places such as the center which Sam Floyd runs.

Lida: The Center for Black Music Research in Chicago.

David: Yeah, Center for Black Music Research in Chicago.

But I said all that to say basically that the stimulation for a lot of the activity as a writer, for me, was that impetus, what opened it up. Fact is, we had –Mari Evans, a wonderful poet and lady who has won all kind of accolades for her book *I Am a Black Woman,* and I collaborated on what was to be an opera based on the life of Malcolm X. Now we know that later on Anthony – Anthony Braxton – no, Anthony – Tony, who wrote *X*. I can't believe I can re – he's got the same name as – [Anthony Davis].

[At] any rate, we were going to write an opera based on Malcolm X. Mari felt that because of her particular relationship to the black community, that she could get the clearances without a lot of problems. That died a-borning. I had one of my sometime [composition] teachers, Juan Orrego-Salas, say to me when he found out I was going to write an opera based on this, he said, "It takes about three years from conception to realization of an opera." He said, "You're probably going to get one or two performances, and that'll probably be the end of it." He said, "I want you to stop and think how much music you could write in three years for solos, for orchestra, for choir, for bands, and whatever." I thought about it for all of ten minutes. I put the manuscript away, and that was the end of the opera.

But what it did do was open up another world for me in terms of what I do musically. Followed very quickly by that first concerto for violin were some eight or ten other concerti. The second one was a piece for James Pellerite, the great flute player, who happened to be one of the teachers here at the time. I wrote a piece for string quartet, jazz band, and flute [*Concerto for Flute, String Quartet, and Jazz Band*]. Then it opened up the door for a tuba concerto, two bass concerti – one of the tuba concertos for Harvey Phillips, a bass concerto for Bert[ram] Turetsky and one for Gary Karr, a cello concerto for Janos Starker which was premiered by Russell Dennis Davies [Dennis Russell Davies] at the – was it in Minneapolis? Yes, in Minneapolis, with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Then [there] followed eventually a second cello concerto for jazz band and cello, and two trombone concertos, a viola concerto, another tuba concerto – at any rate, a lot of activity. What it did was begin me moving toward what Gunther Schuller coined in 1958 at the Brandeis Festival, "Thirdstream music", a music which

later [Nicholas] Slonimsky would define in his book as – he said, “If the first stream is classical music and the second stream is jazz music, their Hegalian synthesis is the third stream.” It served nicely as a useful appellation to take into consideration music that is somehow or another – that somehow or another draws on both of these sources in an effort to make a new expression.

A lot of my music – my choral music and whatever, which I’ll talk about a little later – began around this time. Now I had mentioned before a lot of music that I wish I could call back, because a lot of the music written very early, not in my chronological life, but very early in my musical life, is music which was written under the influence of so-called dodecaphonic music – the 12-tone technique. It’s something that needed to be addressed. I think that any literate musician writing in our times has to have dealt with that music either as a conscious addition to what they do or as a conscious rejection of what is in that music.

And so I wrote a lot of music, music that came out in the – what is it? the book? The Black? Concert? Songs?

Lida: *Art Songs of Black Composers.*

David: *Art Songs of Black Composers*. And some of that [was] the settings of the works of Mari Evans, the settings from the Bible. And I’ve done I don’t know how many large works for choral ensembles. It all gets its genesis about this time.

About 1964 I began getting some hints that Indiana University was moving toward the formulation of a jazz degree program. In 1966 Wilfred Bain, who had been the dean when I was here at school, which was roughly 1950 to whenever I left. 19-maybe-56 or ’57. I wasn’t the first choice. I think his first choice was Bill Russo. Bill Russo did not take the job. Jerry Coker, who was acting as kind of a visiting lecturer here, refused to give him any other name than mine, and so out of desperation or whatever – anyway, I got the job. My job was to put together a jazz degree granting program. From 1966 to ’68 I taught a hodge-podge of courses. There really wasn’t anything in place. There were four people who showed up for the improvisation class, and the first time there were no history classes. There was one arranging class which maybe had two or three people in it. So I was teaching orchestration, I had a couple of jazz bands, and a couple of courses.

But at the same time, I had on the drawing board what I thought an ideal jazz program ought to look like. Because we had such a large school and so many bodies, it was possible to pull that into some kind of a meaningful form. It was an uphill battle. There were people who said, “You can have these things, but you cannot have jazz band being a major ensemble. Everybody’s got to be able to play in some kind of a classical ensemble to have a well-rounded education." But it didn’t seem that there was a

reciprocity there, in that they didn't think everybody had to play in a jazz band to have a well-rounded education. I remember a man who unfortunately is dead now, because he was a good man, but he was pretty staunch in his belief that – he told me that, "As long as I'm here, jazz band will never be a major ensemble." Two weeks later, on a Thursday morning, it passed as a major ensemble. So much for his prophecies. Jazz band became a major ensemble.

What I felt had been missing, and what was missing at most of the schools around the country, were serious courses that dealt with the diaspora, serious courses that dealt with the evolution of the music, courses in jazz history, courses in jazz analysis, and the like. So I put together a degree-granting program that took all those things into consideration. It's happenstance, but it also happened to be serendipitous, that this occurred just about the time we reached the zenith of the civil rights movement. All of a sudden everybody wanted to take a course that had to do with black something – black history, black music, black anything. All of a sudden there are these gargantuan courses – sizes that were unbelievable. One year I taught a course – fact is, Lida was my teaching assistant – I taught a course over in the business building, because there were so many – yeah, [the] business building, because there were so many students, probably 500 students in the class, as well as the fact that it was then sent out over TV to our sister campus, I mean to other branches of our campus. All of a sudden I'm teaching 500 people and teaching at four or five other campuses this music.

Very quickly the other courses began to fall in place. We found out that the history courses were not the only large courses. There were courses then that we could offer in arranging that were fairly large, and we had the ensembles to play the music. We of course had plenty to do with improvisation, simply because that was absolutely necessary that we be able to do that in order to people our ensembles. We grew from two ensembles to four ensembles, where we have stayed, as far as what we are doing now.

It became apparent, however, after about 1966 to maybe 1975 or so, that it was no longer going to be possible to run this as a one-person program. Most schools across the time did. But what had happened as a shift of paradigm is that Jerry Coker and I were among the first practitioners of the music to enter into the teaching profession, teaching jazz. Most of the time you had people who came out of school, went to another school, came out of that school, and began teaching without ever getting any experiential knowledge.

So we put together – I put together what I felt was a strong program. Then we went after a second person. We went first after Ted Dunbar. Ted by that time was relocated in New Jersey. I think he gave us a hard look; then he decided that he really didn't want to be away from New York, and understandably so. So we hired a guy named George Ross, who is no longer on this plane. He was a graduate of [the] Eastman [School of

Music]. Fact is, he was a colleague of some of my close friends now. Lenny Foy went to school with George Ross. Byron Stripling was in school with George Ross.

George came and did an okay job for two years, but he was never really able to adjust to the concept that was in place for this jazz program. Plus I think he was a little irritated that – because I had been here so long – that I had a kind of pre-eminence that did not then immediately accrue to him. At any rate, whoever's fault it was – mine or his or both of our faults – it didn't work out. We then hired Dominic Spera, who was with us roughly from '77 – around '77 – until he retired two years ago or three years ago, this being 2000.

Now, what was happening across that time with playing – and what have you – and the growth of the music, my writing was taking on a lot of different shades. I wrote a lot for the jazz bands when I first started teaching, simply because there was only so much music that we could beg, borrow, or steal that was published or what have you. So I wrote a lot of music and came under some criticism for programming so much of my own music.

We went to only one jazz festival when I was here, simply because I had written an article for *Down Beat* in 19 – probably '62, no, '64. I had written an article called *Jazz: the Academy's Neglected Stepchild*. I was very critical of the fact that a person could come in and teach jazz without having any kind of training, without any kind of skill – run a jazz band without ever having done any of this – and these things would not be acceptable if somebody were going to run an orchestra, or run a concert band, or what have you. I started lobbying in that article – which had a lot of repercussions – that they raise the bar for somebody who's going to teach in this – teach this music. There were a lot of residual resentments about this. I decided rather than expose the bands – first of all, we didn't need the exposure. The exposure of the band usually at these kinds of things is basically designed to recruit. We didn't need to recruit. At that time we were the number one music school in the country, and I had the option as well as the luxury of not having to go out and take the band out. We had enough to do. We were playing a concert, probably – every third week of the month one of the bands would be playing. So we withdrew from doing contests. I continued to lobby for the destruction of these combat kind of situations. What has happened as a result of what I do, [and] what Jerry Coker and a host of others [do], is that now they have festivals. The festivals are usually non-competitive. They pick maybe a best group to play at the end of the thing, but they're not where you're head-to-head, where the people are not really listening to each other – they're so worried about whether they're going to get struck down or not by some other band.

We even tried an intermediate thing with Quincy Jones, with Cannonball Adderley, with Oliver Nelson. We tried this for two years at the University of Illinois. What happened is we had a number of bands that were invited to a festival, and each of them

would have connected to that band one of these major figures. To my band that first year, I had Quincy Jones. To another band – no, I had Cannonball. Quincy Jones was with, I think, the University of Illinois. Oliver Nelson was with yet another band. That proved to be very, very exciting, because they played solos, they wrote, they worked with the band. We did it two years. The second year we did it at Kennedy Center, which had just opened. It was a smash success, but then all good things seem to suffer untimely demises, so that fell by the side.

Now what you do see around the country is the proliferation of camps. This has been, it seems to me, proven to be very beneficial, whether you're talking about the camp at Shell Lake, or Jamey Aebersold camps, or the camp out at Stanford, or the camp up at Jazz in July. What it has done, it seems to me, has started not only to create a more aware set of players, but also a consumer market, because everybody who goes to these camps isn't going there to learn how to get a gig and to play on the road. Many of the people are there to enhance their knowledge of the music – to have a deeper appreciation, a deeper reverence for the music. So basically I've been – as Coker and other people have been – have been on a mission since the early 1970s to do service. I can remember Ted Dunbar telling me – because he would always do numerology things – he told me that I was going to go through this big service period. I had no notion that it was going to extend for decades. But it has been a mission which I think has to be dealt with, and it's taken a lot of forms for me. Sometimes it's been in the form of one-to-one teaching. I've got to say that I feel very good about a teaching record that has produced everybody from a John Clayton to a Peter Erskine to the Brecker brothers to Bob Hurst to – you name it.

But it also has produced a large consumer market. When we [the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra] played, for instance, in Indianapolis [at Indy Jazz Fest] this week, it was a joy to see so many people come up to me and say, "I took a class with you."

Along the business of the teaching, you have to stop and think that starting about that point in my life, 19- – when I started teaching here [at Indiana University in 1966], I had no notion – I thought probably a bifurcated kind of approach where you teach and you play – but I had no notion all of the different levels that would come into play as you begin to try to stretch the envelope, if you will. For instance, nobody could have warned me ahead of time about the service part of the business. I began getting calls shortly after the formation of the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]. It had its formation in 1965. I got my first calls in 1968 to be a part of panels. I chaired a panel which was at that time known as the Jazz/Folk/Ethnic panel, and we had all of $250,000 for that whole panel. This was me, Bess [Lomax] Hawes, and I can't remember the Latino person on it at the moment. But we lobbied immediately with the notion in mind that if you're giving one million dollars to a single orchestra, that jazz should be treated a little more professionally than that.

I was there with Chita Rivera – what's her name? The lady who was in *West Side Story*.
Lida: Yes, that's her name.

David: Chita Rivera, and with at lot of those people at the very beginning. Every time I would bring up the subject of, if you're going to subsidize these orchestras, why not set aside the bands that are still left, which were, at that time, Count Basie and Woody Herman. Why not do that with them? Six months of subsidy, and then six months for them to put into practice the things that they have put together, maybe working with youngsters, or whatever. Everybody always laughed. They would always say, "Those groups are for profit." I said, "You're going to tell me that a symphony orchestra, if it has not-for-profit status, isn't in it to make money, too?" But that was always poo-pooed.

It took a little while for people to start recognizing that there was a real need there. I can remember very vividly with Cannonball Adderley, whom I – because the minute I would get on something, I would start lobbying to get some people who were practitioners. So Cannon was on the thing. Cannon told me at the end of one of the meetings – because at that time we'd have four days, and one day was a sunshine meeting, where the press and everybody was invited – Cannon told me, "I'm going to get off of this thing. I don't want to be on it, after we're going to be treated like this." I said, "Cannon, if you're going to do that, resign and say why when the press is here." Cannon said, "Okay. I'm going to wait." So the day that the press was in there, we're on the 16th – whatever the highest floor was in the building where we were at that time. Cannon got up and gave a very eloquent speech about the disparity and about all the problems they have – that the establishment has in dealing with jazz. When he got done, the place was enthralled. People were on the edge of their seats, and Cannon says with this grand gesture, "And now I want all of you to recognize what the last part of me to leave this room is, and to kiss it." And, of course, the place exploded. They were clapping and yelling and screaming; and Jimmy Owens is hollering and gesturing. Cannon goes out the door. I get the meeting back under control, and I hear somebody in the back of me go, "pssst, pssst, pssst." I'm saying, "I wonder what that is." Jimmy Owens said [whispering], "David, the door, the door." I look, and I can see Cannon's eye. I get up and go out. Cannon [had gotten] down there and had tried to get his car out to go back to the airport. He had a $100 bill, and they couldn't change it. And he didn't want to come back in the room after the grand exit [laughs], so I had to give him some money so he could get his car out and go to the airport. [laughter]

Gradually attitudes began to change a little bit. I served on panel after panel. I saw the emergence and the building of Kennedy Center. They asked me, along with Willis Conover – and he simply said he didn't want to do it – so I was the first chairman of the advisory committee on jazz to Kennedy Center. That also had Cannonball, and we walked through all the things that were being put together. So that was a kind of service.

Ultimately it led to an appointment by [President] Ronald Reagan to the National Council [on the Arts]. At that level you could make some differences. You could actually help make policy. So that was a part of the service cycle that had been set in motion in the early – the mid- and late 1960s. Ultimately it would lead to a vice presidency in what at that time was the National Association of Jazz Educators and also, later on, a presidency – president-elect there – but more importantly the formation, under Eunice Lockhart-Moss of something that had started at Wingspread, where they brought together all of the – many of the important figures – 26 of us, I think – and asked us to put together some way of servicing jazz through the NEA. Out of that grew the organization known as the National Jazz Service Organization. I started to say that it's moribund, but it's dead. It was moribund for years. It did serve a logical purpose. So, at least that's an overview of the service part of what I do.

But let me go back now to coming to I.U. and how things have changed, and what has had to happen here. First of all, one of the things I felt that was very necessary from the beginning was to effect some kind of alliance with all of the other aspects of the music school. I think that had I chosen to be in isolation and just deal with jazz as though it were some kind of an isolated entity, then I think we would have had big problems. But the very fact that from the beginning – and I only write on commission. It was not the case at that time, and I wouldn't – didn't dream that it would become the case, but after I wrote the first two or three concerti, then my fellow colleagues were asking me for pieces. That immediately started a kind of synchronicity, a kind of bonding together, because they came out and supported us, because now we were a part of them. As long as we were a part of the university or seen in that way – and I would tell my kids, "Look. When I put the program together, I put the jazz bands at a different time than all the other ensembles" so that the musicians would have the opportunity to play in any other ensemble they chose to play in, because I felt the broader their experience, the better chance they have of getting a job. It seems to me that the function of a university is twofold: one, basically, to prepare people to get a job; but the other is acculturation. The broader that umbrella, the more likely people are to be able to work and do what it is they do. So I find that when I look at my lead trumpet player, for instance, more often than not he's probably the same – he or she is the same person who is the principal trumpet player in the Philharmonic Orchestra. I look at another person who is playing in my band, and I look up and they're in the accompanying group that accompanies the – not The Belles of Indiana – The Singing Hoosiers, or what have you. So we're positioned at a time that we really are seen as an asset rather than competition. I think whenever you get people competing, they're going to fight you, because they're thinking about the preservation of their jobs, which are dependent upon them being able to people their ensembles. So we can people the ensembles, and we can also do what it is we do. When I see the other people out there looking for a job, and I see a job description come past, and they say, dah dah dah dah dah dah dah dah, but it would be nice if they could do this and they could do that, the person who can do the most things

and do them well is probably the one who is going to get the job. So, basically, I've tried to set that up that way as a part of what we are doing.

As to the students coming through here, I inherited a very, very rich – even though the people didn't have a jazz degree program, I inherited a very wonderful bunch of kids. These were people who came up every Sunday and invaded the privacy of my home for 8 and 10 hours to take lessons. They came up in a van, and it would be – because Jerry Coker would send them up here – I mean up to Indianapolis. There would be Jerry Greene. There would be Carl Atkins. There would be Gary Potter, who's on our faculty now. There would be Randy Brecker, who was with me almost a whole year as a student. There would be all of these people. So when I got here, I didn't have to start from scratch as far as players. All of a sudden they say, "Wow, you mean we can get a degree in jazz now?" So all of a sudden I have a ready-made group. That group did more to proselytize on behalf of the program than anything I could have done by putting it in a magazine, because they see Randy Sandke. They see Randy Brecker. They see and hear Peter Erskine. They see John Clayton. They see John's partner, Jeff Hamilton. These things have been the kind of thing that I've tried to set up in a way to bring to fruition the dream of a program that is strong. Consequently, even when we were just two people, we've always been rated in the top five in the World News . . .

Lida: *U. S. News and World Report.*

David: *U. S. News and World Report* [ratings]. I think that says a lot.

But on the other hand, I've never tried to do that at the expense of other programs. One of the things I've always said to my faculty – and I always try to keep in mind – [is] that we cannot be all things to everybody. When somebody comes here and says they want a certain thing that we can't offer them, then we've got to be able to say, "Hey, we can't give it to you, but you sure can get a good shot at it if you go to Eastman. or if you go to Berklee, or you go to [the] University of Miami." When somebody asks me about this program here, I say, "Look, when you come visit us, I wouldn't stop there. First of all, when you come to visit us, don't talk to me. Talk to me about specifics of the program, but if you want to know if the program is working, talk to the other students. Let them tell you. If they're happy here, and you decide you want to be in that kind of environment, fine. If you're not, then you've got my recommendation to go wherever you want to." And I don't – I never badmouth another program if I can help it.

So it's been a very, very healthy thing, and I feel like that that's been reciprocated, because I get people who tell me, "I went up to New England Conservatory, and I talked to George Russell" or "I talked to Carl Atkins" or "I talked to" whoever. Or it's at Berklee, and they'll say, "You know, they say you've got a better program [at Indiana] in this area than they're able to offer." So it's been a very, very healthy kind of situation for us.

I've gone on and on. Other questions?

Lida: Since we're on the development of the I.U. jazz program, maybe you'd like to talk a little bit – because you really are the acknowledged pioneering jazz educator in the world – about the development of jazz education, your role in it over the years, and the people who have been a part of that, that you have known and worked with.

David: I don't think – I think I'm one of the pioneers, but I think it's a question of accident of birth and time. I think that it was – nature abhors a vacuum. Whenever there is a vacuum, that's the time when new things start, when you try to make some inroads. When I came along, the only books on arranging out there were the Russo book – not Bill Russo – the other Russo – Russ Garcia, I'm sorry – and the book by [Van] Alexander on arranging, and a book by Glenn Miller. The books on improvisation at that time were the book by Johnny Mehegan, which was largely aimed at piano players – and [Jerry] Coker's book on improvising jazz was two years in front of my book on jazz improvisation.

So when we came along – Coker, myself, later on Dan Haerle, Leon Breeden, and a few people like that – we had a completely level playing field, because there was nothing out there. Within 10 or 15 years of that time, we were inundated with books. I had kids come up to me who had been playing guitar for one year and say, "Mr. Baker, would you write me an endorsement for this book on guitar I just wrote?" I'm thinking, "Oh yeah?" Then I had another kid come up with a laminated copy of one of my books that he had xeroxed and asked me to autograph it. So you get all those.

One of the things – and I say this without hopefully any acrimony – that used to bother Coker, and it would bother me, was the fact that we were plagiarized so very, very often. Not that anybody owns the material, but you expect – if you know anything about academia, you expect attribution when you use materials. I would – Coker told me once, "I can always tell how much of my stuff somebody stole. When I look in the book and I don't see your name or my name, then I know they stole everything. But if I see our names, then they just stole part of it." I thought, "Well, okay. That's one way to look at it."

But there are other people. Jerry – I mean, Jamey Aebersold, I think, with a brilliant coup to take the concept of Music Minus One, which was already in existence, and to personalize it in such a way that it now has become the major way [that] people learn to play jazz all over the world. When I pick up an endorsement and I see that the late Gerry Mulligan said that he hated practicing, so his idea of practicing was to get a Jamey Aebersold record and turn off everything but the bass and to play with it. When J. J. Johnson would tell me, when he was just coming back from Hollywood and getting himself back into playing all the time, he would say – he said he would practice and

practice and practice, and then, two weeks before time for the gig to start, he would get the Aebersold things out, go back in his workroom, and turn the thing up as loud as possible and play as loud as possible all day long with the records, and he would be in shape, when he would get ready to go. So Jamey has changed the way people think about how to learn. I'm also very pleased to say that I got Jamey started in improvising, because Jamey had never thought – just like George Russell showed me chord-scale relationships and how to approach it, I was able to do this for Jamey, because Jamey didn't have a concept of how to do that. So Jamey [is] a very, very important person.

There are a whole lot of people who are unsung heroes that we don't know about, people who have made great – I've certainly got to look to somebody like Barry Harris, who has been doing all the things we're talking about and has been doing it quietly for years. And all those unsung teachers at the various high schools like Cass Tech in Detroit, and DeSable High School in Chicago, and Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, and the high school that Ted – from Memphis – teaches up at Ohio [State University] . . .

Lida: Oh. Ted McDaniel.

David: . . . that Ted McDaniel's dad taught [at] that produced all those Memphis-ians – Memphis people such as James Williams and Mulgrew Miller and all those guys. So we are pioneers only because we are – by accident of birth happened to be in the place at the same time. But then you've got to certainly give a lot of credit to those pioneers who we don't know. We don't know about the people who never got their name in a book or never wrote a book, but prepared the way and laid the groundwork for what else was going to be.

I think that, despite the fact that we're assailed very much about turning out people – robots, I don't buy that, because if that's the case, then we would have to completely annihilate the whole classical system, where a clarinet player learns to play, studying with [Howard] Klug, and he plays like Klug until he gets his own voice. If he's studying violin with [Josef] Gingold, he'll play like Gingold until he gets his voice. People somehow or another don't want jazz musicians to go through that. So I've always felt that it was imitation-assimilation-innovation; and until that idea somehow or another [is] planted in mind, I think we're going to make mistakes. I got very tickled when somebody told me the other day – was it [James] Moody? It wasn't Moody. It might . . . no, it wasn't Moody. But somebody [Wynton Marsalis] told me the other day, he said he's so tired of students coming up to him and saying, "Man, I want to get my own thing. I'm so tired of playing just like Trane." And the first thing – it was Wynton [that] had told somebody that [they] . . . Wynton said he bit his tongue, because he wanted to say, "If you can already play like Trane, you don't need my help. Play like Trane."

So, I think we're at a wonderful place in the evolution of this music, where we're now turning out consumers, we're turning out people who find – and I think it's been very unfair when we say somebody doesn't have an original voice. They're 22 years old, and [you] say, well, listen to Dizzy. Listen to Trane. Listen to J. J. You're comparing somebody at entrance level with somebody at exit level, and I'm not sure you can do that. I think maybe in athletics, if somebody is doing it strictly on athleticism and not brains, you probably could do that, because once in a while – we know that athletic skills will atrophy across the years. Some people are smart enough to figure out how to use it. When Michael Jordan came back, he stopped jumping over backboards, and he started bumping into you – backing up and killing you, you dig? And I think that this is what happens in music.

We also are caught in a syndrome now where we are willing to give accolades and support to people at exit level and people at entrance level. I get so tired of picking up *Down Beat* or any other magazine and seeing somebody who's 17 years old and it's their first CD, and it says, "the legendary" so-and-so. And I'm thinking, whoa, this is like double-plus speak-talk. This sounds like something from George Orwell. The guy's just starting, and he's a legend? We have done that. Fortunately we are starting to venerate – to look at our venerable citizens when they are up there [in age]. I don't think they should have to reach [age] 97, like Fiddler Williams, or [age] 93, like Benny Carter. But I am so glad we are looking [at them]. There was a time not so long ago, just prior to Dizzy's death, [that] Dizzy was telling me he didn't even have a contract with a record company. Clark Terry telling me, "I don't have a contract with a record company." I think that there has to be some mechanism or at least recognition that we have to do these.

And then Joe Wilder telling me of all the people, like Jimmy Owens said, who have no health insurance, who have no benefits, who've worked on a band – and I won't name bands – but they've been on a band for 25, 35, 45 years, and nobody ever paid into a retirement for them. All of a sudden they reach [age] 75 or 80, and it's not a choice of, can I retire or not? It's a choice, am I going to eat or stop eating?

Those are the things that are now entering into my thinking as I prepare students to go out into the world. So my world view has changed and will continue to change, hopefully.

Lida: You spoke a little while ago about your service with the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] and also with your service on the National Council. I know that one of the things that you're very proud of is the American Jazz Masters Program, where there's some element, at least at this point now being given, recognition with actually a monetary sum.

David: That started some time ago. I can remember when it was born. It was over – we would be the ones who were the overseers of it, when I was on the National Council.

Lida: Right. That's why I thought it might be nice if you said – spoke about it a little bit.

David: But I thought – first of all, it started out with very little fanfare. It was just like the [NEA] folk music awards, in that they simply gave the award – $20,000 – and that was the end of it. Then Antoinette Handy, bless her heart, saw that it could be made a lot more visible and a lot more exciting were it connected to an event. That event was the National Association of Jazz Educators convention, or conference. So she had it connected to that.

Having said that, what is disturbing is that if one – the award now is in its – was it 1988 that it started? I can't remember, but it's well – it's close to 15 or 20 years, and the assumption that the dollar value of $20,000 is still the same that it was when the award was started seems to me kind of naive. I can't think of any other major award that's given, whether it's the awards from overseas or the awards that come from [the] Canadian government, where that award has remained constant, even though the environment and the economy has changed considerably. It is something that I would love to see addressed at some time or another.

But I do think it is a wonderful step forward for the government to finally say, hey, it's really nice to do something – orchids for the living, because unfortunately they cannot award this posthumously. We missed the boat on a lot of players. When I was on the Council, we gave – we recommended to the President the people who should receive the – was it the Kennedy Center honors?

Lida: The Medal of Arts was what I thought you did.

David: The Medal of Arts, but – the Medal of Arts is the one that we had – were directly responsible for. I can't tell you how many times we missed the boat on there. Miles Davis, we missed the boat, because we never did – Sarah Vaughan, we missed the boat, because we didn't make the award.

Perhaps that's one of the real important things about the oral history project the Smithsonian's doing, is having an opportunity to capture something that you cannot recapture when the person is gone. I don't care how many people you talk to as secondary and tertiary sources, there will be information that you cannot glean. It was very interesting for me to listen when the interview was proceeding with J. J. [Johnson] and to think that I felt I really knew J. J. as well as anybody could, because I have idolized him all my life, and then to find time and time again misconceptions, and things that I didn't know about J. J., that somebody now – even though there's the book

out, there are things that will be found that we didn't know about that ain't in that book [*The Musical World of J. J. Johnson* by Joshua Berrett and Louis G. Bourgois III], and nuances in a live interview that cannot possibly be there.

It's amazing that J. J., for instance, was able to capture – because he writes like he talks – sometimes those nuances. For instance, in a letter to me, he says, "I got the book, and I'm glad. It doesn't matter if it comes out or not. Now why?" and this is him saying, "Now why?" and I can hear him say, "Why?" just like he says, "Why Indianapolis? Why not Indianapolis?" But lot of people don't have that gift of writing like they speak.

So this has been a major, major thing for me to see this [the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project] grow, and it's another reason why I'm hoping that this will thrive. I hope that there will come a time, if they can do it so that it's not intrusive, so that it doesn't change the environment, that these things will be a video. The video I suspect now would be intrusive, because most people are very self-conscious. If you don't believe it, tell somebody sometimes – and put a camera on them, a moving camera, and tell them, "Walk back toward the wall," and then they find they can't walk, because they don't know how to walk. I'm serious. It's the same thing when a cat says, "Give me a big smile." If they ask you to hold that smile for more than 15 seconds, your face starts to feel like it's going to crack, you dig? So I would like to see sometime that happen, that maybe that would become a part of it.

At any rate, I think that the Jazz Masters awards are very, very important. It's a way of saying, we think you're important. We think you've given something to the field, and we would like to deal with it. I'm not sure, given the plethora of people who are deserving, how one ever even catches up, because now you're looking at people who are aging, you're looking at people who are infirm, and if we're dealing with only three [honorees] a year, then it does become a problem. But I'm not sure how one would address it. [In 2004 the program was expanded to honor six recipients annually. In 2005 the number of honorees for each year was increased to seven.]

Lida: It seems like there's been so little actual recognition over the years for jazz artists compared to, for example, the awards that have been given to people in the film industry, or in the theater, or in other areas of the arts, or even in other areas of music.

David: Unfortunately there's no mechanism that's in place. If there were a single – well, like even when they have the Grammys, rarely do they ever show the jazz part of it. They don't figure that's any big thing.

But in a lot of ways, this is experience speaking, because it would be nice if they could find a way to channel it, but if you were to talk about – as you and I spoke about – if you were to try to do a jazz festival that was a pure jazz festival, in this country, you could get them all in a room, probably. I think [that] there are other places that try to do

it strictly with jazz without any other incursions. I think the North Sea [Jazz Festival] tries that, even though there are some people who come [who] belong to the pop area.

But I do think it has to be something that you think about. You think through and find out a way to best promote and do what it is you do. Obviously that's not the business of the NEA to do that. They have provided underpinning. I would love to see a lot more things like the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. I'd like to see a lot more things coming from things like the MacArthur Foundation that were not individual awards, but awards to groups, to people, to things, to events. But I'm not sure that we'll ever see a wide proliferation, despite the fact that we know jazz is this important. I think of all the people who've got a lot of money, I look at BET [Black Entertainment Television]. These are black-owned, black-operated kinds of concerns, and I see how miniscule the effort is. I look at the one show that I do see. I don't mean to indict them, but I don't think that the kind of support that happens other places in the world for jazz, like the - what is it? The par? The one that's given in Scandinavian countries that's $250,000? Fact is, I saw that what's-his-name just got it – the kid – Potter – Chris Potter just got that. It's called Le Jazz Par. Isn't that the – its award? I don't think it's in – it might be in France [Denmark]. But I saw it the other day, and I know that Muhal [Richard Abrams] has gotten that. I know other people. So I don't want to ride a dead horse.

Lida: It's Tuesday, June 20th. This is the second day of the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project interview with David Baker. We are going to talk about your service with the NEA and with other granting panels and agencies across the years. You've got a good feel for how much financial support there is in this country for jazz, but you also have traveled extensively in Europe, and you know a lot about how jazz is viewed and supported in other countries as well. Would you talk a little bit about the difference between how jazz is viewed and supported in the U. S. and how it's viewed and supported in Europe and other countries around the world?

David: I think that also presupposes – the question also presupposes attitudes about jazz. I think support almost has to be preceded by expressed interest and that kind of thing, so maybe it would be easier to start with talking about how people view jazz.

Jazz, because of its exoticism, coming out of a black experience, was one of the reasons why it was so readily accepted in Europe in the 1920s, for instance – why there were so many people who decided to stay there, because, first of all, it had a more vaulted status. The first books on jazz, by people like André Hodeir and people like that – the fact is, almost all the scholarship on jazz came from Europe – from France, from Germany and other places in those early years.

The other thing is that it didn't have – it was seen as something exotic. Consequently, a lot of people chose to be expatriates. For instance, Louis Armstrong went over. Didn't stay. Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster. Almost everybody, but by the time you got to

bebop, then you had people actually becoming expatriates: Dexter Gordon, who lived in Copenhagen for years; Benny Bailey, who left and never came back; Art Farmer, who moved to Vienna; Johnny Griffin. And it goes on and on. Part of it is that the people realized, first of all, that when you come into an area, there is a – you're a marketable commodity. When you're a marketable commodity, they're going to pay you more. Ursula Davis addresses this in her book on expatriates [*Paris Without Regret*]. She says that the phenomena works like this: you come into a country. The first couple of years you're there, you're very much in demand, and you're paid at a different rate, because you are from the United States. But then you become a local, and consequently that money's not the same. It happened to Kenny Clarke. It happened to Nathan Davis. It happened to everybody that's there.

Now as far as attitudes about the music, I think there was a time when jazz was much more highly respected and appreciated in foreign countries than it was here, but when the novelty wears off, the balance is restored. So that whereas, in France, you could go there, and when you were visiting there with, say, Quincy Jones, or you were there with the Modern Jazz Quartet, or you were there with the Jazz Messengers, that's fine. But the more you come back, it's the concept of familiarity breeds contempt. I've watched these countries. The minute they have begun to internalize and get the things that we are able to offer them, then they all of a sudden become nationalistic. It happened in Australia. I can remember we went over there probably eight times in about two years, maybe three years. We were teaching them how to teach. They were learning the music. They were learning how to do all of this. And when they got – the minute they got it, they said, "Look. We play Australian jazz. We don't need this." Now there are no Americans over there. I see books by Greg Quigley, who scuffled just to even learn to play jazz, and now all of a sudden his books now are being marketed in this country.

So there are times when it has been more highly respected and more deeply appreciated than it was: a prophet without honor in his own country. But now I would say this: that that's been equalized now. I think it's mainly because of the incursion of education into the economic picture. We are probably 20 years ahead [in America] in jazz education. It doesn't mean we're creating more players necessarily. We are doing that, too, but we also are creating a consumer market. This is something that America really has the edge on. They really have the edge on that from the git-go.

If you're talking about governmental support, probably per capita America is way, way behind. You look at Canada. The Canadian Arts Council has a very liberal granting thing. I've had students like Ralph Bowen and others who come and study with me, and they are supported by the Canadian Arts Council. If you go to Australia, for instance, the ABC – Australian Broadcasting – they have resident orchestras. If you go to Copenhagen, or you go to Stockholm, or you go to places in Germany, they've got radio orchestras that are tenured, that play the music.

However, they don't have as many venues. Now that we have education in the schools here, where you're looking at maybe – what? – probably any high school [and] junior high school now has something that represents jazz, simply because you've got all the jazz festivals. The lady who brought that music back yesterday goes to probably a dozen festivals. So all of a sudden you've got college bands, you've got high school bands – and when you have that, you've already created a consumer market. You've created a whole slew of people. People are asking, like Phil Woods used to ask, "Who – where are the jobs going to come from?" The cream rises to the top. The people who can play, and the people who want to play, will find work. I don't think you can restrict the activity predicated on what you perceive the job market to be.

Now, you're foolish if you don't take into consideration obsolescence. You don't prepare somebody for a job that's not going to be in existence. So you don't prepare somebody to copy music by hand any more, unless you're trying to teach him just from an artistic standpoint, because that job – those jobs are gone. You don't teach somebody to play instruments that have no – look. Let me tell you just very quickly something that really has proven itself. For instance, we've gone through the last five years a drought of trombone players and of clarinet players in colleges and in the high schools. When we did a study of it, it turns out that the reason – the main reason behind it is that the drum and bugle corps, which are really popular now, don't use trombones and they don't use clarinets. So you can almost always trace it back to some very practical kind of concern. Now, as to whether it will continue – like for instance, the NEA – we are really prudes in this country. And so the NEA, which has been a supporter of the arts – to a degree – the minute a few people began to protest because they didn't like the [Robert] Maplethorpe or they didn't like the [Andres] Serrano, or whatever, then we cut back. But then the other countries laugh at us, because they say, then if you did that, you couldn't even paint a – that the Rubens nudes would cease to exist, and *David*, Michelangelo's *David*, has to have clothes on it.

Consequently, part of it also is the fact that we're trying so hard to be sophisticated in this country. [There was] a time when it used to be you had to go to Europe to be a classical conductor. We had – we didn't have a single – aside from Leonard Bernstein – a single American-born conductor leading a major orchestra in this country. Then, finally, you start to get a Dennis Russell Davies – or Russell Dennis Davies – or people like that. But what guys would do, they would go to Europe and add a "ski" to their name. Then they would be "Davidowski" and come back. Or you have a splendid example of the cat who runs that show [*Adventures in Good Music*, NPR], Karl Haas. Karl Haas is American born, went to American schools, grew up in America, and he talks with a British accent and trilled "R's."

So part of it is approximating to whatever you think is going to sell, whatever you think is going to get you over. If I were to say the healthiest place for anybody to be if he's a jazz player, it's the United States right now. Jobs are folding everywhere. I talked to

Jiggs Whigham. Jiggs Whigham was going to be on our faculty starting next year. He's a trombone player. He's been working over there 25 years at the radio orchestra in – not Berlin – in Germany [Cologne]. It folded for him. Now it's gone to a person who is of German birth. The same thing happened with Bill Dobbins. Bill Dobbins is trying to get back to this country. Bobby Brookmeyer thought he was going to be over there forever. The minute the equalizers take the case and the people know it [when the people who think they're now equal to the Americans who have been teaching them the music], then they become nationalistic. They begin to think about, "Well, wait a minute. You're taking jobs away from people who live here."

So I think that the landscape has shifted – the picture of the landscape has shifted considerably, to the point where now, if you're really talking about making a living as a player and making a living as a jazz educator, you probably want to do it in the United States.

When we went overseas last year to those festivals, those are summer festivals. Then you've got a limited number of venues. Part of it is because of the fact that you have fewer people. Like you go to Australia, [and] you find out that the population of Australia, which is the size [in area] of the United States and Canada – it's got the population of New York City. So what does that tell you?

I think again, along those lines, you have to be very careful about making too many generalizations about how much better it is there. I think there were people for a long time who were more sophisticated. They understood the music, they were more critical of the music, and therefore, I think, more respectful of the music. But that gap is rapidly closing.

Lida: Do you think, too, in Europe the whole consideration of race and racial acceptance and racial tolerance is a major part of that, too – accepting a music that comes from a culture that was not accepted here?

David: Maybe. Maybe at the beginning, but it was acceptable for all the wrong reasons. It was acceptable because you looked at Josephine Baker, or you looked at Bricktop, and they were seen as exotics.

And it's the same reason why Carl Van Vechten, who was one of the major white people involved in the Harlem Renaissance, dealt in what he called "niggerati." It was never meant to be a negative term, but [it] was about black people because they were exotic. I'm not sure that that would be acceptable behavior now.

As far as it being racially more tolerant, I do think it was easier for people to work at one time over there, but again, once there starts to be much of an influx of anybody from a culture, particularly people of color, then there starts to be this shifting of

attitudes. We saw it happen in countries where – like France, like Germany. Germany you would expect it, because there's a history there. But in France and in other places, you start to see about the race riots. In London, people from India, people from Africa, being attacked, because again, people fear things that they don't know about.

We do the same kind of thing in the United States to a lesser degree. We start to see the people coming in from Cuba, or people coming in from other places, illegally or legally, and all of a sudden there's a backlash. So I don't know. Maybe it's a – what is the word? I can't remember what the kind of phobia it is that's called – the phobia that means fear of foreigners. I don't remember what the word is, but there's a word that is a legitimate word. I can't remember it. [xenophobia]

Going back to Ursula [Davis], she talks about the fact that it was just as stringent over there for a black after you got past the stars. When it was Kenny Clarke, he could combine with Francy Boland and have a band. When it was Johnny Griffin. But the minute they're there long enough to be locals, they're no longer celebrities.

Lida: Picking up again on the idea of government and also private support for the arts and for jazz, something that's been an important part of our lives now, over the last number of years, has been the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra.

David: I think that, first of all, the people who really are thoughtful and caring have wanted to do as much as they could for jazz. The backlash from the Serrano stuff, which started during the 25th anniversary of the NEA, was such that people felt that they had to make a whole bunch of compromises, so one of the first things they did was take away the individual grants. Now grants go to cities, there are set-asides for local –so it's still a very, very convoluted process here, where it isn't that way – money is given very freely to the arts in almost all the other countries, whether you're talking about Japan, or you're talking about Australia, or you're talking about Italy. And they've already proven they spend more per capita by far than the United States does. Right now, I think that what they were saying is that the NEA actually is about 63 cents per person a year. And actually, if the people knew, and it was presented that way, it would be fine. But when you get the far right, and the religious right, and the Senator [Jesse] Helmses and people like that exerting their influence, then somehow or another the process is turned upside down.

So I think generally the support for jazz – governmental support – is much better in other countries than it is here.

Lida: Could you talk now about the whole concept of repertory orchestras, of which the Smithsonian is one of the premier repertory orchestras now in the world? And about the background of how the Smithsonian Orchestra got started and the whole concept for that? Because you were in on that from the very beginning.

David: The repertory orchestra as a concept is really – even when it wasn't called that, it was in existence. But as a formal kind of construct, it probably isn't that old. I remember the American Jazz Orchestra, the one that Chuck Israels had – that orchestra [the National Jazz Ensemble], and other attempts to play music – to revive music of earlier styles. Sometimes it was rehearsal bands that actually played repertory without calling it repertory. But the conscious effort to have an orchestra that would in fact provide continuity and preserve this earlier music is something that's a relatively new concept.

The Smithsonian Orchestra came into being as a result of an attempt to start a publishing – what was it called?

Lida: The Jazz Masterworks Editions.

David: Jazz Masterworks Editions. That had its genesis with Fred Starr, who at the time was President of Oberlin Conservatory. I went out to do an evaluation of their school. Gunther [Schuller] had already been there. Fred started talking then about, why not publish some – what he was calling "urtext" editions of works by Ellington, works by Fletcher Henderson, and that kind of thing. It seemed like a pipe dream to me at the time, but he pursued it with Roger Kennedy, who at the time was head of the [Smithsonian Institution's National] Museum of American History. He pursued it with him. Of course it was logical to call in Gunther Schuller, who had done a lot of work along these lines, because he had had repertory orchestras – ragtime orchestras and repertory orchestras. And the same thing with Martin Williams, who had tried to have transcribed all the stuff that was on the [set of recordings called the] Smithsonian classic collection of jazz [*Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*], which again would have been repertory.

It turns out that our eyes were bigger than our stomachs when we tried to do this, because it would have demanded a lot of money, and we needed a person who would oversee it. We had a number of meetings across probably 18 months or two years. John Hasse was a part of it. We formulated this grand plan [David Baker chuckles], and I think we ended up probably with maybe three pieces to begin with.

But out of that Roger Kennedy said, "Look. One of the things that would promote it more than anything else would be if we had an orchestra to play the music." At that time they sounded me, because the American theory – the theory musical society, whatever it's called [Society for Music Theory] had its conference in Washington, and at the Smithsonian. They asked me if I would bring the band up from Indiana University and play an all-Ellington concert.

There were people who thought that there were things – Gunther had already made up his mind that you couldn't play ballads in repertory music, because that needed the exact sound of the music. I think he and Martin [Williams] were of a mind about that. But we came up, and we played things like *Warm Valley*. Shannon [LeClaire] played it. We played other ballads, and they were both convinced that it could be done.

Then Roger Kennedy said, "Well, look. Why don't we have an orchestra that's in residence, that would be here at the Museum of American History?" And they came out to – a group of people came out to Elmhurst [College], when I was teaching there in the summer [at the Summer Jazz Workshops]. It was Spencer – Spencer Crew, John Hasse . . .

Lida: Did Jim Weaver come in that group?

David: Jim Weaver, yeah, and John Hasse. So they came out, and we talked then. They had made it a grander plan by saying, "Would you consider being a senior consultant and coming to work [at the Smithsonian]?" Of course that was out of the question. But I said I would be glad to try to put the orchestra together. An interim time passed, and then we had a meeting. Roger Kennedy said to me, at a dinner – I was with Spencer and Jim Weaver – "Would you start an orchestra?" I said, "I would love to do that, but I'm teaching full time, and I would feel better if we did it with Gunther along, First off, Gunther has been in the repertory business for a long time. He knows the people in New York who can play the music." We didn't know what our sources would be to get people to play. There was some reluctance at first, but then they acceded to my wishes, and we formed an orchestra.

It started out with a big bang. Dottie Green was the first person who was in the position of producer, because we hadn't really thought it beyond that. John Hasse was executive director. We started out that summer of – '91? I think we must have played seven or eight concerts. It was like Topsy: it grew. Because it didn't have a grand plan. We just decided, all right, this concert's going to have some Ellington; it's going to have some Basie; it's going to have some of this – they were not concept concerts. Consequently, we were lulled into thinking, "Boy, we've got something really hip," because we would have people lined up for a block or two blocks. But it didn't occur to anybody that this hall [Carmichael Hall in the National Museum of American History] would only seat, what? 250 people? So consequently when people were out there waiting all day for a ticket, we assumed, "Boy, this is fierce." So we could give all these concerts, but we could only accomodate so many people.

The concerts really were – now that I think about it – very much hodge podge. There was a lot of redundancy – we would play the same pieces. But after the first couple of years, it became obvious that we were going to have to come up with another kind of plan. So we then started doing concept concerts. Gunther did one on the Birth of the

Cool. I did one on the music of Jimmie Lunceford and Tommy Dorsey; mainly it was really about the music of Sy Oliver. I did one on Chick Webb. Gunther did one on the music of Bennie Moten, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Jimmie Lunceford. These things were very successful, because we tried a lot of music.

We had different ideas about how the music should be done. Gunther tended to be a little more – he thought of the music in a more – as precious, a kind of museum music. For instance, he wanted to ask people not to clap for the short solos and things, because he wanted them to hear every note of the written solo. That was the first time that we were at odds about what the scope should be, how it should be approached.

Then there were changes that were made. We actually went to a bigger venue. We played the other one, the Museum of Natural [History] – is that the one where the elephant is? Or the mastadon?

Lida: Natural History [Baird Auditorium in the National Museum of Natural History].

David: Yeah. We played there, and that was good.

We were still going through the whole business of fluctuation of personnel, fluctuation of concept.

Lida: Your original venue was Carmichael Hall in the National Museum of American History.

David: Yeah, the original was Carmichael Hall, which we now know really was not anywhere near big enough to do this.

So that first year we did [Baker counts softly] – looks like we did about 10 concerts that first year. We were working with a budget, which at that time was – was that a part already – a part of the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund? I don't remember. I don't think so. It wasn't yet that.

So I don't know. I don't have enough information to know where money came from. I just simply don't know. I do know that we gave a bunch of concerts that year – it turns out more like 11. And we actually went up and played on the Hill. I remember we went up and played for [Michigan Congressman] John Conyers and the other Congressmen during the Clarence . . .

Lida: The Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings?

David: The Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings. I remember that.

The next year we began to expand and do other things, but the concept still involved playing the music absolutely.

Now let me digress a moment, because at the same time we were doing – interpreting the "jazz masterworks" to mean repertory entirely, other groups were doing it this same way and all of them running into the same kind of problems about how limiting that could be. I think Lincoln Center really started out like a repertory orchestra, and very quickly, they took on other tasks. For instance, they started commissioning works. There was a whole intrigue that went down with that. But at the same time, there were other orchestras that were picking up this idea, like for instance the Columbus Symphony – I mean Columbus Jazz Arts – was it Columbus Arts?

James Zimmerman: Jazz Arts Group of Columbus.

David: Jazz Arts Group of Columbus. Actually, they probably preceded us in doing repertory music, because they were doing that. Jim Ketch followed us with his orchestra down in . . .

Lida: In North Carolina.

David: . . . North Carolina. So it's an idea whose time was there. It was part of the zeitgeist, if you will. We were the only one of the orchestras that was attached to a governmental agency and had governmental support. It gave us, it seems to me, a very, very special place. We were a much acclaimed orchestra. I can remember the reviews by Whitney Balliett and others when we played at the White House. I think we had very much the inside position, but it became apparent, as we moved into new positions with both James and Ken on board, that . . .

Lida: That's James Zimmerman and Ken Kimery.

David: James Zimmerman and Ken Kimery – that we were really going into a cul-de-sac, that there's only so much you can do. For instance, people were asking, why – if you're going to make a CD, why should I buy your CD when I can get the original? It was a conundrum. You'd say, "Well, ah, duh duh duh." They were right, and we had to start reexamining our premises about what it meant. I think very compelling arguments were made by both of the aforementioned gentlemen that "jazz masterworks" meant "jazz masterworks," and it didn't have anything to do – it had only tangentially something to do with the concept of repertory. [The term] "masterworks" we were using kind of loosely to say that, if it was in existence for at least 20 years or 25 years, that was long enough to establish its preeminence as a work that would warrant further consideration. We examined a lot of precepts. We talked about the business of "old wine, new bottles," by taking pieces that were older pieces and putting new arrangements on them. But then we found out that basically this was the attitude of the

Carnegie Hall [Jazz] Orchestra. This is what Jim McNeely was doing with Jon Faddis and that orchestra, taking pieces like *In the Mood* and dressing them up in new garb.

So, again, the land shifted. I remember Andy Jacobs, who – I wrote a campaign song for him the first time he ran for Congress.

Lida: He's a Congressman from Indiana.

David: He said something that was so prophetic. He said, "It's only a fool who keeps going in a straight line when the road curves." We obviously recognized that the road had curved and that it was time to examine the music from other – we still continue to do the whole thing. We do repertory. We do contemporary works. And we can justify them, because we can put them a context to allows us to say, "This is important music. It's music that needs to be examined." We have not really done any extensive commissioning yet, but we have certainly asked people to write for us, without making a commitment to a single composer, even though we did do all Monk, but it was transcribed. We did do a program of Ellington and Kenton – we did the *Far East Suite*, and we did Kenton's music.

So we have really tried to be inclusive, and it seems to me that that's the magic word when you're talking about this music: trying to make it inclusive music.

Lida: At one point Gunther decided that was not a direction that he could live with. Is that fair to say?

David: There were other circumstances. Some of them were musical circumstances. Others were circumstances that had to do with personnel and whatever. Plus I'm sure that he had a lot on his plate already. There were a lot of things he wanted to do. When we were at odds with the direction that it was going to go, it really needed to have a single – probably a single vision for what the orchestra was going to be. In this particular instance, since I was – despite the fact that Gunther had been my teacher in composition – I was the senior person in this particular instance. He left voluntarily. He was not asked to leave. He chose to leave, to pursue other things.

Lida: I always felt like his interest was more in the preservation of the intact original form in a certain – of pieces from a certain earlier time period than actually the direction that the orchestra is going now.

David: We have not abandoned the notion that we can do these things in a pristine manner, too, but it's inclusive. We don't do one – I had to be convinced – because I was hard-headed, too – that we could do all of these things, and that would give us a viability that we wouldn't have if we chose to do one or the other. It's like an orchestra, a symphony orchestra, that chooses to play only Romantic music. I think you can do

that once a year, put on a Romantic festival. I think you can do, once a year, the music of the dodecaphonists. You can do that. I know that when what's-his-name took over the [New York] Philharmonic – the 12 tone cat who took over the Philharmonic after [Leonard] Bernstein resigned. At any rate, he insisted on playing all really contemporary music, the music of [Anton] Webern – well, it's hardly contemporary music, but music which was 12-tone music. I'm thinking of the writer – he's a composer. Anyway, the point I'm trying to make is that what really happened, more than anything else, was the vision of inclusiveness rather than exclusivity, and I think that's a healthy thing when you're dealing with jazz music. [Pierre] Boulez is the name I was trying to think of.

Lida: Would you like to comment at all about your service on different panels and boards over the years that weren't specifically connected with the government, but had to do with people who were interested in trying to fund and support jazz in a way that it hadn't been before?

David: The main thing, when I wasn't working for the NEA in some capacity or another, was the National Jazz Service Organization. It had very laudable goals that had to do with expanding the jazz audience, providing opportunities for work for jazz musicians, providing vision for where the music would go. For instance, we put out a book called *New Perspectives in Jazz*, which I edited.

But at the same time, there were countless groups that were talking about promoting jazz, whether we were talking about the National Jazz Service Organization; or the Southern Federation of Musicians, or whatever that's called; or Arts Midwest. So again, it was an idea that was in place. I was in a mode where I was saying yes to anybody who asked me to do anything that had to do with promoting this music. It meant being spread very thin, and it also meant sometimes not being able to exercise a whole lot of influence over what went on. Now I'm trying to be a bit more selective in the things that I accept positions of authority in.

Lida: When you were talking earlier about the Lenox School of Jazz and your experiences there, and you spoke about the fact that it was an almost idyllic situation with an all-star faculty that might be something that would be more difficult to organize something like that in a school situation, but you have actually done that twice in other situations where you've put together an all-star faculty and had a wonderful school and festival program: in Monaco in 1992, if you would like to speak a little bit about what you did there, and also recently, this past summer – actually just a couple of weeks ago – what you put together at Ravinia, as a part of what they have decided to try to do with their Steans Institute, reaching out now to young jazz artists and giving them some of the same opportunities that young classical artists have had [there] over the years.

David: Yeah, but there are qualitative differences. I think that Tanglewood – that experience was absolutely unique.

Lida: Oh, certainly.

David: I don't think it can be replicated. First of all, all the components were there that would go into a real school situation if you had all the bodies. You had two theory teachers in [Bill] Russo and George Russell. George Russell of course was the major figure, having come up with the Lydian concept. You had two people who were historians, in Gunther Schuller and Marshall Stearns. You had sometimes one, two, or three people on every instrument. There's no school that I know that could replicate that. Certainly the New School [for Social Research] and schools around New York try to do that, because they can do that with adjunct faculty.

But the difference between what I'm doing at the Steans Institute and what I did at Monaco is that those were performance-oriented programs. They didn't have a theory component. They didn't – well, they had a very loose theory component. [They] did not have a history component. [They] did not take in all the things that really make for the well-rounded education. Theoretically, if somebody could have bottled what they had up at Tanglewood – at Lenox – and been able to afford it, but nobody could afford that anyway, because the other thing is, you had the top people in the world on their instruments. You got J. J. [Johnson] and Bobby Brookmeyer. You got Dizzy Gillespie and you got Kenny Dorham. You got Jimmy Giuffre. You got Sonny Rollins. You got Percy Heath. You got all of these guys. Who could afford that? No school that I know of. So, ideally, if somebody – you could only do that, really, if you hired somebody for two weeks. What they were able to do at Lenox was to provide these people, basically, a vacation. They could come there for six weeks. [They] had the run of the place. It was beautiful. It's like being in Wonderland. They brought their kids with them. J. J. had Billy and Kevin with him. Percy had his kids with him. So you just have to let that alone if one is looking to form a school, simply because you couldn't do it.

Lida: What was impressive to you about what happened at Ravinia, where an established program now is reaching out to try to identify young jazz artists on the verge of having a major career and having them mentored and tutored in an intense kind of situation with an all-star faculty in the way that young classical musicians have had that opportunity previously?

David: Well, it's the imprimatur, first of all, of Ravinia. When you're connected with Ravinia, that's already like a stamp of approval. It's like the Good Housekeeping seal or whatever. It is kind of a parallel development to what happens at the Thelonious Monk Institute, except it happens over a two-year period [at the Monk Institute].

Lida: And that's, of course, something else that you've been involved with, too – the Thelonious Monk Institute, if you would like to talk about that as well as Ravinia.

David: At Ravinia, basically what we did is bring in people that were chosen because we knew the quality of the student. We didn't have the time to do it by tapes or whatever, but rather, I called on three colleagues who were intimately involved with education and said give us the best people you've got, people that are ready to go to New York – can play anything, can read, can play changes, can do all the stuff that they need. Then we provided them with playing opportunities, where Nathan [Davis] had suggested, why don't we use a lot of original music and have the kids bring their own music?

Lida: This is Nathan Davis.

David: Nathan Davis – which proved to be a very, very wise move, in the sense that all of a sudden the kids were involved in a way they would not be involved otherwise. It also – even though we said it was people getting ready to go to New York, we wanted people who didn't already have reputations, didn't already have a lot of records out, but we did not – we said, "ready to go to New York," but we took people who were great players. The youngest was, I think, 15. Probably the oldest was somewhere in – probably 40.

So that was really very, very strong. But I realize that – the only thing I would have wished is that it would have been over a longer period of time. That was a very, very special situation, probably the most rewarding situation I've ever been in educationally.

Lida: That was – it lasted for a week.

David: One week, yeah. And I don't remember what you asked me – you asked me something else.

Lida: About the Thelonious Monk Institute.

David: The Thelonious Monk Institute is another brilliant idea. I think that since its inception they have done a wonderful job, but again, they've located themselves in a – usually in an institution that's already in existence, so they don't have to try to build a building. They were at New England Conservatory for the first years of their existence, and they're now at the University of Southern California. They have a wonderful philosophy, in the sense that they have an artistic director and then a director who is there handling the day-to-day activities, and then they bring in a different teacher every week. As far as a sound educational philosophy, there would be some people who might argue that that doesn't give you continuity, but the difference is, is that the level of student there permits the possibility of having a different teacher every week, because

they come there already with the fundamentals already under control. Consequently, then you can use this visiting lecturer concept. But that's a rarity that you could do that. It presupposes that the people are coming there with a great deal of experience as players. Then it's left up to the individual teachers to search for their Achilles heel, [to] find out what they can't do [and] give that to them.

What makes it unique is the same thing that – one of the things that made Ravinia unique – is that it's all expenses paid. The difference now is that it's over two years at the Thelonious Monk Institute. They take a class. When that class graduates, they bring in 8 more students or 7 more students. When you're working with those – classes that small, the individual attention is very high, and you expect a great return. They've got Herbie Hancock. They've got T. S. Monk. They've got Patrice Rushen. They've got Barry Harris. They've got Ron Carter. When you can bring those kind of people in, and the kids are not having to pay anything, you've got another ideal situation. It's unlike New England Conservatory – I mean, unlike Tanglewood, in the sense that it's a revolving faculty, where at Tanglewood we had daily contact with these people for the whole time we were there. We had a rehearsal every afternoon. You had theory with George Russell in the morning. Then you had arranging and composing with Bill Russo. And then you jammed every night. So these are things that are unique, and it's very difficult to replicate them under most circumstances.

Lida: Is there any way today for young players to have those kinds of experiences?

David: Sure. Go to one of those – go to the Thelonious Monk Institute or the Steans Institute or whatever. Or, create as much as possible these kind of conditions in a formal educational situation. Any enterprising student is going to find a hundred different ways to play. They're going to make their own groups if they're going to Indiana University, or they're going to Miami University, or Berklee, or North Texas, or whatever, they'll find a way to find opportunities to play.

Lida: Even over and above that, what I was really thinking of is, for so many years I've heard you talk about how much help you got from the older musicians who had come before you, and the encouragement that you got, and just the fact that you could be in proximity to them and observe what they did. It seems like now it's very difficult for young players to have the opportunity to either be personally mentored by a more experienced player or to even just have the opportunity to have the kind of proximity to the older, more accomplished players, that you did at an earlier time in your life.

David: You pick your places. If you go to New York, you've got that. If you're going to the New School, you're going to Rutgers, you're going to William Paterson [State College], you're going to Manhattan [School of Music], then all you've got to do, if you've got the money, is go out and go to clubs. You ask people for help. You tell them, "Look, I need the help." Or you hang around with them. Obviously you have to do it a

different way in most situations, because if you're not in, say, New York – or Miami is a different kind of experience there, but you've got a professional situation going on there with everything from the Bee Gees to Latin American music to what have you.

So I don't think there's any one way, and I don't think there's any one answer. I think that certainly, if you could have the mentoring, that's fine. But there's something that takes the place of mentoring. It never will fill the gap entirely. But when it became apparent that you wanted people to have knowledge, and the dissemination of knowledge was then made available through the printing press, it's the time that you got rid of the aristocracy. The same thing happens in jazz. Sometimes you sacrifice one thing to gain something else. Now we have a more democratic system in jazz. You can go to a college – any college that has a jazz program – and you get that help. Then you use the records, and you use the summer camps, and you use your other kinds of resources to fill in the gaps. So you take one or the other. As long as only royalty and the clergy had knowledge: peasants, fiefdoms. You had all of these things. But the minute all that knowledge was made available through the printing press, then there was a democratization of this knowledge. The same thing happens now. You don't have to study with me to know about what I do. You can find out what I do, because I don't put anything in a book unless there's a reason – unless I think the information's not available or it's not available under one cover. Now, anybody who even wanted to be self-taught – there are books out there, and there are people you can call to do this. So I don't see this as crucial as some people. I think a lot of people would like to keep this knowledge somehow or another in-group, but that's not going to happen. I think of that commercial with Brother whatever-his-name-is. He's working in stone, printing up the tablets; and the guy says, "I got bad news for you, Brother. We need four more copies by tomorrow."

So I think that the democratization of this information has been very, very healthy, and I think it will continue to be that. I think jazz is in the best shape it's ever been. When I listen to the kids I heard at Ravinia last week, they know more at this stage than people of my generation knew 20 years later in their evolution.

Lida: You talked earlier about Mr. Brown being a tremendous early influence for you and about how J. J. was such an inspiration to you when you were coming up. Do you have other people who were influential in your life as mentors or as inspirational figures that you would like to talk about?

David: Everybody I've ever come into contact with has been an influence, negative or positive. If I were going to try to talk about people, obviously my parents. I would talk about my teachers at Crispus Attucks High School, particularly Russell Brown and probably LaVerne Newsome. But then J. J. was always helpful and, quiet as it's kept, Slide Hampton was a great teacher for me by example. I listen to my playing now, and I look at my writing, and I realize what a major influence Slide has been on me. I'm sure

I must have told him at some time or another. George Russell [was] a seminal figure in my development, simply because George Russell provided me the first opportunity for a lot of – for exposure. Plus he was a great teacher. The Lydian Concept opened those doors for me.

Then, everybody who has given so unselfishly in private lessons to me, as well as allowing me to sit in on classes – all of those people. So I would be really remiss if I tried to go through and tried to name all those people, because I would certainly miss some folks that I think are important in the evolutionary process. And of course, every student I've taught has taught me as much as I've taught them, whether it's Ted Dunbar, or it's Peter Erskine, or it's Michael Brecker, or it's Bob Hurst. I learned as much from them as I teach them. So it's a wide-open thing. For me, that's an open-ended question. I would have to talk for hours just to begin to do a service to that.

Lida: Over the years, among some of our more recent Presidents, there's been a very strong interest in jazz expressed by some of them, particularly the most recent President, Bill Clinton, who also is a performer and studies jazz improvisation. You've had some wonderful experiences over the years at the White House. I'm wondering if you would like to talk a little bit about those?

David: First of all, there's a history of jazz – it probably goes back as far as Kennedy, simply because of Jackie Kennedy and her interest in the arts, period. Then Nixon held the big party for Duke Ellington, which had J. J. [Johnson], Dave Brubeck, and all the luminaries of that particular time. My invitations to the White House started with President Carter. The ones that I accepted and felt very strongly about were the ones that came – when Reagan was in the White House. I was there once honoring Lionel Hampton.

There is a list, I'm certain, of the people that they say should be there. It probably is one that tries to cover most of the demographics. It's got some black folks. It's got some white folks, some Asians. It's probably got some educators. It's got performers. And there are different levels of meaning to this, because the one for Lionel Hampton was obviously completely politically motivated and was probably the one which was done most cheaply and with the least thought, because it seemed that it came up very quickly. At that time Lionel was – gave a lot of money to the Republican Party. It was in a tent outside. They served surplus cheese . . .

Lida: From the Department of Agriculture.

David: . . . and wine. The entertainment was basically, aside from the jazz musicians when we went in, a string quartet out of the military – one of the military bands. I didn't think it was terribly effective, nor did I think it was very sincere. We went, and I remember seeing Jimmy Heath, Ron Carter, and all the guys. We sat together and were

generally appalled at what went down. Pearl Bailey, who also was a very rabid supporter of the Republican Party, and [her husband, drummer] Louie Bellson were there. There was a lot of playing.

The next time I went was for, I guess, the Medal of Arts participants. Yes. I went to – at least two or three times there when I was on the National Council for the Arts, because we received invitations to come there. These were never terribly profitable in being able to give information or talk about what was going on. You met everybody. I remember sitting at the table with Tony Bennett and his lady, and talking to all the other jazz musicians who were there. But, again, these were social occasions, but they were a part of what I – my job. We were referred to – when you're appointed by the President, you become the Honorable so-and-so, and so that's what it was.

As far as meaningful kinds of things, I went back to the White House to play with the Smithsonian Orchestra, whatever year that was. Then we had exchanges with President Clinton. Tom Carter [President of the Thelonious Monk Institute] had been instrumental in getting us there. There were chances to talk about music, and I thought that [in] those instances, it was very meaningful.

Perhaps the most meaningful – okay, I've been to the White House I don't know how many times, probably three or four times under each President since Carter. But the most meaningful was one which I helped them plan, which was the one called "Jazz as an Expression of Democracy." I had offered the notion "jazz as a metaphor for democracy," which I think has a deeper meaning and has a different thrust. But I gave them input [and] talked about what I thought they could do that would make it meaningful. I was not the only consultant, obviously, because they had Marian McPartland and Wynton [Marsalis] serving as the co-hosts for the show. But we had at least a chance to make statements about what jazz means now, and, I think, a very valid comparison between democracy – how that works – and how it [jazz] works. As I talked to people in the formative stages of this, I was telling them, I said, you know, when you have a jazz band, what you have is democracy at its best, because even though you have a president – that's the leader of the band – when the persons – other people are taking their solos, at that particular time they become the leader of the band for the length of time, if it's a band that's a truly listening band and a good band. Then you have the situation where you have the best of the individual and the best of the collective, because jazz is a collective music. You step out from the collective, and then all of a sudden you're the star. Then you fall back in the collective, and you're the support system for the next star. This is what I tried to communicate to them when we were talking about how to put the program together.

When it finally came to fruition, basically those things were promoted, but they thought more in terms of the integrative element, the fact that whites and blacks have always worked together in jazz without the acrimony, without the things – and this was even

during the most strenuous times, when relationships were strained, like during the ’30s, when segregation ruled the land. Even then musicians worked without being bothered by that. Some of them caught some heat. You stop and think of Billie Holiday and Roy Eldridge on the Artie Shaw band. Artie Shaw had enough money and enough guts that he could tell people where they could go if they didn’t want the band in the form that he had it, and he didn’t bother to – he didn’t hesitate to tell them. Other people were more reluctant, but still it was a wonderful integrated kind of thing. And this is what I thought they were able to communicate to an audience.

We can argue about things that could have been done better in terms of presenting the music, but even there, that would have been – it would be nit-picking. I’m glad that there are people who are part of it. I had a chance to work with Tipper Gore out in Miami earlier this year. I was very, very impressed with the sincerity of her belief about how important jazz is to the culture, to American culture, and the fact that she’s a drummer – she has drums – and the fact that her daughter studies with Jimmy Carroll.

Lida: Who is a former student of yours.

David: Who is a former student from Indiana University. So I like that notion of this openness and the feeling that the White House realizes they must recognize this music as an important force. Part of it, of course, was with – we drew up, basically, the statement that [Michigan Congressman] John Conyers gave to the Congress that made jazz a national treasure.

Lida: “We” meaning?

David: We meaning the National Jazz Service Organization, because the guy who was head of the Duke Ellington school for a while was our – was in the National Jazz Service Organization. He helped formulate that statement. I think we cannot afford to ever be in the – [to] fall back into the background again. We have to stay in the face, letting them know that jazz is important. To Clinton it is important. He’s a saxophonist. I think he has a sincere interest in it. And I think we have to make sure that every President who’s in there realizes that we are a big voting force. I think that they have recognized that IAJE [the International Association of Jazz Educators] is important. When we’re there [at the White House] – every time I’m there, I see Bill McFarlin [the Executive Director of the IAJE], and I see whoever is the [IAJE] president or the president-elect and whatever. And not just in the photo ops, but I see them there mingling and really interfacing. I didn’t feel that this last time I went to the White House, again for Lionel Hampton – I think it was a much more sincere gesture than it had been before, but I thought it could have been done much better than it was done, in terms of how it integrated events and how people were presented. But it was nice that they thought of Hamp on his 90th birthday.

Lida: I'd like to go back and pick up some things in your career that we moved away from as we were doing the chronology of your performing career. I think we talked a little bit about your time with Lionel Hampton, but this might be a good time, now that we're talking about Lionel Hampton, to go back there and pick that up.

David: I didn't spend a lot of time with Lionel Hampton. I worked in the summers, two weeks one summer and a part of a tour a second summer, because, first of all, the money was really dreadful. I think you made some ridiculous – he had no per diem, and he didn't pay for the rooms. And even though I was still in college, I knew that something was wrong. So I didn't spend a lot of time with him, nor did I really treasure my moments there. It was a chance to meet people like Jimmy Cleveland and the rest of them, with . . .

Lida: About what year – what time would that have been?

David: This would have been in the mid-'50s, because I went out in the summertime when school was not in session, you know, 'cause he was always – the personnel changed as rapidly as the weather.

Lida: He didn't have a wonderful reputation about taking care of the people in the band.

David: No. That's for sure. With Maynard [Ferguson], I was only there for a tour, for part of a tour with Maynard. That was because Slide [Hampton] got me on the band. Slide said, here's an opening. I think Butter Burgess [Bob Burgess] had just left. I came on the band and did that tour with them. And it really wasn't going to work out, because I was playing bass trombone. They only had two trombones, and it didn't make any difference what I did – it [the sound] was going to be too heavy. So consequently, all I did was finish the tour with them. Fortunately, I made some good friends. Maynard became a very close friend, and we have – fact is, I even wrote a piece for him called *My Main Man Mighty Maynard* – the *Five M Calypso.* So we've remained very close friends, and it did give me a chance to work with Lanny Morgan and Willie Maiden, and of course with Slide. I met Bobby Timmons, because Bobby Timmons was the piano player with that band. Clarence Johnson was the drummer. I can't remember the bass player at the moment, but there were a lot of really good players on the band – a cat named – we called him Batman, the alto player.

Lida: Edgar Bateman?

David: No, Edgar Bateman's a drummer.

Lida: That's right.

David: Anthony Ortega. We called him Batman. So it meant I made a lot of very valuable connections that I would then really be able to capitalize on down the road, because we all were very good friends. So that was good.

Then, I hadn't spoken much about Quincy [Jones]. Quincy called when they needed another trombone player to go to Europe. A tour was in the planning, and George Russell's band was off. I think we had a month or six weeks that we were going to be off. Quincy called, and George recommended me. He said, "David's a good reader" and everything.

Lida: This is about 1960, maybe?

David: Probably 1960 or so. So I joined Quincy's band with two rehearsals. Fact is, I joined the band so quickly they didn't even have a chance to have the uniform cut down, so I wore Butter Burgess's – I mean, Butter Jackson's uniform, and Butter was probably 50 pounds heavier than me, so I'm rolling up the cuffs and things so I won't look like a bum.

The trombone section was a very, very good section with Åke Persson playing lead, Melba Liston, Curtis Fuller, and myself. The saxophone section was Phil Woods, Gene Quill, Budd Johnson, Sahib Shihab, and – who is it? It might have been Joey Lopes. I can't remember who the other saxophonist was. Freddie [Hubbard] was in the trumpet section along with Benny Bailey and a guy they picked up over there, and a cat named Cohn who played with the [Count] Basie band [Sonny Cohn]. The rhythm section was Patricia – the girl piano player. Oh! I know who the other saxophone player was. [It was] Eric Dixon, who would also be on the Basie band a little later. The femme fatale was the piano player. What's her name? [A] big girl. [Patti Bown] Anyway, it's unimportant at the moment. I can't think of who it was.

But it was a really good band. We toured and spent time in Switzerland and in a lot of countries, because we were doing one-nighters. Quincy was a very good bandleader. We were playing very, very good music.

It was only some 20 years later that I happened to see that somebody had bootlegged a recording of the band when we were in Switzerland. When I had taken my whole band up to the [New York] Brass Conference – my college band – and they knew that I had played with Quincy across this particular time. Somebody saw the album – an album, and he said, "Here's that album," because he knew the music that I played – that we played on the band at that time. I said, "Great." So I go over there, and the personnel is listed. They listed all the personnel. It got to the trombone section, and it said Curtis Fuller, Åke Persson, Melba Liston, plus one other trombone. [laughs] I called Quincy and gave him hell. I was just kidding. Quincy was all apologies. "Man, I'm so sorry I did that. This is not a legal record anyway." Blah blah blah blah. I said, "Quincy, I'm

just kidding you, man. I can't worry about that." But it's downstairs [in my studio], unopened. It's still in the cellophane, because it's got "plus one other trombone" on there. So I've always been "plus one other trombone."

I was trying to think – Patti. Patti Bown was the piano player, and Stu Martin was the drummer, and – I can look on the record when we go down there.

But at any rate, that tour was a very revealing tour for me because I got a chance to watch Quincy work. And even though the band had been over there before and they'd gotten stranded doing *Golden Boy*, I think, with . . .

Lida: Sammy Davis?

David: Sammy Davis, Jr. So I got a chance to watch Quincy – what he did, how he led the band. And that's why I had recommended Quincy when they put together the big festival where they had college bands. Quincy led one band, and Cannonball [Adderley] played with my band. Fact is, I remember that we did *Roly Poly* with him.

Lida: Which is one of my favorite of your tunes.

David: So that updates the big bands. Now with George Russell, that's of course the formative time of my life.

Lida: That tour with Quincy – was that the first time you had gone to Europe?

David: I can't remember. I think it might have been. I don't remember for sure if I had been to Europe before. That's the first time I can remember going with a big band. It might have been the first time.

Lida: I was just wondering if there were any experiences your first time actually out of the U.S.?

David: Yeah, it was my first time out of the U.S. That was a great experience.

Lida: Gosh, I'm so glad.

James Zimmerman: Did you fly?

David: Yeah. And fact is, I can remember Curtis and those cats would be drinking and reveling, and when the plane would take off, Curtis [would] say, "Don't nobody be cussing when the plane's taking off." [laughter] And we'd get up in the air and then it would go back to real – everybody stopped drinking when the plane was taking off [laughter], which was kinda different.

But I met a lot of people over there, and I got to play. I would sit in at the clubs. Bud Powell was over there at the time. So many – I can't even remember the names. Clubs were jumping. I remember Wardell Gray's ex-wife, Geri Gray. I remember running into her there. It was a time where there was a lot happening in France and in Germany and all the other places over there at the time.

But the George Russell thing, again – once George formed the band after we left Lenox, then, as I said before, George came out here to Indianapolis and rehearsed the band at the YMCA. Then he put the band together, and we played. I mean it was a great band. The original personnel was, as I said, Joe Hunt, Chuck Israels, and George in the rhythm section, David Young, Alan Kiger, and myself. We made a number of albums for both Decca and Riverside.

Then the personnel changed. Kiger decided to move back to Indiana, and he was replaced by Don Ellis. Don Ellis really changed the shape of the band, because Don plays very differently. He tended to be more aware of the retro aspects, because he had been very much influenced by earlier trumpet players like Rex Stewart, and he could do that whole thing there.

It was a very good band. The personnel was still stable. The only change that had been made was he came into the band. We went out on some tours with that. We did the album *George Russell Sextet in Kansas City*. We spent time at [the] Street's Hotel. I ran into lots of people that became close friends. One was Jimmy Lovelace, a great drummer. [Another was] Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, because we would jam together. I can't remember all the horn players and things, but it was a great time. We played Birdland. We played there. We played clubs. We played the Museum of Modern Art. And we operated to a lot of critical acclaim. I won the [*Down Beat*] New Star Award as a result of being on that band and continued to place in the polls right after that.

Lida: That wasn't the only personnel change that took place.

David: I'm about to get to that.

Lida: Thank you.

David: When Chuck Israels left the band, Steve Swallow, who had sat in with us several times – Steve had never really played bebop. Steve was a Dixieland player, playing with Roswell Rudd. They would come down from Harvard, where they were in school – Harvard or Yale. I can't remember which one. They were playing at a place called the Brass Rail, playing Dixieland. Then he joined us. He was – that particular version of the band was now Steve Swallow, still Joe Hunt, George Russell, and we added Eric Dolphy. So then it was now Don Ellis, Eric Dolphy, and myself. We did an

album called *Ezz-thetic.* It's funny, because I had recommended Eric Dolphy to George Russell when we did *Jazz in the Space Age,* because I had played with Eric Dolphy and actually hung out with him – stayed at his crib out in Los Angeles. He was playing with – the big band [that] does Latin music. We saw him at Monterey – Gerald Wilson. So I got to be very close to Eric Dolphy, and we stayed in touch. I saw Eric when he came to Indianapolis. By that time he had joined Chico Hamilton. It was he, and Jim Hall, and Ron Carter. So that was a hell of a band. They had been together, and they were on tour, so we spent some time together, [got] reacquainted. I kept my letters [from him] in the scrapbook, not knowing that there would be a time – that he would die at age 34. Nobody could have anticipated that.

So I renewed my acquaintance. But when George – because we're ready to do *Jazz in the Space Age.* He had me and David Young – I mean, and Kiger – and I said, "Why don't you get Eric Dolphy?" He said, "I don't know who Eric Dolphy is," because Eric hadn't made any records, wasn't well known. Then by the time he joined us, Eric had played with Charles Mingus and had begun making a big splash. So he joined the band, and we did a great album that had *'Round Midnight* and *Ezz-thetic* and some of those things on it.

Fact is, that's when I got to be good friends – even though it was a very short-lived friendship, because he died almost right away – with Booker Little, a great, great trumpet player, but he already had the encroaching arthritis. It ultimately killed him.

With George Russell it was a constant learning experience, because we rehearsed every day. Even the days that we were going to record, we would rehearse from, say, 2 o'clock in the afternoon to 6. We would go to the gig and play from 10 to 2 in the morning, and then leave and go record all night long. So that when you hear our albums, the five or six albums that we did, they were always – we were always – because we had been playing the music on the gigs, and then we would go in and we would play, you know, and do the record. So the records were pretty tight, and I think it's some pretty solid music. Fortunately the music is going to be reissued.

Then, at the *Ezz-thetic* album, which was my last album with him – we had gone to Washington, D.C. – and I've got the tapes down there [in my studio] – and did the first Washington, D.C. festival. It turned out it was the only Washington, D.C., festival. But we did the D.C. festival. That was the band that had – we drove down or over or wherever it was from New York. I remember getting from the guy over at the Library of Congress a tape of that performance where we did the *D.C. Divertimento.* By that time Sheila Jordan was singing with us. I was on the original performance of *You Are My Sunshine,* which was a piece George put together for her. By the time they were ready to record it, my face – the muscles had broken down completely. I was already in the hospital. I was replaced by one of my students, a guy named Brian Trentham, who had been my student out here, and I had recommended him. Ultimately Brian was replaced

by Garnett Brown. Don Cherry had joined George Russell's group, and Cameron Brown on bass, and a cat from the Scandinavian countries – I can't remember his name – was playing. He was on – he played in the *Last Tango in Paris.* He played in the music. Anyway, he was a Scandinavian, maybe a Norwegian, maybe from Norway. I don't remember.

The George Russell thing was probably the biggest single event in my career, toward furthering the career. Playing with Wes [Montgomery] and those guys all the time, I felt like I was in very fast company from the beginning, because with Wes, and with Slide, and with those guys, you were ready to go to New York when you played with them, just because you had to really play to be able to even survive, because you had to learn music quickly. [When] you played with Wes, we'd play a park or something, and Wes would teach us five tunes before we would go on stage. The only problem you would have, you wouldn't remember the head [the melody] when it came time to take it out. So Wes would have to play the head the first time through, so you could remember it. [laughter]

So the playing thing – then, once I was in the hospital, I was without an instrument for at least two years, without an instrument that I could play, because my face was gone. I couldn't play that [trombone]. Piano was resisting me, even though I did play gigs on piano. I played some gigs on bass and ultimately switched to cello. The group that I had at The Topper, then I put it back together, but this time with myself – I was playing piano. I was under such heavy medication that I'd sit at the piano and go to sleep while I was playing, and wake up and couldn't remember where I was in the tune, because it was really heavy medication, just trying to keep the [facial muscle] spasms [under control]. I was wired shut for six weeks. They put wiring on the teeth and then put rubber bands around it to lock my face in place. If you're claustrophobic [like I am], you've got some problems. I had to take nourishment through a straw. Jeannie would make chili, and grind it up, and put it in a blender so I could eat.

About that time then I started getting interested when Mr. Brown came up with this cello business. I put together probably my first groups after that, probably by 1964. So there was a time from around 1962 to 1964 where I was just practicing at home and trying to learn how to play. Then I put together a group again with various musicians. I can't remember all of them. We started playing the clubs around Indianapolis with that group. And I'll talk when we get to Indiana about what happens with my small groups from that point on.

Lida: You and George Russell recorded again in the '70s.

David: Inexplicably, my – in 1971, it came back. I could play [the trombone] again. George Russell said, "Let's make an album. You have to play trombone." I took it for granted that it was back for good. I even went out and had a mouthpiece made with my

name engraved on it and all this. I think that's why God took the instrument away from me again, because I was pretty vain.

Anyway, I had the mouthpiece made. We made an album. Actually, I made two albums on trombone. I made an album with Toots Thielemans and Nathan Davis called *Gettin' It Together,* and I made an album with George Russell called . . .

Lida: *Living Time.*

David: *Living Time.* It actually was Bill Evans's date, but it was Bill Evans, and George Russell had the band. George told me that he got a lot of the ideas from a piece of mine which I had called *Schizophrenic.* But I think I had another name for it [*Stereophrenic*]. I can't remember what I called it first. But it was *Schizophenic,* and it's where I had experimented with the notion of having the rhythm section play at one tempo and the horns play in another tempo. George said that that gave him the idea of writing those pieces, which he called *Events.* That's what the album *Living Time* is. It's based on a book [*Living Time*] by a disciple of Gurdjieff.

Lida: Maurice Nicoll.

David: Yeah, Nicoll. It was really a super album. I didn't – I guess I soloed some on there.

Lida: Um-hm.

David: But it was a great album, with Bill Evans. Check it out: it had Bill Evans on it; it had Tony Williams; Sam Rivers; Bill Evans's drummer – I can't remember what his name was now [Marty Morell]; it had Eddie Gomez; it had Ron Carter. So it was truly an all-star album. Fact is, I'll look at the personnel when we get done down there.

Lida: That was on Columbia.

David: That was on Columbia. I think – Helen Keane was Bill Evans's manager. I'm not sure that that didn't get Bill fired from Columbia Records, because that was – it's really space kind of music. At any rate, Bill Evans wasn't with Columbia Records any more after that [laughs], so I don't know if we got him fired or not.

His son has been trying to get in touch with me – I can't think – to talk about – I don't know what he plays. His name is Miles Evans. [conversation in the background] No, that's Gil Evans's son. But Bill Evans's son, too, contacted me by e-mail, saying he wanted to talk about the time that I knew his dad, because I knew his dad very, very well. We would talk about William Blake. He really enjoyed reading William Blake, and I enjoyed talking about it because it was somebody who was a favorite of mine, too.

I saw Bill the last time down here.

James Zimmerman: Who is William Blake?

David: William Blake is philo – a writer . . .

Lida: He's a poet . . .

David: . . . a poet, a writer.

Lida: . . . mystic.

David: He's the one who – a mystic – he did the poem called *The Tiger, The Eye of the Tiger*, or whatever it is, about – and I can't remember the whole poem, but it's the smile on the face of the person. The tiger ate him, and the smile was on the tiger's face. One of the mystics.

Bill and I stayed in touch. I saw him the last time playing down here [in Bloomington] with his group. Then I didn't see him any more because he ultimately ended up – I guess his wife or girlfriend or whoever it is fell under a subway train, and I don't think Bill ever really truly recovered from the trauma of that. At any rate . . .

Lida: She was killed by the train?

David: Yes. She was killed, and Bill died shortly thereafter. But then he'd been a very heavy drug addict. [The] last time I saw him, his fingers were that big around. [Baker gestures.] And you can almost see it, like when . . .

Lida: Very large.

David: I've got lots of the video here of him at the – I can't remember the name of the club [The Maintenance Shop], but Rufus [Reid] and them recorded there with Dexter Gordon. And so you can see his hands. He was still playing beautifully, but it really was the last – his last – the last go 'round for him. What a loss that was.

Lida: How difficult was it for you to come to terms with the fact that you had actually been able to play trombone again for a little while and then you couldn't any more?

David: Oh, I was so happy not to be able to play trombone. I just thought, wow, this is really great, not being able to play trombone. Maybe I'll . . . [laughter]

Lida: You're in deep trouble. You know that, don't you?

David: That was kidding, of course. Of course I felt bad not being able to play the trombone. I came to terms with it because I already was playing cello. I went back to cello. And it was jealous. It was angry at me for not playing it for a while, and refused to cooperate. My playing sounded very, very strange. There are people who think it still does. But it was very strange, because I had been playing trombone. And I quit practicing cello the minute I could play the trombone. That's called being fickle. Once I couldn't play trombone any more – because it [the facial spasms] started going again, the doctors told me, they said, "You can continue to play, but you do it at your own peril. You could end up not being able to talk or have the use of your face muscles at all." And they said, "But worst of all, you won't be able to eat barbecue and stuff," and that was the clincher!

Lida: That was it.

David: I said, "If that's the way it's going to be, then trombone's got to go." I finally – I've still got two trombones left. I forget. I gave one to Sam Burtis. I've got a tenor trombone downstairs, and somewhere I have a bass trombone. But in that workroom downstairs, there be things like dragons and stuff. I'm scared to look for it. [laughter]

So we need to rest. I do. You may not. But I think that's . . .

[Interview resumes]

Lida: A few minutes ago, after we were talking about George Russell's groups, you said you'd like to talk about your own groups, once we got to I. U., so why don't we go there now?

David: After I took the job at Indiana University, one of the things I had to be concerned about was still to be able to have some kind of vehicle to play my own music.

Lida: And that was 1966 that you came to here [to Indiana University].

David: I came in 1966. For probably the first year or two years after I came here, I kept working the group that I had in Indianapolis. I had a group of musicians that I played with: Sonny Smith – that was his own group – but I was also playing with Mingo Jones and Earl Van Riper. Sheryl Shay was singing with us. Chuck Carter, Al Reeves, and a host of the other players. Willis Kirk. So I continued to work primarily with Indianapolis musicians.

Lida: And mostly in Indianapolis? Or did you play all around the area?

David: No, no. Mostly in Indianapolis. Gradually there developed a group of students that I could work with down here. I didn't make any concerted effort to have anything other than the band that was the school band, because there were not that many jobs to be worked down here. But I did put together a group, finally, first as a bass player, because I worked a lot as a bass player – I had a group – and then ultimately with cello as the focal point. I'm absolutely drawing a blank for any of the people that I worked with. I did have a string group, a string quartet that I not only worked with here but took to [the] Spoleto [Festival] in [Charleston, South] Carolina. I can't really remember much about the groups of those early years.

Once I put together the 21st Century Bebop Band, which would have been in, I guess, the mid-'70s, then I had a working group that I really felt comfortable with. This consisted of Harvey Phillips on tuba, Hunt Butler on tenor saxophone, Kurt Bahn on bass, Jim Beard on piano, and . . .

Lida: Keith Cronin.

David: . . . Keith Cronin on drums. And that really was a working group. I considered it a bebop group, but a bebop group with extended roots. And the very first album we did, which was simply called *David Baker and the 21st Century Bebop Band* . . . we took some standards. I did *Hot House,* but did it in a really different kind of way. I did a contrafact on *Back Home in Indiana* which I called *Bebop Revisited,* a piece called *This One's for Trane,* and one other piece [*An Evening Thought*]. I can't remember what it was.

But that was a really solid group. We made our first record for Laurel Record, a company owned by Hershel Gilbert. I had worked with Hershel with some of my classical music. He had recorded a piece with the Western Arts Trio, a piece of mine called *Contrasts.* He had also recorded my . . .

Lida: That was for piano trio.

David: Yeah, piano trio. And he had recorded my concerto for flute and jazz band [*Concerto for Flute, String Quartet, and Jazz Band*] and the *Concerto for Violin and Jazz Band*. He used a group on the West Coast for the *Concerto for Violin and Jazz Band*. It was James Getzoff on violin, and the band itself had as its rhythm section Ray Brown, Shelly Manne – and I can't for the life of me remember who the piano player was [Michael Lang], but it had all the best players on the West Coast in it. So that was something that we had gotten together, and he was very impressed.

I think the second record I did for Laurel Record was *Starker Plays Baker.* It was a piece for Janos – it was an album that featured Janos Starker, on one side with my cello

sonata and on the other side with a piece for 17 percussion instruments and cello, which was called . . .

Lida: *Singers of Songs.*

David: *Singers of Songs and Weavers of Dreams.* [*Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams*] Then he said, "Why don't we do a jazz album? You've got a group there, the 21st Century Bebop Band." So we did that album with that version of the 21st Century Bebop Band. Most of those guys have gone on to have good careers. Harvey has retired, because he was on [the Indiana University School of Music] faculty. Jim Beard has played with everybody and produced records for Steps and for Michael Brecker and has played with them. Kurt Bahn has been very, very active in the New York area and also teaching electronic music at one of the major universities there. I have no notion what happened to Cronin, but I'm assuming he probably had a big career.

At any rate, shortly thereafter – and of course we did one – ah, the personnel had changed by then. Then there was a shift of personnel. It went to Bob Hurst on bass and . . .

Lida: Shawn Pelton.

David: Shawn Pelton on drums, still Jim Beard on piano, Pat Harbison on trumpet, David Kay on tenor saxophone, and myself. We not only did . . .

Lida: And Harvey.

David: and Harvey – not only did two albums with that instrumentation, but also a video. I worked that group for – some version of that group for about the next six or seven years. At one time or another I had two tenors in it, with a guy named Jack Wilkins on tenor added. At another time I had added another trumpet player who has had a big career writing movie music and . . .

James Zimmerman: Terence Blanchard?

David: No, not Terence. He wrote the movie music – background music to about three movies and has had a big career. He was a close friend of Greg Gisbert's. He's actually from Portland. I can't think of his name now, but he was in the band for a while. [Chris Botti]

Lida: And Ralph Bowen was in the band.

David: Ralph Bowen. Fact is, he was in the band the same time Ralph Bowen was in.

Lida: Jack Wilkins and Ralph Bowen were in the band together.

David: Yeah, but I also had this trumpet player. Anyway, I can't remember his name. That band did not record, and I regret that to this very day, because it would have been a nice chance to have Ralph Bowen, who was an *enfant terrible* on that instrument. We worked that band for a long time.

The next version of the Bebop Band was the one with Lida and with – the tenor player in Chicago now.

Lida: Randy?

David: No. He only made one album with the group.

Lida: Tom Gullion.

David: Tom Gullion and . . .

Lida: Harvey.

David: . . . Harvey Phillips.

Lida: Chuck Ledvina was playing bass.

David: Chuck Ledvina on bass.

Lida: Who was playing piano?

David: I can't remember the drummer's name, a very good drummer.

The group has been now kind of in limbo, because I've been doing . . .

Lida: Was Jakubu [Griffin] playing with us then?

David: No, no. Jakubu never played with us, except on maybe one concert or something.

Lida: Okay.

David: This is the guy from New York.

Lida: Oh, Scott Latzky.

David: Scott Latzky was the drummer.

Lida: I don't remember who the piano player was, though, Do you remember who the piano player was?

David: Luke Gillespie.

Lida: Oh, thank you.

David: That was a very, very good group. I've tried to keep some version of a group together. We finally recorded for Liscio Records one [CD] with my quintet, which was Lida and I on the front line, J. B. Dyas and . . .

Lida: Mike DiLiddo.

David: Mike DiLiddo. So it must have been a sextet.

Lida: And Dave [David Hammer] . . .

David: It must have been a sextet. Anyway, that's coming – that's out on an album called *Steppin' Out.* That brings up to date the small groups because I've been working with various groups now. And it's really time to re-form and put together another group, which I will be doing probably very shortly.

So the playing went that way. But the thing that filled the void for me was the Smithsonian [Jazz Masterworks] Orchestra. Even though I don't play with that orchestra, it is an outlet for whatever my artistic visions are at a particular time.

I do play locally at a place called Bear's [Bear's Place]. I do at least two concerts a semester there. I work also with Oliver Nelson, Jr.'s group in Indianapolis. And I get calls to work with other groups from time to time as a cellist.

That brings up to date what's happening as far as the playing goes, because it also provides me an outlet for writing for my small groups, which I don't have an opportunity to do. Then in the summer I do concerts at the jazz camps that I do with Jamey Aebersold. That's usually with some version of either a sextet or a septet, according to whether I use trumpet and tenor [saxophone]. The last two summers or three summers I have used trumpet and tenor plus flute, so it's been a septet. Those are usually vehicles for my original music more often than not, even though I do do rearrangements of standards from time to time.

That's an update of the playing. Oh – performances with the groups have included a lot of things. For instance, Dizzy – each time he's played in those last years of his life –

played here [in Bloomington] – he requested my group to open for his band. He had been a mentor, had told me what to – Slide and I went backstage once at the Village Gate, and I told him we – we're telling him we're going to start doing a lot of his music. He said, "If you're going to do my music, put something new on it." And of course one of the things that happened was that version I did of *Bebop.* Then I did *Hot House*, and we did *Groovin' High*, a really convoluted version which is on – [it] has never been released yet. Yes, it is. It is on a Bloomington – the one called *Jazz Live from Bloomington.* We did that. So I opened for Dizzy and opened for Maynard Ferguson when he was here. I'm trying to think if we opened for anyone else. Did we open for Sonny Rollins? I can't remember.

Lida: I don't remember.

David: So I've been keeping an active career as a cellist, playing with various groups and working with – whenever I go out to do lectures and clinics, I try to make sure that I include performance with it, because it makes me have to keep my chops together and my act together as a performer.

[8 seconds of silence; evidently half of Lida's question was inadvertently erased.]

Lida: . . . to your career as a performer has been your career as a composer?

David: Probably the composing has almost eclipsed the performing, simply because that's something that I can do passively without having to travel. So I've been writing – as I said before, I think I have 14 or 15 concerti – all commissioned works. Much of it's been recorded. One of the saxophone concerti – the one called *Parallel Planes* – has been recorded. All of the saxophone concerti, except the piece that I wrote for Lee Konitz, has been performed, whether it's been recorded or not.

Let me just speak to some of those pieces. There's a trumpet concerto which I wrote for Dominic Spera. There are two trombone concerti: one for Tom Beversdorf, which is a very early work, like, the 1970s, and a more recent trombone concerto which I wrote probably four or five years ago for Dee Stewart for strings and orchestra. There are two bass concertos: one for Gary Karr and one for the avant-garde bassist Bert Turetsky. There are two tuba concertos: one for Harvey Phillips and one for Dan . . .

Lida: Perantoni.

David: Perantoni. There's a two-piano concerto which I wrote for Charles Webb and Wally Hornibrook, which is for two pianos, jazz band, string orchestra, and percussion ensemble. There is a viola concerto which I wrote for a lady named Karen Elaine [Bakunin] and which was just recorded with the Czech National Symphony with . . .

Lida: Paul Silverthorne as viola soloist.

David: Paul Silverthorne. Yes. There are two cello concertos: one I wrote for Janos Starker and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, which was premiered under Russell Dennis Davies – or Dennis Russell Davies – I can never remember for sure . . .

Lida: Dennis Russell Davies.

David: Dennis Russell Davies, and a second concerto for cello which I wrote for Ed Laut, which is for jazz band and cello. There's a flute concerto for Pellerite, James Pellerite. There's three – four saxophone concertos: one for Lee Konitz, one for the guy . . .

Lida: Ernie Krivda.

David: Ernie Krivda, one for . . .

Lida: Howie Smith.

David: Howie Smith, and there's one other one.

Lida: For one other saxophonist [a reference to the Quincy Jones band's "plus one other trombone" earlier in the interview].

David: [Baker chuckles] Um-hm, for one other saxophonist. I think there's a – I don't think there's a percussion concerto as such, even though I've written a lot of work – at any rate, those are among the concertos that have been written. There are more sonatas than I could begin to count. Of the recorded ones – Anne Akiko Meyers recorded for RCA Victor my *Blues* for violin and piano. Starker recorded my sonata for cello. More recently – oh, my concerto for cello and orchestra was recorded by – a name that I can't remember [Milos Jahoda] – somebody who's from the London Symphony Orchestra [the Czech National Symphony Orchestra]. It was recorded with the National Czech Orchestra [the Czech National Symphony Orchestra] and it's going to be out very soon. There's also a recording of the *Blues* on an album called *American Diversions* by Jenny Spanoghe, who's, I guess, French or Belgian?

Lida: Belgian, I think.

David: Yes. There are any number of chamber works. There's a piece – probably the best-known work is a piece called *Roots II*, which was written for the Beaux Arts Trio. It's had probably 50 or 60 performances.

Lida: All over the world. That's really . . .

David: All over the world.

Lida: . . . a piece that's gotten a lot of . . .

David: And there are a couple of other piano trios: the one that I wrote for the Western Arts Trio, which is called *Contrasts.* There's a number of string quartets: one called *Through the Prism of the Black Experience,* which is on an album called *Through the Prism of the Black Experience.* There's a piece for jazz violin and string quartet. I don't remember what I call it, but it is a piece for jazz violin and string quartet [*Sonata for Jazz Violin and String Quartet*].

Lida: That's on the same . . .

David: That's on the same album.

Lida: . . . CD.

David: Of the big orchestra works, there's a piece called *Le Chat qui Péche* which was recorded by the Louisville Symphony Orchestra and Jorge Mester. It's on the First Edition [recording] series. It's about to be re-recorded now by the Chicago . . .

Lida: The Chicago Sinfonietta, I think.

David: The Chicago Sinfonietta.

Lida: Paul Freeman will conduct that.

David: Paul Freeman conducting. There's a – of the sonatas, there's a piece for clarinet, a sonata for clarinet which also has a version for flute and piano, a version for clarinet and organ, a version for violin and piano, and a version for – I guess that's it.

Of the recordings, there's a duet for alto saxophone[s] which is recorded by a guy named Takashi Yonekura on an album called *After the Rain.* It's in Japan, in Tokyo. [There is] a duet for clarinet and cello which has not been recorded yet, and the *Ethnic Variations on a Theme for* [sic: *of*] *Paganini,* which I wrote for Ruggiero Ricci.

Lida: That's a violin work, obviously.

David: Violin and piano – as well as a recording by Aaron Dworkin on an album called *Degrees of Mastery. Faces of the Blues,* a piece I wrote for alto saxophone and saxophone quartet.

And this could go on forever. I'm not going to go through all of these things, except that there are more pieces. I'll maybe mention the orchestra pieces. *Kosbro,* which is now on an album, again, by the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra of the Czech Republic.

Lida: You might also tell them what the significance of the title is, too. I think that's very clever of you.

David: I wrote it a long time ago. *Kosbro* stands for "keep on steppin', brothers."

There's an album that's got choral music of mine which I probably should mention, called *Images, Shadows, and Dreams: Five Vignettes for Chorus and Chamber Ensemble.* It's recorded by Philip Brunelle, and it's on an album called [*Witness, volume III: Towards the Future*] – on Collins Classics. *Life Cycles* is on the new album that's a tuba album, and it's with the Czech National Symphony [Orchestra] and Paul Freeman conducting.

Lida: And William Brown.

David: And William Brown singing.

Lida: Tenor.

David: It also has my work for string orchestra called *Refractions* on that same album.

Lida: And also another big orchestra piece, *Alabama Landscape.*

David: *Alabama Landscape.*

Lida: It will also be on that [recording] as well, and William Brown is the tenor soloist.

David: Yeah. It's a piece written by – a poem written by Mari Evans.

So there's probably – what? – 60, 70 albums of music.

Lida: At least.

David: Then with the jazz stuff I've been talking about, there's *Basically Baker*, which is a piece recorded for string quartet – [it's an album of] my string quartet music for jazz string quartet in Australia. The 21st Century Bebop Band, there are three albums from that: *Live in Bloomington;* then there's *RSVP,* which is the 21st Century Bebop Band; an album of vocal stuff for Sheryl Shay called *Sophisticated Lady*; an album for Wanda Stafford, which is *Wanda Stafford Sings,* or whatever. Then a lot of my music is being

still recorded by George Russell. George Russell just did [my piece *War Gewesen*] on one of his albums, an album with his Living Time Orchestra called *So What.* On another one – I can't remember. Then some of my stuff is on New World Records: *Nica's Dream,* for instance – a piece is on it. The name of the album is *Nica's Dream,* but the name of my piece on there is *War Gewesen.*

I recorded with – and I should have mentioned one of my students who went on to great fame. His name is Charles Tyler. Charles Tyler died an untimely death about five years ago. I worked with him on an album called *Eastern Man Alone.* We also recorded an album for Sonet Records, released in England, called *Folk and Mystery Stories.*

Of the big works that I should probably mention [is] a big work called *Black America: To the Memory of Dr. Martin Luther King,* which I wrote starting the day after the assassination. He was assassinated on a Thursday evening, I started the work on Friday, [and] three weeks later we did the first performance. It's about an hour and a half long, and it's for narrators, choir, cello choir, individual players, soloists, and what have you.

Lida: Jazz band.

David: Jazz band. Then another big work I probably should mention is a work commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for Dexter Gordon. It's called *Ellingtones,* recorded by the Tokyo Philharmonic for Blue Note Records. [It has] never been released, but it was of singular importance, simply because it was the last work that Dexter Gordon recorded.

Lida: And you went to Tokyo.

David: We took – went over there to record it and to perform it.

And I'll mention one other big work: the *Jazz Suite for Clarinet and Symphony Orchestra: Three Ethnic Dances,* recorded by Alan Balter and the Akron Symphony Orchestra. What else was on there [on that recording] of mine? No, there were three different other composers on there.

And we recorded some music for USAir in the Air [the in-flight audio program of US Airways], and that was kind of different. [laughs]

Lida: That was with your I. U. jazz band?

David: With the I. U. band.

That brings up – I have probably close to 2,000 compositions. Many – probably 200 of those are published, including small group stuff for small jazz bands and then big

works. With [the publisher] Dunsinane [Music] I have *Concerto for Brass Quintet and Orchestra; Concerto for Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra; Ellingtones; Homage a l'Histoire,* which is a [companion] piece – I wrote a lot of companion pieces. For instance, I found out that there were a number of works where, when people got ready to play them, the instrumentation was so odd that you couldn't find anything to play with them. One was *L'histoire du soldat.*

Lida: By Stravinsky.

David: It's for clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, percussion, violin, and contrabass; and I wrote *Homage a l'Histoire* as an accompaniment [piece], so whenever they do that work, they can do my work, too. The same thing with the *Serenade* [*Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*] by Benjamin Britten, which is for a high voice, usually tenor . . .

Lida: French horn.

David: . . . French horn, and string . . .

Lida: And strings.

David: . . . and strings. That was – I wrote a piece called – to go with that – it's called *Life Cycles.* It was recorded recently on an album, with Bill Brown singing and the National Czech Republic Orchestra [Czech National Symphony Orchestra] again. That's already out.

Anyway, [I have written] close to 2,000 compositions, and I'm not going to try to go through all of them. Most of the stuff is with a publisher, either Walrus [Music Publishing] if it's jazz, or it's with . . .

Lida: MMB is your major classical [publisher] . . .

David: MMB [Music] and Dunsinane [Music]. So I won't go through all of that. That stuff is easily verifiable. All you have to do is look in the catalogues. A lot of the stuff that's been recorded is in the Schwann catalogue, so it's just a question of looking there.

Lida: Something I've always found interesting is that there are actually many people who do not know your jazz background at all, who know you only as a classical composer.

David: When we went to – where was it? When we went to Texas, when we went down there?

Recording engineer: Corpus Christi?

David: No, we went – what's the school? The big school. When we took the [Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra] . . .

Recording engineer: It's in Dallas?

James Zimmerman: SMU?

David: SMU [Southern Methodist University]. I had a lady come up at the end of the concert – she had heard the Smithsonian Orchestra – and she asked me, she said, "Are you the same David Baker who writes classical pieces?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I didn't know you wrote jazz." And I said, "Well, that's a twist." That's definitely a turn from what people really know about what I do.

Lida: Very, very interesting, I thought.

David: So basically, that brings it up – and I'm still writing. I have a ballet that I wrote two years ago called *Masque of the Red Death.* I'm writing a big percussion piece now which will premiere in October of this year, as well as a new piece for the Top Brass which also will premiere in October.

Lida: That's a chamber ensemble . . .

David: That's a chamber ensemble. Yeah.

Lida: . . . based out of Dayton, Ohio, a classical chamber ensemble.

David: So that gives – I've written several other ballets, but the main ballet is *Masque of the Red Death,* which I will probably turn into a suite. It's based on Edgar Allen Poe's [story, *The*] *Masque of the Red Death.*

Lida: Truly terrifying.

David: I don't think there are any other of the huge works that I'm leaving out. So that brings it up to date as far as compositions. That's up to date until June 2000.

Lida: Yes. One of the things I've found so interesting is that you've written almost entirely on commission.

David: That's true.

Lida: People will come and ask you for pieces and specify certain types of things, or talk with you about what they think they might like to have you write.

David: I think that's a normal procedure with commissioning. Basically, the more parameters prescribed by the commissioner, the easier it is to write the piece. When you tell me it's for – it's this many minutes long, now you've already made that a little easier. You tell me it's going to be three movements, that's easier. You want it to be fast-slow-fast movements, and it's for trumpet and string quartet. By the time you finish that, the piece is virtually written when I sit down – when I go to the piano to write.

Lida: Another thing I've always found very interesting about your writing is the texts that you have chosen for your choral and vocal music. You have several poets that you're particularly partial to.

David: That's pretty limited again, because it's partially trying to get permission to use poetry. I have chosen the Bible – that's my prime source for my texts – and Mari Evans, probably more than anybody else – those two sources. But I have [also] chosen the music [poetry] of Paul Laurence Dunbar, and the new commission is for a brass quintet or chamber group and the selected poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar, because Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in – wherever the quartet is in residence. [Dayton, Ohio]

Lida: Was he born in Dayton?

David: He was born in Dayton. He was actually a close friend of the Wright brothers [aviation pioneers Wilbur and Orville Wright], which came as a real surprise to me. Paul Laurence Dunbar is, of course, a Negro poet who was a part of the – was around during the Harlem Renaissance and wrote – fact is, he even wrote some poems that people have set to jazz. They even named one of the New World records [in the New World recordings series] after his piece called *Mandy*. Abbey Lincoln sang it. The name of the New World record is – it's named after his poem.

Lida: *When Malindy Sings.*

David: *When Malindy Sings.* And that's Paul Laurence Dunbar. So those are probably the pieces – and even though I've written a lot of works – I wrote a work for the 100th anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers some 25 years ago and then more recently wrote for the Fisk Jubilee Singers again for the inauguration of their new president, who is an ex-student of mine, John Smith. Those were settings of some original spirituals. So that brings it up to date as far as composition – I mean, even though it doesn't begin to scratch the surface.

Lida: No, because you have a tremendous, tremendous output.

We talked a little bit about who your influences were as a player.

David: Wait a minute. Let me back off. I have done some movie things. I had one series which was nominated for a Western Heritage award. I did a thing [a television documentary series] called *The Black Frontier.* That was three . . .

Lida: Four.

David: . . . four episodes. The main characters are [portrayed by actors] William Marshall and Rafer Johnson. It's about black cowboys in the West.

I did a second series called *The Trial of Captain Henry Flipper,* who was the first black at West Point and was drummed out of the service unfairly. He was cleared many, many years later. Those [are the] two TV series I've written, and I've written any number of commercial TV pieces that were not part of series.

Lida: I can remember at one point Quincy [Jones] was lobbying you really hard to come out to Hollywood and become a film and TV writer.

David: And then my better sense prevailed. But Q had told me that if I came out, he would get me started, probably with Earl Hagen – the same people that everybody else studied with when they went out there. Earl Hagen is the one who wrote *Harlem Nocturne.* He wrote the Gomer Pyle show [*Gomer Pyle, U. S. M. C.*] He wrote "Andy Griffin" [*sic*] [*The Andy Griffith Show*] as well as – just about everybody. He's kind of the guru to Benny Golson, to Quincy Jones, and to almost everybody else who comes out there and tries to get a start writing.

Lida: I think J. J. [Johnson] mentions him, too, as being somebody who was important in . . .

David: He studied with him, too.

Lida: . . . helping him in that part of his career.

David: So I just want to simply mention that, and I've done a lot of stuff for radio, of course.

Lida: I started to say, you've talked about your influences as a player, but I think it would be interesting for you to talk about your influences as a composer, too, as both a jazz composer and a classical composer, because you had some really interesting people that you have . . .

David: I think everybody, again, that I listen to has probably been an influence. On the classical side, probably Bartok more than any other person, even though I draw very liberally on other sources, too. But Bartok is the main influence on the classical side.

On the jazz side, it really does run the gamut. Of course, Ellington is ubiquitous. You cannot escape him. George Russell [is] a big, big influence, J. J., Gil Evans. I'm probably missing a lot of the players. But virtually everybody that I've come into contact with has influenced me one way or the other. I actually studied with a lot of people, studied composition. I studied composition with Juan Orrego-Salas. I studied composition with Bernard Heiden, with Gunther Schuller, Bill Russo, George Russell, . . .

Lida: Thomas Beversdorf.

David: Tom Beversdorf, and actually took a few lessons with Harris . . .

Lida: Roy Harris.

David: Roy Harris, yes, when he was out here doing clinics. So I've studied with a lot of people. But then a lot of it has been [a] self-teaching mechanism, too, because you have to find your way in writing in a way that you don't have to always find your way in playing.

So, in the jazz writing, the people that I mentioned, and in classical writing, again, the main source has been – even though I listen to Rachmaninoff and I listen to everybody else, but the main one is really Bartok, even though [in] one of the pieces [I have written], which is called *Contrasts*, there's a movement which I call *CEI/CCP*. The CEI is Charles Edward Ives and the CCP is Charles Christopher Parker. So, I don't draw any lines when I write. I really draw on everything that's available to me.

I think for me the epiphany came when I realized that I could use my own ethnic background as a source of material when I write. Part of the thing that opened my eyes to that was the writing of Bartok and Kodaly, and realizing that they took their own folk music and wrote pieces like the *Concerto for Orchestra* in the case of Bartok or the solo sonata for cello in the case of Kodaly. When I realized that is when I really had my breakthrough, because up to that time I had been writing twelve-tone music and music which was probably more cerebral than it was emotional music. But once I broke free and started writing pieces that allowed me to use the blues, to use spirituals, to use other religious music, and to use bebop and jazz – any source. Nothing is safe when I get ready to write. I simply write and use what I need, and I do that now without apology.

One of the reasons why I think my music gets performed so much is that I'm not afraid to write melodies. I really consider myself basically a melody writer. I think people play

my music because they don't have to go searching for whatever happened to the melody.

Lida: One of the things that I have always found so interesting about you is that you're always listening. You're always listening to something.

David: What? [Baker cups his hand behind his ear and jokingly pretends he couldn't hear the question.]

Lida: [laughs] Except to me. You're always listening to music, all kinds of music. People are always sending you things to listen to, and then, of course, you have your own particular favorites that you listen to over and over again as well.

David: That's important. I think you grow by being exposed to music. I have routines that allow me – when I walk in the mornings – to listen to music and to stay abreast of things that are happening in the field. Fact is, I think that, for me, why the Smithsonian [Jazz Masterworks] Orchestra has been such an important part of what I do, is it provides me, on the one hand, a chance to consolidate all that has been the best in this music. At the same time, when I'm in a teaching situation, where everything I'm writing is trying to point to where it should go – where it's going to go, because then I have on the one hand, preservation, [and] on the other hand, nurturing. To me that's provided an excellent balance that has made it possible for me to feel like I'm really being creative even when I'm just conducting.

Lida: When we did the interview together with J. J. [Johnson], one thing that you asked him was something that I thought might be fun to do in this interview as well. You asked him the classic desert island question. Because you're such a voracious listener and reader, if you were stranded on a desert island, what five recordings would you take with you?

David: One that dialed 911. [laughter] That's a very, very – I would take certainly a Nat "King" Cole recording of some sort – a boxed set maybe. I would certainly take something that had Dizzy [Gillespie] and Charlie Parker on it, probably – maybe even the Canadian recording they did in 1953.

Lida: The Massey Hall?

David: Massey Hall. I would take probably the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra.* I would take probably Ellington's – probably the *Far East Suite.* And maybe – probably a J. J. big band recording. That would be the five. I would hate to ever be in a position where I had to do that, but if I did, those would be among the pieces that I would play.

Lida: Because you're also such a voracious reader, what would you take with you? Because when you're not listening and practicing and writing, you're reading, and your reading interests span such a tremendous range.

David: I'd take the Bible. That's a given. I'd probably take a book of the writings of Edgar Allen Poe, simply because I'm very interested in that. I'm trying to think of any books I really enjoy reading and re-reading. I'd probably take a book of the writings of Lerone Bennett – *Before the Mayflower* and probably his newest book, the book called *Forced into Glory.* I would find some biography that I like to read. I'm not really sure who I would pick in that particular instance – probably a musician – maybe *Groovin' High,* the biography of Dizzy Gillespie, which is one that's inspirational and one that also wears well in subsequent readings. And I'd probably take a book like – one of the books – a book of the Harlem Renaissance, because that would cover so many poets and writers.

Lida: Another wonderful hypothetical question is, given unlimited time and resources, what would you like to do? Do you have some writing or playing projects, or some study projects, or anything like that that you . . .

David: No, because what I do is not based largely on either time or monetary resources. I write pretty much what I want to write, when I want to write, and if I want to write. I probably – if I had unlimited resources, what I would use them for is to record everything I write. Then I could hire the best orchestras. I could buy the best players to play my music, because one of the things is – I'm spoiled, because I've got orchestras down here that are as good as most professional orchestras to play. And now that we have begun to expand our vistas, like with the Smithsonian Orchestra, that's another source for my writing and arranging. So, if I had unlimited resources, I suspect I would put all – aside from humanitarian things – I would put it into recording my music, because I think that's important. That's your legacy.

Lida: And also, I think that's how you grow as a composer, because if you never hear the things that you write . . .

David: Well, I can hear it without it being recorded.

Lida: I see what you're saying.

David: So I'm making that an appendage. I would record the things. Fortunately now stuff is being recorded at an unprecedented rate of speed. Now I'm having half a dozen albums – CDs – coming out a year, so that's probably less of an imperative than it would be. But if I were to, tomorrow, get five million dollars, I'd probably spend two-and-a-half million recording my music.

Lida: And you'd give the other two-and-a-half million to me.

David: Dreamer. [laughter]

Lida: I'm going to throw out some names of people that have been important to you in your life, and I'm hoping maybe you'll talk a little bit about each one of them. Talk a little bit about your relationship with Dizzy [Gillespie], because that's been a very special relationship.

David: Dizzy is my mentor. I first met Dizzy when he gave me the scholarship to go to [the] Lenox School of Jazz. Since that time he's been a big source of encouragement. He would write me letters. I wrote him letters. He wrote a very strong letter, I'm told, in support of my becoming a distinguished professor here [at Indiana University]. And whenever Dizzy would come through, he would request that my band open for him. I have a wall full of pictures, of mementos and things from Dizzy.

So Dizzy is a major influence, and I probably should have listed him as one of my major influences as a writer, too.

Lida: Ted Dunbar.

David: Ted Dunbar: my brother. Ted, probably, is one source – biggest source of inspiration, simply because we locked in from the time I met Ted, which was roughly 1959 or so, to his death. I probably – there was probably no other human being, outside of family, as close to me as Ted Dunbar.

Lida: Because you all connected so beautifully, not just musically, but spiritually.

David: Nobody closer to me, outside my family, than Ted Dunbar.

Lida: Wes Montgomery.

David: Wes Montgomery: a big inspiration; [a] very, very close friend; [the] greatest guitarist of all time, in my estimation – jazz guitarist – [his] face could light – [his] smile could light up a room. I always think that when I remember him.

Lida: Slide Hampton.

David: Slide Hampton: alter ego; [a] very, very close friend; and one of maybe my two or three favorite writers and composers. And I think, probably, now that J. J.'s not playing, probably the best jazz trombonist in the business.

Lida: Eric Dolphy.

David: Eric Dolphy: groundbreaker; [a] very, very good friend; unrealized gargantuan talent. [He] died far too young, age 34, before he had a chance to really leave the mark he would have left, had he lived another 30 years.

Lida: J. J. Johnson.

David: J. J. Johnson: the boss. Jay, my idol on the trombone, and, since I've been an adult, one of my very closest friends and confidants, and somebody that I think is one of the original voices in the music, one of the survivors. There are only maybe five or six of the bebop pioneers left: J. J., [James] Moody, Ray Brown, Max Roach. I'm hard pressed to figure out who else. But J. J.: survivor, innovator, mentor, and friend.

Lida: James Moody.

David: Main man. Moody, again, from the time I met him when he first called to introduce himself and ask . . .

Lida: Tell that story. That's a wonderful story.

David: Moody has said it enough, but I was in my office one morning, getting ready to go to class. The phone rings, and a voice said, "This is James Moody." I said, "Look, man. I don't have time to play games. Who is this?" He said, "No, no. It's Moody." I said, "Look, man. If you're not going to tell me who you are, I got to get off here. I got a class." And it turned out to be Moody. I missed the class, and we talked. He said, "I've got your books, but I don't know how to use the books. Tell me what I should be doing with the books."

Lida: And this was about what year, do you think?

David: I have no notion. I was still in [room] MA279, so it must have been early '70s.

Lida: That was your old office [room] number in the School of Music.

David: He was living in Las Vegas, so if anybody's interested, they can find out from when the time was that he was in Vegas. Since then we have become very, very close friends, probably one of my half dozen closest friends. I admire him as a writer, I admire him as a player, and even more as a man and as a human being and friend.

Lida: Charles Suber, who used to be the publisher of *Down Beat* magazine for many years.

David: Chuck Suber was a facilitator, somebody who helped my career get along. He was somebody, as [the] publisher of *Down Beat* [magazine], who was in my corner from the very beginning. He taught me a very valuable lesson. He judged the first contests that I was in as a student at [the] Notre Dame Jazz Fest [Notre Dame Jazz Festival] and also wrote about me. I remember him stopping me one day, and he said, "Do you ever stop to say 'thank you' to people when they do something for you?" He said, "Keep it in mind. That might save you a lot of trouble down the line somewhere." And I learned a lot about that, because I take – we have a tendency to take for granted things that people do. So I try to express that to my students, and I certainly try to remember to say "thank you" to people who do things for me or do things for people that I care about or do things for this music.

Chuck Suber has been a friend along the line. He published my first book and was the reason why *Down Beat* chose to publish so much of my stuff before they divested themselves of the responsibility of trying to sell books.

Lida: And actually music, too. I think some of your music was published by *Down Beat* as well.

David: No, just one –yeah, they have rights on some of the music.

Lida: And then you wrote a continuing column, an education column for *Down Beat*, off and on.

David: No, I didn't. I wrote . . .

Lida: You contributed articles . . .

David: Thank you. It was to *Down Beat*. Yes.

Lida: Dr. Charles Colin.

David: Benefactor, really good friend, again. When I went to – moved to New York in 1977 or whenever it was, Charles Colin . . .

Lida: '78.

David: . . . Charles Colin just really took me under [his] wing – and published – paid me to write books that he didn't need, but he paid me to write them – books of duets, books of other things, and took me under his wing. He provided me [with] a studio to use, a place to store materials, and even bought me a corduroy suit one Christmas.

Lida: Dan Morgenstern.

David: Dan Morgenstern, one of the major voices in jazz writing, one of the most honest people I've ever known. He along with Don DeMicheal, who died many years ago, were among the people that I respected most as writers, people that I knew could set aside their biases and write in an honest way, or at least state their biases up front, so you knew, when you were reading them, what those biases were before you started to read. And he's somebody who I think is a great scholar. I can remember calling him when I got ready to write a piece which was commissioned for Roy Eldridge two years before he died. I couldn't find some of the music. I called him on the phone that morning. The next morning I had the music that I needed to start, I had the recording that I needed to work from.

Lida: Janos Starker.

David: Janos Starker, the greatest cellist that has ever lived, I think the most important cellist of all time, in the sense that the development of the cello had really stopped right about the time of Pablo Casals. Starker, with his 1949 recording of the Kodaly unaccompanied [*Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello*], set a standard that was so high, that now that's the measuring stick for virtually everything. Plus he's a very, very good friend. We differ about a lot of things politically, but they don't get in the way of our friendship.

Lida: This is Wednesday, June 21st, 2000. This is our third day of taping for the Jazz Oral History Project with David Baker. I'm Lida Baker. We're going to go back to the list of people that we were talking about yesterday. The next person on the list is another one of your faculty colleagues at Indiana University, but a man who you met many years before you came to Indiana University, and that's Harvey Phillips.

David: Harvey Phillips [is] probably the most important tuba player in the evolution of that instrument. I met Harvey – it must have been around 1958 or '59 when we did an album called *The Golden Striker.* John Lewis wrote the music. Gunther Schuller was the conductor. It had people who would become part of my life later on: Harvey Phillips, the first time I met him; Joe Wilder. We used people from my small group which had become the George Russell Sextet: Alan Kiger. We were kind of the nucleus of the group. It was John Lewis [on piano]. The bass player – was not Percy Heath. It was – I can't remember his name [George Duvivier]. Boy, I'm having a lot of trouble with memory. The drummer was Connie Kay. It was a wonderful group of musicians, and it was the same music that had comprised, first of all, *The Golden Striker,* which stood by itself, and also the music from *Odds Against Tomorrow,* which John Lewis had written for a movie that featured Harry Belafonte.

Lida: This was brass.

David: It was an all-brass group. It was like the tower sonata music of Palestrina and Gabrieli and people like that. So that was very important, Harvey Phillips.

Later on Harvey commissioned me to write a piece. He asked me for a composition that he wanted to record. I put it off and put it off. Then in 19- – it must have been early '60s, I saw him at an NAJE [National Association of Jazz Educators] meeting, and he – by that time he was vice president of New England Conservatory, under Gunther Schuller. He was in charge of all the money-raising. He said, "David. How's that piece I asked you to write?" I hadn't even started it. I said, "It's coming along great. Coming along great." He says, "What's it for?" I said, "Tuba and string quartet." He said, "Wow, that's great, because there's nothing for tuba and string quartet." Then I had to write a piece for tuba and string quartet. So I wrote a piece that he recorded on the Golden Crest label. It was the first of a whole genre of music. It was a piece that we recorded with the Composer's Quartet and with Harvey Phillips. Subsequently Harvey then had another piece written [for tuba and string quartet] by Johnny Carisi, the guy who wrote *Israel.*

Harvey is probably – if I had to say one person that I tried to emulate from the standpoint of efficiency, teaching, and vision, it would probably be Harvey, because Harvey is one of only a handful of people in the world I know who never procrastinates. I remember we were asked to do a concert with Frankie Laine. Frankie Laine had contacted me, wrote me a letter, and said he would really like to sing with our big band, because he heard about the big band concert we would do. I don't know – when I don't know people, it's hard for me to call them or return calls or whatever. I showed Harvey the letter, because he had a foundation. Harvey said, "Come out to my house for breakfast next Sunday." So I went out to the house for breakfast. We had the letter. Harvey went in there at 10 o'clock in the morning, picked up the phone. He said, "Can you give me the address of Frankie Laine?" No, he had the address. "Give me the telephone number." Harvey calls at the phone. "Hello. Frankie Laine. This is Harvey Phillips down in Indiana University, calling about this letter." And I thought, hmmm.

So Harvey set a thing – and I use a lot of his philosophies. For instance, he said with his students, in a four-year cycle, he spends three years working on their weaknesses and on the final year he works on their strengths, which makes good sense to me. He also is the one who would come up with these things, [sayings] like "Tuning shows a lack of self confidence" [laughs] – kind of tongue in cheek. But [he's] also a man who is an excellent teacher and became a part of the – a founding member of the 21st Century Bebop Band, because he's a very good jazz player, and a guy who really, like I said, never wastes time. We would be recording – we did a number of albums together – and when he didn't have a solo, Harvey would be sitting there making notes, writing letters. And I would catch his eye, because he would be in another booth. I'd be going – and boy, immediately – he'd be doing all sorts of things, but boy, when the red light went on, he didn't make mistakes when it was time to record. He was the most recorded tuba

player, probably, in New York. He's on all that stuff with Billy May. So he's a very, very special man, and we retain our friendship. He retired, but he's still a man I go to for advice and a man I go to as friend and comrade, and a guy who gets everything done. He says – he has a saying that there are three kinds of people on earth: people who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who wonder what happened. [laughter] I've always tried to keep that in the front of my mind, too.

Harvey's a very, very special man. He's retired now, but he still is the person who put together the Tuba Santas [Tuba Christmas], the Octubafest. I wrote my first tuba concerto for him. It will probably never be played again, because I wrote it for tuba, speaking choir, singing choir, jazz band – and everybody in the audience, when they come in, gets a tape with various excerpts on it; and when I hold up the sign, they all turn their tape recorders on so that that's coming from the audience. And it's made up of video snapshots of all the bad puns on tuba: Octubafest, tu-ba-four, tu-ba toothpaste, . . .

Lida: To be.

David: Tu-ba or not tu-ba, you know, or whatever. So anyway, Harvey, a very central person in my existence, and the man who really kept New England [Conservatory] afloat across those years when it was going through dire financial straits. Also, our connection is with Gunther Schuller, too.

Lida: And speaking of Gunther Schuller, that's the next name on the list. Gunther Schuller.

David: I met Gunther at Tanglewood. I had, of course, known his work. But I met him at Tanglewood, and he kind of took me under [his] wing.

Lida: That was when you were at the Lenox School of Jazz?

David: At the Lenox School of Jazz. Gunther didn't drive then, nor does he drive now. So I can remember – and I remind him, now that he's affluent, of he and [his wife] Margie hitchhiking into town at Tanglewood. I can remember Edwin and George, when they were babies.

Lida: Those are his children.

David: Yeah. Gunther had been – at age 15, Gunther was the principal horn in the Opera . . .

Lida: Metropolitan Opera.

David: . . . Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

I really had met him prior to that, because he came out to Indiana University when the Metropolitan Opera used to tour. We would do a performance for them of whatever opera we were working on. We were at that time working on the United States premiere of a piece by Norman Dello Joio called *The Ruby*. I was the bass trombone player in there [in the opera orchestra]. We played, and then afterwards we played something called "After Opera Antics" [which was a show with skits and whatever]. My big jazz band played – that band with Alan Kiger and with Joe Hunt – the one we talked about earlier. Then Gunther decided he would write an article. I took him up to Indianapolis the next – I think it was – maybe that was a little later, but it seems – I remember taking him – no. Then he wrote – yeah – no. I took him up to hear Wes Montgomery at the Missile Room, and he was just absolutely floored with that. So he wrote an article called *A Midwest Renaissance*.

Lida: *Indiana Renaissance*.

David: *Indiana Renaissance* [published in *Jazz Review*, September 1959]. And he talked about having heard me and met me and the whole thing, and of course about Wes Montgomery. That was the focal point of the article, those two things. So I had known Gunther then, because he had been very, very friendly. I took him – he met my first wife [Jeannie]. She was a gourmet cook, and he loved her cherry pie. He has a nice, healthy appetite, so he liked the pie and the ice cream, and copious quantities of it.

We kept the friendship across the years. Like I said, we did that one – that album together [*The Golden Striker*]. And then later, I would see him. He came out here. They tried – they asked me to come to New England Conservatory and head the jazz program there. Gunther and his chief assistant flew out here. I was already teaching at Indiana University by that time – this must have been about ’67 or ’68. We walked across campus and, of course, being one of the few black faculty here, and the fact that I taught these large classes, the illusion was that everybody on campus knew me, when we would walk across campus. There was a guy whose last name is Brown [Marcus Brown] – a wonderful black trumpet player. We were walking across [campus] with the dean – the two deans out here – the dean and associate dean, Wilfred Bain and Charles Webb – and Gunther and his assistant. We were [all] walking [together], and this one black cat sees me. It was so funny. He dropped to one knee – never acted like he knew me – he dropped to one knee when he got even with me and made a sign of the cross until he got by me, and then he got right up and kept on walking. Gunther and them were going, “What was that?” [laughs]

So anyway, across the years, Gunther took me to hear – with him for the premiere – I think it might have been the Philadelphia Orchestra – but anyway, he took me to the premiere of his [composition] *Pieces on Seven Sketches by Paul Klee.* I had a chance to

study his work, and across the years we became fast friends. That culminated in my asking him to be a part of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra when that was formulated. He was already kind of the senior member of the Jazz Masterworks Editions.

So yeah, Gunther Schuller, a continuing friend. We are close enough friends that we can fight when we need to fight. I went to Sandpoint for him with he and George and Edwin and . . .

Lida: That's where he runs a festival in Idaho.

David: . . . and – what's-his-name who wrote that book on all the various Indian things that he barely knew about – anyway, the piano player. So, yes, that's [a little about] Gunther [and me].

Lida: Another one of your [Indiana University] faculty colleagues and a long-time friend of yours, Dominic Spera.

David: Dominic: another close friend. It's important that he be here [in this interview], because the friendship extends so far back. Dominic was a wonderful trumpet player from Wisconsin. He was stationed at Fort Harrison in Indianapolis. He happened to be in the Army with Les Spann, the guy who played guitar and flute with Dizzy Gillespie and is on that one version of the – the only version of Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong in a studio on "The Jackie Gleason Show" – on the video. He [Les] was also on an album with a guy named Smitty Smith, one of the best drummers I've ever heard in my life. Andy Simpkins was also in that band. Jimmy Spaulding was in that band. So we got to be friends across that time. I actually knew Patty, his wife, before he did. She came to the club, and I met her and, later, met Dominic.

[Later on] Dominic had called me. He had been working at the Roxy Theater in New York for a long time. He called me one day and said, "I'd like to get out of this rat race. I'd like to come back to Indiana and get my master's [degree]." He asked me – he said, "Do you need a teaching assistant?" So he came back as my teaching assistant for a year or two years. Then he went away and taught at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, started a wonderful festival, built a hell of a reputation. [When we decided to add a second faculty person to the Jazz Department at Indiana University], we went through, first of all, George Ross, who did not work out as the second faculty member. In the next go 'round, when they did a faculty search, Dominic was the runaway choice, and we became [I. U. faculty] colleagues. I think perhaps the value of our relationship, as far as the school, was that our gives and takes were in different places. What he excelled in were things that I was not interested in or didn't excel in, and vice versa. So, for 20 years, from about '77 to '97 or '98, we were colleagues and ran the program, just the two of us. The program became one of the top – was never lower than fifth in that

report [*US News and World Report* college rankings]. We were always in the top five groups. We played together a lot. Dominic specialized in the big band music. I did that as one of the things I do. Dominic was also a composer, not interested in classical music, particularly, as a composer, but a very good jazz composer – a much published composer with Hal Leonard and did a number of books. Across the years we became very fast friends, and that relationship continues now that he's in retirement.

Lida: Another person who has a connection with Indiana University, but you go a lot farther back than that, and that's Larry Ridley.

David: Larry Ridley I met when Larry was in his teens. I convinced Larry, and a little earlier, David Young and George Bright, to come to Indiana University. I remember his mother, whom I saw at the Indy Jazz Fest – [I convinced her] to let Larry come to school here – she let him come to school with the stipulation that I was going to be basically his on-campus guardian. First mistake. Larry came down here as a violinist. He was playing violin in the orchestra and gradually realized he wanted to play jazz. He was a contemporary of Jack Wilson, the piano player, [and] of Joe Hunt. Larry became an accomplished player. He played with the big band that I had in 1958 and '59. That's the band that included, like I said, Freddie Hubbard, Al Kiger, Joe Hunt, Lanny Hartley, Larry Ridley, and various other people coming in and out of the band.

Larry did not finish his degree here. He moved to New York and immediately began playing with Sonny Rollins and playing with – later, Thelonious Monk. He played with – he's on that *Night of the Cookers,* I think. He's on the first recording of *Ceora* with . . .

Lida: Lee Morgan.

David: Lee Morgan. Ultimately, when they got ready to form a program out at Rutgers, Larry and the rest of them put my name forward as the person to lead the program. I referred to that a moment ago. I decided against that. Larry then became head of the program out there, and Ted Dunbar, Kenny Barron, Bill Fielder, and others became a part of that program.

Then we worked hand-in-hand when he – I helped get him on the NEA [jazz panel]. At that time, when he came on the NEA, he also ended up being the director of the jazz programs in the schools for about three or four years. We've maintained a relationship. We're in a quintet which consisted of Joe Kennedy and myself – two string players – Larry Ridley, Keith Copeland on drums, and Russell Wilson on piano, which we had together for about two years. I've worked with Larry on subsequent recordings, have played together, and have tried to be pretty much [of] a mentor to Larry, just simply because of the ten year or so difference [in our ages]. He has studied with me from time to time.

So that pretty well spells our relationship. We continue to have a relationship. Fact is, he has actually played with the Smithsonian [Jazz Masterworks Orchestra] at least once.

Lida: Jerry Coker.

David: Jerry Coker I consider to probably be maybe the most important voice in jazz education. I've known Jerry Coker since 1950, when he was a student here at Indiana University. We were on a different track. I was very blues-oriented. Jerry was much more an esoteric player and thinker. He was – I was a Basie man. He was an Ellington man. I did – I thought Ellington – I couldn't handle that music at all. Then Jerry told me there would come a time I would be able to and would love it. It was prophetic.

But J. C. and I grew kind of together. It looks like every time I would have a book [and] he would write a book, we would find out we just wrote the same book. So we have the book – he did *Improvising Jazz,* I did *Jazz Improvisation.* He did *How to Teach Jazz,* and I did *Teaching Jazz,* or whatever it is [*Jazz Pedagogy*]. There were about 5 or 6 or 7 books that we wrote, and we would see each other in the summer and start talking, and find out we just sent our book[s] to the publisher and it was the same book.

Jerry took a different path. I went with some of the bands on short-term relationships, because I was staying at school and was leaning toward other things. J. C. had a protracted stay with the Woody Herman band, where he was really *the* tenor [saxophone] player in that band. It was a band with three tenors and baritone.

Jerry started the [jazz] program here [at Indiana University], except not the degree program. He was here as a visiting lecturer. But he's the one who recommended me for the job here. Jerry also started the program at Fort Sam Houston [Sam Houston State University], and he started the program at Miami University – University of Miami [in Florida]. So he started a lot of programs. Fact is, when he got to the University of Miami, the first thing he did was to begin to lobby Bill Lee, who was the provost there, or president of the university – I can't remember which – to bring me there, so that we would be in the same place. They started a band called the Baker's Dozen, with the anticipation that I would come there. But again, I was pretty firmly entrenched at Indiana. It didn't make sense [to leave].

So, across the years, Jerry and I have moved along parallel paths. Jerry tends to be introspective and introverted, so consequently a lot of the things that have come my way have not come his way, simply because he's very introverted and – to himself. Plus I chose to move into the area of classical music, where there was a void. Nobody really was working continuously writing Thirdstream Music. So when people needed that kind of music, they would call on me.

Jerry didn't choose to go that route, even though he's one of the finest arranger-composers I know. The difference was, when we would try to trade arrangements, I would do 20 arrangements in a year, and Jerry would do 2. So I was always the loser when we would exchange arrangements, even though today, one of the most exciting arrangements I've ever known is an arrangement he did on George Russell's *Ezz-thetic.* George plays it. I play it. It's one of the things, if I do the music of George Russell, or when I do the music of George Russell, [it's] one of the pieces I will use with the Smithsonian [Jazz Masterworks Orchestra].

Jerry continues, even though he retired [from the University of Tennessee] – and I can't speak authoritatively, but I think he regrets retiring. He retired, but he stays very active. He's done all our European tours with Jamey [Aebersold] when we go, and also to Australia, also to Scandinavia. And we continue. Fact is, Jerry was considering moving to Bloomington upon retirement, and as near as I know, that is still something that is an option for him.

He and his wife [Patty] – his wife and I wrote a book together on vocal jazz [*Vocal Improvisation: An Instrumental Approach]*. She continues to be active in that. She had been married to one of the trumpet players in Maynard [Ferguson]'s band when I was on that band, many years ago, but she and Jerry have been together forever now. Our children – [my daughter] April, and Curtis, his son – were very good friends when we were up at Tanglewood and other places. I might have mentioned that Jerry and I taught at Tanglewood one summer. We taught the jazz course. That's when they had Gary Smart, Carl Atkins, and whatever. That's when the gentleman [Harry Kraut] who heard us practicing the group in the main house came up and said, "There'll be no jazz in the big house." [laughter]

We still laugh about it, because he [Harry] was also the man who put together the big tour in Monaco and appointed me head of that particular tour. One of the things that will always endear him, despite his no-jazz-in-the-big-house edict, was that when he came out here, he made it very plain that they wanted to attach to a school, so there would be some credit, but he said – he told my dean immediately, he said, "The only reason why we are coming out here is because David Baker is here." He said that's the first thing the people at International Distilleries [United Distillers] – or whatever it was – He said, "The first thing they said was they wanted him as the director of the program, so we're coming to Indiana [University] because he's here." Of course it gave me a kind of leverage I wouldn't have had without that. I was able to take my band [and] Dominic's band. I chose the faculty. That included Jerry Coker, Ted Dunbar, Nathan Davis, and myself. And they gave me a carte blanche. I could hire anybody I wanted to. I hired big bands, small groups. I had Michel Petrucciani. I had Woody Herman. I had Dave Brubeck. I had Freddie Hubbard. I had Louie Bellson. I had the Jimmy Heath Quartet. I had Joe Henderson's group, all of these – Betty Carter. It's like being in a

candy store. So I hired all of these people, and I was always deeply indebted to him for having made that possible.

Lida: That's the 1992 Monaco school and festival that you're referring to . . .

David: Yeah.

Lida: . . . and the gentleman's name is Harry Kraut.

David: Harry Kraut.

Lida: He was also the personal manager . . .

David: . . . personal manager of Leonard Bernstein.

Lida: Jamey Aebersold. Let's talk a little bit about Jamey and your relationship over the years.

David: Jamey and I go back a long way. Jamey was my student in 19 – early 1960s, or mid-1960s, maybe it was. I can remember him coming up – driving up from New Albany to take lessons.

Lida: That's New Albany, Indiana.

David: New Albany, Indiana. I remember starting him on the concept of relationships of scales and chords. Jamey's always been very up-front about it – attribution about where he got it from. Then we played together across – fact is, I wrote his senior recital piece. I wrote a piece for brass choir and Jamey Aebersold. We became very good friends. In 1964 he put together a band that would play in the schools. Incidentally, we also went to the Notre Dame Jazz Festival and won the Notre Dame Jazz Festival that year with Jamey and a group that included Everett Hoffman on tenor saxophone, Dickie Washburn on trumpet, myself, a guy named Don Baldwin on bass, Tom Hensley on piano. I can't remember all the people, but we went and played in all the schools around southern Indiana, and we went to the Notre Dame Jazz Festival, I think, maybe twice.

Then Jamey came up with the idea of the play-alongs [play-along recordings], and he made one in his basement. His folks owned a flower shop. Fact is, the street is called Aebersold Court [Aebersold Drive], after his dad. Jamey has such an entrepreneurial sense, and he's one of the most honest people I've ever known. The first thing I knew, he had one record out on how to play jazz. [This record became volume one of the Jamey Aebersold Play-Along recordings series.] Then the next one was the blues – how to play the blues. [That recording became volume two.] And the rest is history, because all of a sudden he became a really enterprising person and thought about, if I'm doing

this, why don't I really go after tunes? Then he went after two albums of just tunes. I think the fifth album was my music – [the] eighth album was my music. Now there must be up to a hundred CDs [in his play-along series]. He has really changed the face of jazz. There was an article that John Kuzmich did – and [it's] one [that] will be updated very soon, probably in time for the next IAJE – which is called *The ABCs of Jazz*, which was Aebersold, Baker, and Coker, because basically we really were pretty much the foundation of the music, each with a different attitude. Coker, like I said, one of the most brilliant minds, particularly about education. Good ideas, ideas that led – his book preceded mine by two years, his *Improvising Jazz.* So [the three of us] – we're inextricably linked. We're all from Indiana University. We're all from Indiana: Jerry from South Bend, where he grew up in the shadow of Conte and Pete Candoli; Indianapolis, obviously, what I was doing; and Jamey told me he got his stuff from coming around what we were doing at Indiana [University] at the time. Just as an aside, he said he used to practice in New Albany with his windows open, [so that] in case Basie or somebody came through town, they would hear him, and he would be discovered. [laughter] And he was serious.

Lida: And of course New Albany's a tiny, tiny little town. You can drive a bus through it.

David: Yeah. New Albany is like a suburb to Louisville. But he said he practiced every day with the windows open, hoping somebody would discover him. He ultimately became a part of the National Stage Band Camps. When it was winding down and Ken Morris was about to divest himself of an interest in the camp, Jamey raised the money to buy the franchise. It changed from a big-band camp, which it had started [as] in 1959 at Indiana University, under the auspices of – Ken Morris is the entrepreneur who was running it, but the Stan Kenton camps. Then it was the Stan Kenton camps. Then it was the Berklee people who came: John LaPorta and those guys – the drummer from Boston – the great teacher . . .

Recording engineer: Alan Dawson.

David: Alan Dawson. And that became that thing. Then ultimately it evolved, and Jamey turned it into a combo camp. They were the first combo camps in the country. We were going all over. We would follow the sun. We'd probably do 8 or 9 camps in the summer here [in the U.S.], then we would go to . . .

Lida: In the U.S.

David: In the U.S., then Australia, and then we would go all over Europe. Finally, as Jamey began to age, as we all do, he said, "The heck with this. We're going to have the two camps here and let everybody come here," until we had about 400 people at the

camp in Elmhurst [Illinois] last year. We were doing for years – before that we would go to . . .

Lida: Northern Colorado.

David: Northern Colorado. We went to San Francisco – or the San Francisco environs. We went to New Jersey. We went to Louisville. So we had all these camps. Now the camps were for years residing just in two places, Elmhurst and Louisville, and now strictly Louisville for the two weeks.

So Jamey's been a major, major voice. He's somebody that's so well known that I'm sitting with Rufus Reid and the guys in a cabaret on the second floor in London, and we hear somebody out there playing in the streets. They've got a battery-operated play-along, and they're playing with the Aebersold records. And Jamey said, "Watch this." We went downstairs. Jamey walks up to him, and in his twang, he says, "Do you know who I am?" The little guy says, "No." He [Jamey] says, "1 – 2, 1 – " He [the little guy] said, "You're Jamey Aebersold!" [laughs] So he may be the only person in the world who's recognized by a count-off. [laughter] So Jamey – a very, very important figure in the music.

Lida: And then someone whom you met outside your Indiana University experience, and that's Nathan Davis.

David: Nathan I met – I had not known Nathan Davis. I knew Nathan because of his recordings and the fact that he was a big person with Carmell Jones and people like that in Europe. He – it turns out later that I found out he was from Kansas City. Just by happenstance, I had done one of the black music conferences at the University of Pitttsburgh. This must have been 1969. Maybe it was 1970. When I got ready to leave, we had done – this is Sonia Sanchez and Etheridge Knight and all the people who were pretty much in the front of what was happening in the civil rights cultural part of the movement – when I got ready to leave, the head of the music – the head of the school said to me, "We're thinking about starting a jazz program up here." He says, "I know you're pretty firmly entrenched where you are. If you think of anybody that we could use, it would sure be a help. We'd like you to think about it." Serendipitously, I came back – when I got home, I had a letter. I opened the letter, and it's a letter from Nathan Davis in Paris, saying he would like to come back to the United States and teach. I immediately called – maybe it was Donald Henderson. I don't remember who was the provost at the time. I immediately called him. I said, "Hey, I can't believe this. It must be destiny, because I come home after you asked me about that, and here is somebody who has a graduate and an undergraduate degree already." So he called Nathan. Probably two weeks later, Nathan was head of the department up there.

Our relationship went deeper than that. I recommended him for the job, but he also decided to go to U. Mass. [University of Massachusetts] and get his doctorate, because they told him he had to have ultimately a doctorate. So I ended up being one of his advisers on his doctoral committee. I remember going up to U. Mass. and sitting his doctoral committee. He wrote his dissertation on Charlie Parker.

Across the years our relationship has been very, very tight. I'm a reader on his journal [*International Jazz Archives Journal*]. I've been at his festival three or four different times, one time along with Stanley Turrentine, Lee Konitz, Ron Carter, Kenny Barron, Donald Byrd, and then with another configuration the next time. It ends up being one of the great and continuing festivals. He still does that. So every time I get something, I call Nathan, and every time Nathan gets something, he calls me. We've been working – he works with [the] Thelonious Monk Institute. He and Tom Carter are very close. Fact is, I think Tom wanted him to be the adviser at the beginning of that.

So, Nathan and I continue [to be close]. I took him to Monaco with me. I'm somebody who – I give loyalty, and I really respect loyalty. With Nathan and those guys, I don't do anything that ever destroys the kind of confidence that comes from having people that you're loyal to and people who are loyal to you. We just recently, meaning spring or summer of 2000, did Ravinia together. Then it just happens that the connection become even more interconnected in the sense that he and Moody, along with Grover Washington, call themselves the Three Musketeers. So my relationship with Moody and his relationship with Moody then forms even a tighter chain.

Lida: Charles Tyler, who had been your student at Lincoln University.

David: No, he'd not been my student at Lincoln University. I didn't know him until he called me one day and said . . .

Lida: Oh, that's right. That was Julius Hemphill. Sorry.

David: Charles Tyler went to Crispus Attucks High School [in Indianapolis], even though he was from Cleveland. He had been playing with the Cleveland avant-garde group. He called me one day and said he'd like to take some lessons from me. I was really reluctant, because the kind of music he was playing was not really where my head was. He started studying with me, and as a result of studying with me, then he asked me to do some recording. We did a record called *Eastern Man Alone* with myself, him, and a bass player named – the guy who's in South Bend now, the one who was in the band when Chazz [Charles Ellison] was in the band – I can't think of – he just moved back. He'd been in the Army band with David – Dave . . .

Lida: Steinmeyer?

David: Steinmeyer. And he's back there. He was in the band here in 1968,'69, '70 along with Larry Weisman. He was my bass player [Brent McKesson].

Lida: You're talking about – you're not talking about Mark Dresser?

David: Mark Dresser's later. No. At any rate, it doesn't matter. He's just moved back there, and I can't think of his name. So now I lost my train of thought. What was I talking about?

Lida: You were talking about how you met Charles Tyler and you came to do *Eastern Man Alone.*

David: He's on the record with Charles Tyler and I. We did that.

Charles remained my student, even though I had some serious doubts about what he was doing, until one day we were rehearsing with another version of that group called Composition, with Richard Dunbar on . . .

Lida: French horn.

David: . . . French horn. We started to rehearse. We were going to do one of the loft gigs. All of a sudden the band just caught on fire and was swinging so hard. Charles stopped and said, "No. Don't lock it into a groove," he said, " 'cause you can't move if it's locked in." It's the first time I realized that Charles really had a different kind of thought, but it was a vision. He knew what he wanted. And he didn't want to practice. We would start to practice, and he said, "Don't." He said, "Once we've chosen a tune, don't practice it, because when we practice it, then we'll start trying to re-create things that work, and it's no longer spontaneous." My respect jumped 100%. We did a number of records together. We did that [*Eastern Man Alone*], and we did a record which was released in Europe. Fact is, it probably sold not much, because every year they send me a bill saying that I still owe them $16 of an advance which I never really received. So for 20 years I've been getting this thing every year from Stainless Music saying you owe us 16 dollars and 92 cents, or something like that.

Lida: Unrecouped advance.

David: Charles and I remained good friends. When I moved to New York in 1978, we stayed in one of his apartments in his house at 190 Carlton Avenue out in Brooklyn – Fort Green. Charles and I – Charles would drive me back and forth to Rutgers in an unheated car. It was so cold, it would be unbelievable. Charles would stop at the smoke store, because you could buy pot over the counter. And he'd be lit. We'd be driving 10 miles an hour, and I'd be sitting there with a blanket on, trying to keep from freezing to

death. [laughter] And Charles was oblivious to this. Finally I told him, "Charles, I'll take the train in from now on." [laughs]

But he was a good friend, a good student. Ultimately [he] died. His ex-wife called me about maybe 10 years ago now, just to say that he had died. But he had made a big, big mark on the music as an avant-garde composer and [an] alto saxophone and baritone saxophone [player].

Lida: Was that your only foray into the avant garde as a performer?

David: No. George Russell considered what we were doing "cutting edge," and he was right. We were around Ornette [Coleman], and what we did was certainly influenced by Ornette, but probably reined in somewhat, because George had a system out of which we could work . . .

Lida: Which was the Lydian concept.

David: . . . which was the Lydian concept. But my alliances and allegiances, when I was going through this loft period, were with the avant garde, whether it was Archie Shepp or Bill Dixon or any of the guys who came out of that. Don Ellis considered himself that. The piano player, Jaki Byard. And I can remember we used to go play a place called the Café Wa.. We'd go down there and play for food. At that time Jaki Byard played the alto saxophone as well as piano. It always bothered me a little bit that as we progressed along, one of the chief promoters of the music was Stanley Crouch. I actually did an album with Stanley Crouch that had James Newton. It had Black Arthur Blythe. It had Mark Dresser, Stanley Crouch, David Murray. [It was] an album that was never released. At that time Stanley was a staunch supporter of the avant garde. When they moved to the Tin Palace, he was still the biggest promoter of that music. I was a part of that circle. Then at some point he decided that the music was bullshit. All of a sudden [he] went to the other side and didn't believe any of the music was valid.

I got to know Muhal Richard Abrams and Roscoe Mitchell. Fact is, for a book which we never put out, I did one of the first interviews with the members of AACM [Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians]. I spent a lot of time with them talking about – with Anthony Braxton and those guys – talking about the directions of the music, playing the music. We've still got those interviews somewhere. They've never been published.

So yeah, I felt a real affinity to what was happening in the avant garde, even though George Russell put it in perspective in an article in – it wasn't *Playboy* – yeah, it might have been *Playboy* magazine. They did a roundtable discussion, and George Russell said, "The avant garde is the last refuge of the untalented." A lot of cats got their ass on

their shoulders. George quieted it very quickly. He said, “I don’t mean everybody. The ones who I’m talking about, they know who they are.” Then everybody shut up, quick.

But basically, the good things about that music – the things that were liberating, the things like that – managed to survive, managed to become a part of the mainstream of the music, probably never to the degree that it would be with the Art Ensemble of Chicago. I can remember flying into Stockholm to play with and conduct the radio orchestra there. I get in on a dreary Sunday evening. To my dismay, when I get to the hotel, [I] find out they don’t have but two television stations. One of them carries news 24 hours a day in Swedish. The other, to my delight, was prime time, a two-hour presentation of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, replete with war paint and the whole thing. I thought, now this is another world.

Then we followed them around Australia with the group with Roscoe Mitchell and the guy who wore the smock – trumpet player.

Lida: Lester Bowie.

David: Lester Bowie. We followed them through there, so we got to be pretty good friends. Muhal and I have remained very close friends, because Muhal was one of the founding members of the National Jazz Service Organization and then ultimately became one of the officers in that organization. So we stay in close touch. Then I was also – [I] sat as one of the judges at the Detroit Symphony Black Composers Competition, which Muhal won with a piece called *Transversion.* So we’re very close friends. At times we’re at odds, because he was and is a Chicagoan [and a Chicago Bulls fan; Baker is a Los Angeles Lakers fan]. And then we were on the same side when Michael Jordan was there [playing for the Chicago Bulls], but he would be going tooth and nail with the guys who were the Knicks fans who were from New York – James Jordan, Larry [Ridley], and the rest of them. So like I said, Muhal is a very special friend and, I think, one of the geniuses in the music.

Lida: Can you put your activities in the avant garde in a time frame? When we lived with Charles in New York, that was ’78, ’79, but I know you’re talking about activities from a somewhat earlier time.

David: It varied, because when we were with George Russell – once I was a convert, once I got past feeling threatened by Ornette – what we played belonged in that category. And a lot of the music that I played in Indianapolis when I moved back there and was switching to cello, had to be called pretty much avant-garde music. This was music that I was playing with Willis Kirk, I was playing with Chuck [Carter].

We went through a period for one year, when I had a group with David Lahm, that we played only the music of Thelonious Monk. That was all we played. I can remember we

would have jam sessions, and Elvin Jones was coming out quite regularly, So we were playing with Elvin, and playing with those guys. It was a fairly free music, even if it wasn't truly the avant garde, because the avant garde is an au courant term. It means whatever's happening in that particular time that people think they're in advance of what's going on. I never was as locked in as, say, Cecil Taylor is to what he does. But the people who were my friends – Buell Neidlinger, Charlie Haden, and all those guys – were all people who were thought of as a part of the avant garde. If you think of Charlie Haden's Liberation [Music] Orchestra – even though what he does now is pretty much retro – if you stop and think of the use of movie music and stuff, it's very romantic and very beautiful.

But then [at that time] and then again in the time that I was around with Charles Tyler, was back into the avant garde. And actually my first years here at Indiana University, it was packed. You couldn't get in a concert, whenever we played. And what we were playing was really out. I would have orchestras with people positioned all around the room, playing. I did a history of Louis Armstrong. It was an hour-long work. It started with trumpet sections [in] all four corners of the auditorium, and guys walking through, recreating the music of New Orleans. It was theater music.

Basically, I think what happens as you get older, you become more and more conservative. Not enough to be a Republican, but you do become more conservative.

Lida: Since you brought up your relationship with Muhal, I think it would be interesting to talk about some of the other black composers that have been a part of your circle over the years, and your activities in the Society of Black Composers, and that whole part of your life.

David: In the jazz part of it, basically it was Muhal, people who came out of that ouevre of music. Anthony Braxton. I played some concerts with the Sho' 'Nuff Orchestra, which was, again, the trumpet player we were talking about [Lester Bowie].

But then my interests, starting with the civil rights movement, as we found out that black composers had not been adequately represented, there was kind of an enclave that included . . .

Lida: . . . in classical music, you mean.

David: Yeah, in classical music – that included Hale Smith, who is one of the doyens. He was one of – somebody who taught us all. T. J. Anderson. All people about five or six years older than I am. And then some older people such as William Grant Still, whom I had interviewed and talked at length to out in Los Angeles. And the lady who wrote so much of the music in L. A. – [I] can't remember her name at the moment, but I'll think of it in a minute [Margaret Bonds]. But as I was doing this – fact is, I think

that might be when I – no. Later on I did – I remember interviewing Benny Carter, interviewing Quincy Jones, interviewing all the black composers in that area, and finding out that these people had the same interests that I did in the music. So William Grant Still. The guy in New York who died recently – he was a bigwig at BMI – Ulysses Kay, who was, incidentally, the nephew of King Oliver. I became very interested in what they were doing as writers and became a part of that first issuing of the music of black composers on Columbia recordings [The Black Composers series] under the guidance of Paul Freeman.

So I have a very close relationship with, first of all, Hale Smith. We communicate all the time. He and Olly . . .

Lida: Wilson.

David: . . . and T. J. – the three of us were pretty much inseparable and maybe sometimes insufferable too, for a while. I have some wonderful pictures from the first time we met in Chicago as a part of the National Association of Schools of Music. We formed a black caucus and talked about the music. It's very interesting seeing the pictures of the three of us sitting there looking like the politburo of Russia, with these dark, mean looks.

So, yeah, those guys, and later on, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, who is a very dear friend and another one of the giants of this music. That generation, those people are the ones I knew, and of course one of my classmates from down here, Roger Dickerson, whose domain is everywhere, but he lives in New Orleans.

I'm trying to think who were the other black composers who were part of those – because we would have a meeting somewhere every year. The Black Music Center was here in Indiana University. Consequently it served – and of course I met Thomas A. Dorsey, who wrote *Precious Lord, Take My Hand,* and the people who were a part of that oeuvre of music also.

I already knew that J. J. [Johnson] and those guys were writing music that combined jazz and classical music – he and John Lewis and people like that. Even George Russell was included in that, with his *All About Rosie* and things like that. But I can't think of any of the other names off the top of my head.

Lida: That was an important creative group. You all kept in touch. And the Black Composers series that came out on Columbia recordings was certainly an important series that got the music out and got the attention, hopefully, at that time of orchestras and performers that hadn't really known the music and hadn't really known the composers.

David: It got it out there, but there was not much in the way of residual effects. Some of us did get works performed. I remember in Houston they did the first performance of [my composition] *Kosbro.* Then later on, when Everett Lee came back to the States to do a tour, he chose to do my piece [*Kosbro*] with the New York Philharmonic. Shortly after that my cello concerto was performed by the New York Philharmonic. Then I also had the – I got a commission from the New York Philharmonic to write *Ellingtones.* So I've had a working relationship with a lot of the major orchestras, Indianapolis being another one, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra being another one. So I've been very fortunate, and I think a lot of us have, as a result of some composers [conductors] who choose [to do works by black composers], when they have an opportunity to work with an orchestra. One of them is a guy up in Indianapolis who did my piece *Images of Childhood.*

Lida: Bill Curry.

David: Bill Curry. So by the back doors, or coming in sideways, a lot of the black composers – and I guess I would be representative, maybe, of that oeuvre of music and of those people – have had their works now recorded, performed, on CRI – recorded on CRI, which is Composers Recordings Incorporated. And that's done a lot, I think, to get people like Adolphus Hailstork and Bill Banfield, whom I always try to pull in on my particular opportunities, like for instance when we did the thing with the Akron Symphony. It was a three-year project. Once they recorded my clarinet concerto, I suggested both Billy Childs and Bill Banfield, who constitute the rest of the recording.

So it's been one of those things where it's a kind of reciprocity. We all try to help each other. The ones who are a little older have reached back to help us. I'm kind of at the next level, and I reach down and try to help the people younger than me. But certainly I would say [Coleridge-Taylor] Perkinson, Olly [Wilson], T. J. [Anderson], Hale Smith, and George Walker, whom I forgot. George Walker is the man who won the Pulitzer Prize about five years ago. I happened to be on the Pulitzer committee that year, and his piece was so absolutely stunning, that it was – almost an absolute that it would be the piece that we would choose that year.

Lida: Do you see young black musicians having more opportunities now in terms of not only being able to perform so-called classical or art music, as well as composers now being performed more?

David: No. I don't think anything has changed. I still think it's – most of the time, with rare exceptions, we're programmed in February. It's black history month, which started out as black history second. Then they gave us a minute. Then it was an hour. Then it was a day. Then it was a week. But it ain't going to get past a month. And one of my colleagues pointed out that the month they gave us was the shortest month in the year.

So, no. I don't see any real changes. We still – if I were to try on an anecdotal basis to talk about how many blacks there are in the major orchestras – symphony orchestras – I would say maybe – in the top 25 orchestras there may be 10 blacks total. When Sanford Allen left the New York Philharmonic, I don't know if they even replaced him.

So that's still –and the real problem with, particularly string instruments, is that if kids don't have a model, if they don't see that there are opportunities for them to play – you have to start a string instrument by the time you're five years old to be a symphony player, to be that good. The [law]suits that went down with Arthur Davis – Art Davis and others – really bore no real fruit beyond some band-aids at the time.

As far as orchestras, you've got some pockets of people, like Phil Brunelle and others, who still champion the music, but my music, when it's played by the Indianapolis Symphony – which is home, and I've had quite a bit played – it's always done with the visiting conductor. I can't recall [Raymond] Leppard ever doing a work of mine. I can't recall the guy who preceded him. And the same thing with the New York Philharmonic. When they do my works, it's always somebody like Jimmy DePriest who comes in – a black composer, a black conductor – and they say, "What's your program going to be?" And they have the courage to put a piece by a black composer [on the program].

Now on the chamber music level, [it's] a little easier, because that you do almost always with personal contacts with people that are part of your circle of friends. My chamber music gets performed everywhere all the time, because there are people, when they want Starker, they ask Starker, "What do you want to play?" and Starker says, "I want to play this." They ask the Beaux Arts Trio, "What do you want to play?" "I want to play this."

But lesser groups don't have that kind of leverage. So that does happen, that with chamber music, that's happening. I would suspect that there are some breakthroughs, like for instance in opera, because you get people like Jessye Norman. You get people such as Reri Grist or Martina Arroyo. These are people who are going to rise to the top.

The problem is that when you're exceptional, you're going to get it, but what about the middle, where everybody ain't [at] that level? It's those people in the middle who don't get the opportunity. Whereas if you're white and you're in an orchestra, you probably have a chance to have your music performed, because you have a relationship with the conductor. If you wrote a piece, they would probably read it for you. And if it's a good piece, you'll get it played. Since there are no blacks in the orchestras, I don't know what they do.

Lida: You were talking a few minutes ago and on one of the other [interview] days about the formation of the Black Music Center at Indiana University.

David: That was formed as a result of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. When we found we had no music, then we went to the dean – [Wilfred Bain], then dean of the music school. Dominique-René de Lerma, and Doris . . .

Lida: Richards.

David: Doris Richards, who was at that time teaching here, even though she went back to Detroit to teach back where she had been teaching there, which is where what's-his-name . . .

Lida: Bob Klotman?

David: No, the guy who was president of – was IAJE president.

Lida: Dennis Tini.

[doorbell rings; recording interrupted]

David: . . . the music school was Dean Wilfred Bain, who had come here in 1947 or 1948 and was the dean for 25 years. He was very receptive to the notion of us starting a Black Music Center. I don't think we ever really defined what that was going to be or what it would entail. Dominique de Lerma was the first director. I guess Doris Richards and I were kind of the co-directors. Then I think Doris Richards might have taken over when Dominique left. But at any rate, we started a Black Music Center. Its main function was to collect recordings and music by black composers. That included the music of Undine Moore, the music of lesser-known composers, but it also included the music of people like Philippa Schuyler and music of other women composers and other minority composers.

The Black Music Center then began to run a number of conferences. Out of one of the conferences came two books that were edited by Dominique de Lerma. [*Black Music in Our Culture* and *Reflections on Afro-American Music*, both published by Kent State University Press] Those two books covered a multiplicity of subject matter, everything from philosophical reasons why the music had never been propagated – sometimes it was discussions of specific pieces. Tapes came out of that. The big work that I wrote, *Black America,* was performed at more than one of the conferences – I think two different conferences – with all-star casts, people who later ended up in the Met [the Metropolitan Opera], such as Pablo Elvira, who was a baritone who sang on one of the – sang on almost all the earlier versions of *Black America.* We heard music of composers such as Hale Smith and others, music that was not considered mainstream music yet, music that later on might become mainstream. We discussed virtually every philosophical position possible, and there were the inevitable clashes of how one should proceed. I think there must have been at least three or four of those [conferences]. Then

when they were no longer at Indiana University, [they were] at University of Michigan and other places around the country. Record companies were formed. There was a company called AAMOA [African-American Music Opportunities Association], which was formed, and they actually recorded a few things. One of them was a piece that I wrote, a suite for piano and string quintet [*Sonata for Piano and String Quintet*], for a lady named Helena Freire, who was from Brazil, from Sao Paulo, and a string quartet which included I.U. graduates or about-to-be graduates, including Steve Shipps, who teaches at [the University of] Michigan now, and [James] Van Valkenberg, who is in the Detroit Symphony.

So there was a lot of activity for about ten years. It looks like every school was trying to see what they could do to out-do the other school[s], simply because – first of all, there was some sincerity involved, but there was also the notion that there were grants all over the place for anybody who was going to have somebody of color as a part of what they did. For instance, at [the University of] Wisconsin they hired Cecil Taylor for a year. That was a traumatic experience, because I think they said they had something like 1,000 students in the class, and he gave all "F"s, because he didn't think they were serious. Of course it was overturned by the Board of Trustees – the grades were, that is.

But everybody had to have a spook. So you had all these schools now committed to at least some kind of short term – some of them lasted a long time. Where Dixon was, for instance – Bill Dixon was up at one of the schools up east, because I remember going up there to do things for him. U. of Mass. was a big school. Amherst [was] another big school that had a great African-American Studies program. And so, around the country, these [programs] proliferated. Indiana University was kind of a focal point, simply because it already had the reputation. So a lot of these people got to know the university very, very well, and of course it was to our advantage, because we got to play the music that we wrote and got to hear the music that the other people wrote. Out of that came, for instance, Willis Patterson's [book] *The Art Music of Black Composers,* which came – almost always dealt with poetry of black composers, whether it was Paul Laurence Dunbar or Langston Hughes or Mari Evans or Sonia Sanchez or whoever.

So this was a time of kind of a second renaissance, if you will, but the halcyon years, for sure, when everything – but the problem is, is that when music comes in and culture comes in that way, under duress, the first thing that gets jettisoned, when that pressure is taken off, are those things that have been added. It's why I worked very hard, as well as Hale [Smith] and others, to get us in a situation where we're not perceived of as special, where we're always on all-black programs, or we're always on in February – Negro history month programs, because when we're there, then it's easy to get us out of there, but if we are part of the mainstream, then we are fine. For instance, I ask people, "Look, I would rather you put me in your subscription series." Put me in the subscription series. Then you've made a choice that you think the music is worthy.

There is something that still has a stigma attached to it, except you take what you can get. There's still a kind of a stigma attached to – and I've got half a dozen CDs down there [in my studio] that are my music that are there as a part of all-black things – this Albany [recordings] series. Now one of the things that has been nice with Paul Freeman is that they're "The Music of David Baker," and it doesn't say whether I'm black, green, yellow, or whatever. It just says "The Music of Dave Baker," and he's doing a series of albums of that.

A young lady, Karen Walwyn, just recorded my piano sonata on an album called *Dark Fires*, but again it's an all Afro-American album. So I think you have to have all of these fronts being dealt with, and you have different strategies at different times in the evolution of a music. There's a time when confrontation is what gets the job done. That runs its course, and then it's conciliation. Then it's agreement or whatever. I think you have to realize where you are in that evolutionary process when you begin to adopt the strategies that you are going to use to get music done or whatever. And we've already been through – we find out that sometimes it has to be revisited. We found out America's greatest changes with regard to race have been in areas of confrontation. That's why a lot of people can't deal with the '60s, because that's when blacks made their greatest strides. But the minute the pressure was off, then it went back to [the] status quo. Sometimes the only thing that gets the job done is when cities are burning. Malcolm X understood that. I think the [Black] Panthers understood it when they said, "by any means necessary." I'm not one who necessarily agrees that the end justifies the means. I don't buy that. I think there are times when you have to know when to apply discreet pressure to get a job done.

I think the same thing exists for gender – gender segregation. As long as women are quiet about it, nobody does anything, but when you put the pressure on, they bitch and scream, but it's like they used to say about people who resisted the music of the 20th century: they're dragged screaming and yelling and kicking into the 20th century. Sometimes that has to be done. The period we're talking about was a period when it was necessary and when it had to be done that way.

Lida: You've lived through some very difficult times in terms of the civil rights movement and the different things that were happening not just in the '60s, but also when you were really small. You were mentioning to us last night, when you were a small child in Indianapolis . . .

David: And saw a lynching.

Lida: . . . actually having witnessed a lynching.

David: Yeah, but those things were part of the zeitgeist. It's a drag, but you end up having to adjust to the situations that exist. That's the reason why I'm a little less – I'm

very hesitant to be judgmental about people like Steppin' Fetchit, or Amos and Andy, or Willie Bess, or [Eddie] "Rochester" [Anderson], because I think that those people wore a mask that allowed them to survive. I can remember when Billie Holiday was criticized for playing a maid, and Billie took a very strong stance. She said, "I'd rather play a maid in a movie for fifteen hundred dollars than be a maid for fifteen dollars."

So there has to be some accommodations. When people talk about Louis Armstrong – Louis Armstrong said in no uncertain terms that "every nigger" – his words, not mine – "every nigger needs a white man" to speak on his behalf. Obviously [Duke] Ellington felt the same way – Irving Mills. They could get things done at a time when blacks were not taken very seriously. They couldn't get things done. Jackie Robinson needed Branch Rickey. Without Branch Rickey, how long might it have taken before they ever integrated baseball? I think maybe it's hyperbolic to put it in those terms, but basically, at that time in history, it probably was more true than it was not true.

I've lived through a lot of those things. I think there are more things which are traumatic for me: as we made strides, to see the martyrs. One of the movements of my piece *Black America* is called *Money, Missionary, Marines*, but it's also *Malcolm, Medgar, and Martin.* Those three "M"s pervade that work – I mean, that's the impetus for the work. Malcolm said it once. He said, we do – America works like this. When we intend to colonize or take a country, we send in the missionaries. If the missionaries can't convert them, we send in money. If money can't buy them, then our last court of resort is the Marines. We send in the Marines, and the Marines get the job done.

It sounds harsh and it sounds cruel to think of it in those terms, but it still exists. With the emerging countries, we still do business that way. When the missionaries can't convert them to Christianity, which can render them docile, then we spend all the money that we can to buy them, and if that doesn't work, then you can bet your life, we'll find some – what do they call them? . . .

[The recording is interrupted abruptly as the tape runs out. Baker picks up the thread when recording resumes.]

On an artistic level, those things – like I said, missionary, money, marines – became – on an artistic level that theme – those themes became the fodder for white and black composers. Joe Schwantner, in his peon to Abraham Lincoln, for instance, wrote about these kinds of things. And there are earlier people, like [Aaron] Copland, with *Lincoln Portrait* and what-have-you. But every black and every white composer probably went to these sources of this kind of subject matter when they would write. I can't think of a single black composer who did not address – if he's a certain age – did not address the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King or the assassination of [President John F.] Kennedy. Oliver Nelson, one of his biggest works was *The Kennedy Dream.*

We all had as a source of inspiration things that were happening, contemporaneous events. That's really what a poet does. That's what a musician does. We realize that we are the conscience of a nation. We write about the vision, what people don't see in these various events. We talk about how people can tell you where they were when Dr. King was assassinated, where they were when J.F.K. was assassinated. It tells you how these things are planted in our mind. Basically these are the things. It makes you start to then think about as a child having seen a lynching, as I did, or it makes you think about what has changed. I can never forget walking past a tavern and hearing people celebrating the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, and they're saying, "Well, they finally got Dr. Martin Luther Coon." Those things become a part of your memory bank. You cannot walk through life being bitter and doing those things, but they do serve as inspiration for pieces that you write.

It was years later that I wrote *Through This Vale of Tears.* I didn't even have a title for it. I went to a lecture [in Washington, D.C.] at the [Congressional] Black Caucus. I spoke, and Max Roach spoke, but most eloquently, Imamu [Amiri] Baraka spoke. When he was talking, he was speaking in measured tones. He got done, and he said, "And it is a big task as we walk through this vale of tears." And I said, ah, I've got my title for this piece, which is about Martin Luther King.

There are certain pieces which inspire me. One of them is a piece by Pete Hines – or, a guy named Carl Hines. It's called *Now That He is Safely Dead.* It's a piece which Ruby Dee and her husband use on Martin Luther King Day each year. It's a wonderful poem that talks about how we feel like we can give vindication by doing lip service. In the last lines in it, he says, "You know it's easier to build monuments than it is to make a better world. So now that he is safely dead, we will tell our children that he was a great man, knowing that the cause for which he lived is still a cause and the dream for which he died is still a dream, a dead man's dream."

When you see it in that perspective, it means we have the opportunity as writers to say things in a poetic way that make them palatable and acceptable in a way that you can't do. Maybe this is what rappers have in mind sometime, when they feel like if they couch it in rhythm and stuff, that they can say things – certainly calypso people have known this all along. What's the guy's name, the great calypso guy? Marley, Bob Marley.

Why are you looking? Bob Marley was, I thought, one of the great people in calypso.

Lida: I thought he was a reggae musician.

David: Well, calypso, reggae, I don't really draw – because the message is the same. But at any rate, basically it's just another way to say that every artist responds to his time – his or her time. I don't think we as musicians are any different. Certainly I don't

feel myself any different than Paul Robeson in his time – perhaps not as committed, not as willing to make the sacrifices, because they cost him his career, particular when you've got idiots like Joe whatever-his-name-is, who was the Red hunter.

Lida: McCarthy?

David: Joe McCarthy.

But I think we all find a way to address the concerns of the day, and basically this is what I have done in all my writing. Sometimes I have an opportunity to revisit things that I like revisiting, like the commission I have now to write on the works of Paul Robeson. [Baker means poet Paul Laurence Dunbar.] Now I get to choose what those works are. They might be *When Malindy Sings*, but they also might be *A Song* – which is so beautiful and so romantic – or they might be dialect. And again, I think that as an artist you have to have the options open to you to be able to use whatever means you use, whatever words you need to say what you have to say. Sometimes it's the Bible. Sometimes it's Martin Luther King. At other times it's the protestations of Malcolm X, who talked about the ballot and the bullet. And those are not things which are always palatable. It's easier to talk about pretty things.

Lida: And you lived through some very tumultuous experiences in the '60s, things that were happening here in Indiana at that time, things that were happening on campus, activities of . . .

David: That would always be. There were sit-ins and – what did my friend say? Sit-ins, sit-downs, sit-outs. I can remember when we occupied the track at the Little 500 [an annual bicycle race at Indiana University], because we didn't feel that we were included in the planning or the thinking or the rationale for what we felt were frivolous events at the time. I can remember when my good friend who finally went to Howard University, Orlando . . .

Lida: Taylor.

David: Orlando Taylor, who was up to be a black provost here, or to be at least probably head of the Black Studies Department, which was just going to be formulated. When they occupied one of the buildings, his name dropped out of there immediately. So the people who speak up have to always be aware that it carries a consequence. You have to know when that's what you can do and do best. I was able to say things in *Black America*, because I had poetic license, that I could never say with any kind of impunity if I were on a soap box. Perhaps that's why [Duke] Ellington, I think, was so successful sometimes with something like *My People* or something like his sacred services, because he could say things in a song that you can't say under normal circumstances, and he did.

Lida: I know at one point you were approached about writing an opera based on the life of Malcolm X. Then at one point, too, a project was proposed to you which I found very interesting, the project called *The Meeting.*

David: We talked earlier about the Malcolm project. I didn't do that simply because it would have made an encroachment on my time that I was unwilling to give. *The Meeting* was a little more impressive to me. Sam Floyd sent me a copy of the video that was a mythical meeting between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. It was going to be a two-man play. They talked about their differences, but their commonalties. I was approached, and I found that very exciting, to write an opera, a two-person opera based on that. I have no notion why it dissipated. Perhaps because nobody bugged me. I never did follow through on it. It's something that I still find attractive and something that I think would be very good, just like I think Anthony Davis's opera *X* was very, very effective. I think, again, we respond to time and place.

Lida: I know you have a great affection for Dr. King, and you've studied his writings and you've studied his life. And also, the life of Malcolm X has been something of great interest to you. Would you speak a little bit about them and possibly Medgar Evers and others of the pioneers in the civil rights movement that have affected you personally?

David: I'm not sure what you say. These are people who were responsible for transforming kinds of experiences. We know their sacrifices. I can remember Dr. King, hearing him the night before, saying, "I may not live to get there." But that's an abstract. But I think he saw that as a real possibility, and of course it was a possibility. And the next day he was killed.

I think you can't dwell on those things. I think you have to be constantly aware of the things that shape your destiny, shape your life, and shape the life of a people. I think you have to not forget those, but I think you have to also, again, realize which strategy is appropriate and move on. For instance, there's been two of the most devastating phenomena of the 20th century – or of the 20th century and [the] last 200 years. One, of course, was the Holocaust, and for people to come up now and say they don't think it ever existed and for people to denigrate it, it seems to me that's foolish and it's folly, when we know. But then, people don't learn. When I was in Germany with Quincy [Jones], I can remember seeing the brownshirts marching again. It's as though they forgot Krystallnacht. It's as though they forgot all the insanity of Adolph Hitler. But then in America, I read an article this morning in the paper, that people are asking that finally this government apologize to blacks for slavery. People say, "Well, I wasn't born then. What do I – why me?" But they don't stop to think of all of the residual effects of slavery. I think as important as the Holocaust in terms of tragedy were the middle passages, where millions of blacks died in the holds of ships, coming to America to be slaves. I can't dwell on that, but I can comment on it in what I write, in the kinds of

things that I do. That would make an opera. I'm intrigued by that. I'm intrigued by the slaves' uprisings, Denmark Vesey. I would love to write an opera about that. I'm not sure that it would have any currency. I don't know. But I think again it gets back to reacting to time and place.

Lida: You actually heard Malcolm X speak.

David: I heard him speak any amount of times. I used to go – when I lived in Harlem with Slide Hampton, I'd go down there in the day sometimes and just listen to him and Daddy Grace and the other people who took the soap boxes. I admit until I after I read his – Alex Haley's book [*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*], I'm not sure that I bought into it or that I even understood what Malcolm was talking about. Since then, I've bought all the videotapes I can find. I've got the books, and I've read them and digested them. And Malcolm, it seems to me, was right on. In fact it was eerie and almost frightening watching Denzel Washington play Malcolm, because he *was* Malcolm. He looked like Malcolm. He talked like Malcolm. He acted like Malcolm. After seeing him on the street corners, even across these years, it still struck me that I was looking at Malcolm all over again.

So I think it's good that we are reminded of the things that shape the country. There are things which are – it's hard for us to digest. There are people who are really up in arms about [Lerone Bennett's book] *Forced into Glory*, the defrocking of Abraham Lincoln, but you have to deal with it if you – you can't just let it slide off and say, "I don't want to know about this." If there's a chance to deal with truth, you have to deal with truth. As an artist, I feel my first obligation is to deal as truthfully with these phenomena as possible. Fortunately, I've had a chance to work with great poets who are able to give voice, like *Alabama Landscape. Alabama Landscape* is a very powerful piece written by Mari Evans. People don't realize that it's a metaphor for the killing of a young man in Indianapolis, a young black man who was in his tennis shoes and shorts, with his hands behind his back, and the cops say that he shot himself in the head.

Lida: In the back of a police car.

David: In the back of a police car. Ultimately there was a multi-million-dollar suit that was settled, because the new mayor said it's time we pay this. He said we owe it to this family – [the family of] Michael Taylor. So *Alabama Landscape* is that. Fact is, I'll give you guys [Ken Kimery and James Zimmerman] a copy of that CD. In there there's a line that says, "What was tar and rope is now magnum." And you know – and it really does put it in perspective. So she uses as a metaphor the whole notion of a slave trying to escape, and all of a sudden juxtaposing that on what happened to this young man.

And it's something that's current, because if you look at what [Rudolph] Guliani has done in New York, if you look at what was happening in Philadelphia in the 1960s and

’70s, if you look at what’s happening around the country, it’s something that recurs. How many trumped-up charges have they been able to throw out in Los Angeles? So it isn’t something that’s going to go away, but I do think that we have to be constantly wary and ever vigilant. Who better to speak of these things so people understand them than the people who write poetry and the people who write music?

Who’s the guy who’s been coming under fire just recently because he wrote about that guy being sodomized in New York? He wrote – this is one of the great writers and singers. He sang a song, and he’s been under great criticism.

James Zimmerman: Bruce Springsteen.

Lida: Bruce Springsteen.

David: Bruce Springsteen, because he’s writing about that, and people are saying, “We don’t want to hear that. I don't want to hear that. I want to hear something pleasant.” Maybe that’s why I really like things like [the TV show] *Law and Order*, and I still get mad when the bad guys get away. I want to get my vigilante outfit on, and I ain’t got none. [laughs]

Lida: Maybe we could take a minute now and talk about the creative process – because you’ve been talking about how artists are the conscience of the country, the voice of the country – and how you work as a creative artist.

David: Basically, for me, I go to a lot of sources. Part of it is intuition. Part of it is experiential knowledge. But there are some books I would recommend to anybody. One is *The Act of Creation*, which is a marvelous book. It’s by the guy who wrote the book *Darkness at Noon*, Arthur Koestler – K-o-e-s-t-l-e-r. There’s another book which is called *Foreplay*, and it’s a book which deals with the act of creation.

Lida: I think it’s *Free Play*, isn’t it?

David: *Free Play* [by Stephen Nachmanovitch]. Yeah. I'm sorry about that. [laughter] Yeah. *Free Play*. And there are any number of other books. But I’m not sure that most people understand how the muse works. I’ve talked to a lot of people who tell me different ways to call the muse. I write so much music that usually I don’t have a chance to sit around and wait for inspiration. I have to write because I’m being paid to write. So I’ve devised a number of schemes. Some of them come from other teachers. I’ve had a teacher tell me – when I wrote the piece *Kosbro*, he said, “Why don’t you go sit in the auditorium where the piece will probably be played and imagine what you’re going to hear.” And I did. And I sat down and I wrote the piece. I have no notion of where the inspiration came – where it came from, but I wrote the piece almost without stopping. I listen to the piece now, and it’s unlike any other piece – except maybe the first cello

concerto – that I've ever written. But if I had to re-create that piece from scratch, I couldn't do it.

Another teacher told me, "When you're writing, stop writing in the evening at a place where you are going great guns, so that you can't wait to get up the next morning and take off. But if you write until you run out of ideas, it's drudgery the next morning. Stop when the muse is flowing."

I remember what Donald Erb told me about writing. I asked him, "Why" – I said, "Man, why is it – how is it that you can write all these great pieces? I've never heard a bad piece that you write." He said, "Look, David. For over 30 or 40 years I've been writing from 9 to 12 every morning. That's my time to write, and I let nothing get in its way." He said, "If you're writing every day like that, how can you not be – like practicing an instrument – how can you not be good at what you do?"

So the creative muse, for me, is in use primarily at conception level, because I feel like I have craft and skills under control. Once I get the material, I know how to develop it. The idea is to come up with pregnant ideas, ideas that will bear fruit. I keep in mind a couple things that I've read. One of them said, "Beware." And so when I write popular music – if you give me ten minutes, I'll write you a tune, and it'll be a good tune. I can sit down and write – I wrote all the tunes that are in my *Advanced Improvisation* book in less than a day – and there's 25 or 30 tunes – 'cause I can write them as fast as I can think. But one of the things that put it in perspective for me was when somebody pointed out the difference between a song and a theme. A song is a kind of aphorism – or an aperçu, where it's just a passing thought. When you write a song, you've got two ideas. You got the "A" section and you got the "B" section. If you're writing *Over the Rainbow*, you ain't got nothing but the octave and a close-in, another skip and a close-in, and another skip and a close-in. Then the bridge is just two notes – [the interval of] a third – that keep changing meaning. But when you write a theme – he made the idea that a theme really is a hypothesis that has to be proved. When you write a theme, it has to be able to hold up under 40 minutes of development. [Baker sings the opening motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.] That's the start of a theme, and it has to last for however long the Fifth Symphony lasts. You find all the ways to turn it upside down, inside out.

So when I write a piece now – and this is what I tell people who want to study with me, and I'm going to say this to [pianist-composer] Lynne Arriale, who's been wanting to study with me for some time – what I do now is I lay the theme out. I turn it on its side and see what it looks like if I put all the notes in one chord. I see what it looks like if I take the last two notes and put them in the front, to see if it, in fact, can bear fruit. So what you end up doing is trying to use all that material. You look at somebody like Beethoven. You get to the third movement [of the Fifth Symphony]. He takes that same theme that went [Baker sings the opening of the symphony again] and he has a theme

that goes [Baker sings the related theme from the third movement of the Fifth Symphony].

When I'm convinced that it can bear fruit, then I'm ready to start trying to write. But until I'm convinced that the theme is pregnant – that's why, sometimes, when I get people who are writers, I tell them I am going to do to you what a good person who wanted you to write an English theme – if you would say to all your students – you had 200 students in an English class – "I want you to write me a mystery. I want you to bring that mystery in at the end of the semester for your term paper. The mystery has to start, 'It was a dark and stormy night'." Now that's the most clichéd beginning 'cause it's been used so much. I do this with my students about writing. I give them the first five notes of a theme. It might even be a theme that somebody used that goes [Baker sings the first notes of *Invitation*]. I say, "Now write me a new tune." When they get to the point where they can take that material and use it . . . Because look. They ain't got but 12 notes. How much music has been written on those 12 notes? Hale Smith used to be a tune detective. Do you know what he did? He devised a color scheme that he could put over the notes, and if it had too much of the same note, then he knew he had a case for plagiarism or for – what's the word in music?

Lida: Copyright infringement.

David: Copyright infringement.

So I try to devise all the techniques – and, you know, it's another reason why I engage in so much word play, because with word play, what you're doing is taking any particular idea and putting it in as many different settings as possible. I get into puns and into word play, because what makes something funny sometimes is the context you put it in. Fact is, all jokes are a kind of creative magic. The pun is creative magic. You take what is the pun – the word – and all of a sudden it shifts its meaning. Consequently I try to devise as many different techniques for making myself stay sharp about how I use material. When I play – nothing pleases me more than when I'm playing and all of a sudden I come up with a double quote. It starts out as one quote, and when you think it's the quote, then it goes somewhere else, and it's a second quote. I think that it's – the reason why I use quotes at all in my playing is because it makes me think.

When I'm learning, sometimes I'll play on a – I used to play on gigs as a player, and I would decide I'm going to play an *I Got Rhythm* tune, but I'm going to do what Oliver [Nelson, Jr.] did the other day, but now in great depth. It's what one of you said to me – or somebody said to me yesterday – that they take and put their music on a big piece of paper – oh! Larry [Wiseman] – and then he takes songs. That comes from my book. I'll take *I Got Rhythm*. Then I'll take 20 *I Got Rhythm* tunes. I'll take *Anthropology.* I'll take *Passport.* I'll take *Dexterity.* Then I'll make the students learn all those tunes. I'll say, "Now, every four measures I want you to go to the next one." So if they've got 16

pieces, they have to know where they are in the tune. And it goes – so they go, the first four measures of [*Moose the Mooche*] [Baker sings the first four measures of *Moose the Mooche*] and then the next four measures is of [*Anthropology*] [Baker sings the first four measures of *Anthropology*]. So [Baker sings measures 5 and 6 of *Anthropology*] is the next time. And by the time you've done that, man, you're starting to be very, very reliable.

It's the reason why I feel like I like to play [Thelonious] Monk[']s music], because Monk insisted that you use his material. Then you – the less material you have, the more likely you are to come up with something that is really valid. The more material you have, the easier it is to get sidetracked. People used to think on gigs that – I worked these gigs with Freddie [Hubbard]. We would be playing these blues gigs, and what we would do is practice. And people [would] think we didn't know but one thing, because we would play it on every tune. Or sometimes when I'm working a gig, like at Bear's [Place] or something, or even a dance, what I will do is keep using the material. The first tune we play, then I use that material in the next tune. Play that tune, then I use that material in the next tune. So I'm playing a tune like *Groovin' High,* but I'm using all the material from *Half Nelson,* or all the material from *The Shadow of Your Smile.* Anything that forces you to have to make conscious decisions about material is something that makes the creative – that is healthy for the creative mind. The last thing you want to do ever in a creative situation, in my mind, is to get comfortable. It's like lifting weights. Somebody says, the only way you make a gain in lifting weights is one of two ways: you either add more weight or you add more repetitions. When I practice, the minute something's comfortable in my practicing, I either speed it up, slow it down, or change it. I feel the same way when I'm playing. If an audience knows every time what's going to happen to the idea, then why should they listen? If I go [Baker sings a cliché] and finish it with [Baker sings its ending], they're cool. But if I go [Baker sings the cliché again, but transforms the ending into a continuing bebop line], now they say, "Yeah! What was that?"

So for me the creative process is a constant game of trying to change up material, trying to change the context in which material appears. And, you know, we can change the meaning. I use as a kind of an analogy – you have somebody – let's just say we take one of those ladies with raven-black hair. Her hair is absolutely gorgeous. We say, "Your hair is beautiful." But let that hair show up in a piece of butter. It ain't beautiful no more. It's ugly. So context means everything. I think shifting context is what I try to do as a writer. I try to keep you guessing about what's coming next. And something that you thought meant this, you find out that it means something else. What you have to do then as a player and as a writer is to constantly force the hand of the person that you're – of your audience.

Lida: Could we go back and pick up something a little earlier in your life at this point? The fact that you haven't lived continuously in Bloomington the whole 33 years you've

been here at the university, since 1966 – I guess 34 years now – the fact that you did live in New York City several different periods, and also you spent some time in L.A.

David: Yeah, but a lot of that happened before I came here to teach.

Lida: Okay.

David: I lived in L.A. even before I took my job at Lincoln University. I was there a short period of time. I made rehearsal bands. I starved a lot. I made contacts. I ran into people like Gerald Wilson and friends that I would have had there. So it was valuable from the standpoint that I was in a completely different circumstance than the school situation.

When I moved to New York the first time, I went up there because I thought it was time to move to New York, and Slide [Hampton] made it possible for me to live with him at 126th Street in back of the Apollo Theater. We went out every night to Connie's Inn, we went to Smalls' Paradise, and we were going to jam sessions every night. Slide would get me on jobs, and I would play with him. I got a chance to hang out. I got on the [musicians] union floor. I met people. I learned what New York was about. I also learned that if you're in New York and you stand in one place – particularly someplace like 52nd Street over by the [musicians] union – if you stand in one place for more than an hour, you'll see somebody from home. And I think – it always worked.

The first time I lived in New York, it was an experience for me, because I was living in Harlem. I heard music. At that time it was safe to go into Harlem. I played clubs there. I would go over to the Apollo Theater, in those rat-infested rooms, and sit around and talk to people who came there, people that I enjoyed their playing, and just talked to them. Sometimes I would get a chance to substitute, or whatever.

My second time in New York, I went there on my terms. I went there this time with George Russell. George Russell had formed the group, and when I moved to New York, it was to play. I already had a job. But I played sessions, I went again to the Café Wa, I went to clubs down in Greenwich Village and played, and it was a glorious time for me. I lived first with Chuck Israels on West End Avenue. That was really nice, except it was hard to practice, because people would bitch and scream about your practicing in the rooms. So I'd have to try to go to the union or someplace else, or we would take turns practicing.

The first time – when I first moved there, that time – or was it with Slide? I guess maybe the first time I moved there, before I moved with Slide, I lived in a – no. It was with George. When we moved back up there, me and David Young lived at the 34th Street YMCA. It was me; Rocky Boyd, a tenor player; Harold Mabern; David Young. And we would have to fight, because the only place you could practice in there was in

the gym. It was a piano in there, and so everybody would try to get their hour on the piano and hope nobody else wouldn't show up.

Then we moved – I moved with Chuck Israels to an apartment out on West End Avenue, but all the time I was playing. I don't know how often I was home, because George Russell practiced all the time. Incidentally, his birthday's going to be in – what's [the date] today? [June] 20th?

Recording engineer: [June] 21st.

David: His birthday is the 23rd, so it's the day after tomorrow. I'll make it a point to call him.

That's the second time. That whole time we were playing Birdland, we were making trips out to Kansas City, [and] we were playing other clubs and basic concerts.

Then the third time I lived in New York was when I was teaching. I took a sabbatical and moved to New York – actually moved to New Jersey. Then when you came up there – meaning my wife – when you moved up there – well, you weren't my wife at the time – but we moved to 190 Carlton [190 Carlton Avenue in Brooklyn], which was right around the corner from Bill Hardman and his wife, and around the corner from the bass player who played with Monk, whose name escapes me.

Lida: Yeah. We were across the back yard from Bill Lee.

David: And from Bill Lee, Spike Lee's father. So at that time, I was pretty much again on my own terms. I was teaching at [Charles] Colin's [Studios] in the day. I had a studio there. Even when I wanted to practice at home, I could practice, because Charles [Tyler] was [living] downstairs, and it's his house – his building. We were right down the street from where Slide's house was, even though Slide wasn't there at the time. He lived at 245 Carlton. And all the other musicians, whether it was a Wayne Shorter or whoever, at one time or another was either visiting or living there.

So these were very important times in my life, because they came at times when a particular growth cycle was at an end or a new growth cycle was just beginning.

When I was doing my – when I was teaching at Rutgers, it was because I was on sabbatical. On sabbatical I felt it very, very necessary to try to replenish the teaching techniques that I had, so I exposed myself to a lot of things with Ted Dunbar. I got a chance to really be around Barry Harris. I got a chance to talk to other teachers in the area. So this was a very, very fruitful time, in addition to making sessions. I was teaching at Charles Colin Studios. I had probably 25 or 30 students. Sometimes they

were in big classes every Saturday. During the week I taught very often, too, when I would come in.

This was a very, very good time in the sense that I also took six weeks – or maybe it was more than that – to go to Australia across this time and teach in the school system there. Across this time I got remarried, to Lida Belt, now Lida Belt Baker, and we worked together, beginning as players at that time, too.

So this was a fruitful time. It was a time when I think that I brought back a lot of information and a lot of new attitudes about my teaching when I came back to Indiana University to resume teaching the next year. In my absence, one of my students, or ex-students, Harry Miedema, had been the teacher and had done a pretty good job of keeping the boat level until I got back and was able to immerse myself in teaching again and to find that there were a lot of students who had come here who were going to be among my best students, during that interim. Jim Beard, for instance, was one student who came during that interim and I was able to have a chance to work with when I got back.

Lida: One of the things that I've always found interesting about your life is that you've had a lot of activity going on in parallel areas. You've been a performer. You've also been a composer. Your teaching activities have spanned nearly your entire life, but then you also have contributed tremendously as an author. You mentioned that that got – that you started with a book that you wrote, a book of exercises based on George Russell's Lydian chromatic concept. Now you have more than 70 books, many of which have been translated into multiple languages, and many people know you all over the world because of your activities as a writer.

David: Again, this is serendipitous. It's one of those things of being at the right place at the right time in history. I mentioned once before that nature abhors a vacuum. When you're in a situation where materials are needed to do what you do, then necessity is the mother of invention in those particular instances. The only reason why I started writing books was because I needed information to play. And I figured if I needed that information and it wasn't available, somebody else probably needed that same information. So it was a little easier to think in terms of dissemination of information via books than it was – this is before the internet and this is before any of those possibilities that would have happened with, say, even tape.

So I wrote the first book. Then when I got ready to teach, I really needed a book that was a generalized book to teach improvisation. In this particular instance, I liked Jerry [Coker]'s book, but Jerry didn't cover a lot of the things that I felt were germane to what I needed. So I wrote a book. And each time I wrote a new book, my guiding lights were this: number one, either no book existed with that information in it, or [number two] no book existed where that information was all under one cover.

So I started to write. I'm not even sure what the order is. I wrote the improvisation book. I think the next book I wrote was a book called *Composition for the* . . .

Lida: I think the *Arranging and Composing for the Small Ensemble* [book] was . . .

David: That's what I was about to say – was the second book. Then, each time there was a need – you know, Jamey [Aebersold] proceeded along these same lines. Sometimes I could see that Jamey was using the models that I had set, and then he translated them into play-alongs, which was great. Fact is, we even coincided one time, when I wrote the II-V book [*Techniques of Improvisation. Volume 2: The II V7 Progression*]. It had a green and white cover, and all of a sudden the green and white cover of the [II-V7 play-along] record was the same [colors].

So always my writing – particularly in these kinds of books – was driven by necessity, by the fact that no books existed. Now, on other levels, for instance the pedagogy book, which to my knowledge was the first book on pedagogy – jazz pedagogy – written, was one that was driven by the fact that people were worrying me to death every summer. "Can you send me your syllabuses?" "Can you tell me how you do this?" "What do you do in an arranging class?" "How do you plan a recital?" And I kept thinking, if I'm going to be sending out xeroxes of that information, why don't I just put it in a book?

So each book came at a time when there was no such book available or where that information was not all under one cover. Then I began to diversify so that I began writing about things other than "how to." There were essays on philosophical concerns about the music. For instance, that had been the first article that I had written for *Down Beat*, the article called *Jazz: the Academy's Neglected Stepchild*. It was a chance to get on the soapbox and talk about the fact that jazz education and jazz educators had to begin dealing with American music, specifically jazz music. It didn't win me a lot of friends, but it did break ground and did get people thinking about it. In there I criticized not only the educational system, but I criticized racial attitudes – the fact that I was looking at the various camps that were in existence, and I looked to see people running things, and I didn't see black faces. It was no attempt to make it exclusively black, but only simply to say that it seemed to be very ridiculous that in a music created out of black culture, that there were so few blacks involved in it in any meaningful way in decision-making processes.

So I wrote a lot of philosophical books. I edited a lot of books. I had sporadic columns in *Down Beat* and a continuing column in *The Jazz Player* [magazine] later on. And I started to think in terms of the areas. I began to get grants and also appointments to travel and do lectures. And every time I would do a lecture, that would become a point of study for me, to really prepare the lecture. So I was doing lectures. I did a lecture when I traveled on one of the big – what was it? The Rock – it wasn't Rockefeller. It

was – the grant where I did bebop and took it into the various colleges. It doesn't matter [that I can't remember the name]. At any rate, I did a lot of those, and I found that they were the things that were driving my writing, my literary writing. When somebody said they didn't know something, I would study it in much the same way as when I get ready to write a concerto. If it's for an instrument I haven't written for, I'll spend an inordinate amount of time studying people who have written those, studying music that's a saxophone concerto, or whatever, before I write. I do the same thing when I write books.

This is the longest I've ever gone in my life without writing a book, since I started writing books. I think the last book I wrote was *How to* – not how to practice . . .

Lida: *How to Learn Tunes*, I think, was the last one.

David: *How to Learn Tunes* was the last book, and that's been what? Three or four years. I have four or five books in my head now. I have a how to teach book which deals with the vagaries of today: how to deal with harassment, how to deal with changing attitudes in students. The book is ready to go, but I haven't sat down to write the book. There's a book on how to write music that's in the Thirdstream vein. That's in preparation. It's ready to go. I haven't had time to sit down and write the book, which would have been probably the best argument for retirement, but unfortunately, for me, everything I do is driven by what I do in the classroom. If I weren't in the classroom, then probably the books wouldn't be there in my mind.

So I feel that my books, Jerry Coker's books, George Russell's book, [and] Jamey Aebersold's play-alongs have laid pretty much the foundation for jazz education. A lot of people don't know this or don't choose to acknowledge it, but when I go places, I think the people that I really respect are very aware of that foundation and that they're going to my books.

For a long time I would check attributions, and I would see, in book after book, my books being listed as source material. Dissertations – it's almost impossible to find a dissertation on jazz that doesn't list at least one of my books and books by Jerry Coker, which is I think the final proof of whether a book is valuable and how it is being used, because those citations tell you how much the book is being used.

I've got a lot of students who borrow very liberally without attribution, but I've got a lot of other students who do give attribution to the books. I never have to worry about Jerry Coker or people who are experienced people plagiarizing. Sometimes people don't even bother to re-state. I won't say who, but I can remember, like, 25 years ago, somebody who has since become quite a good educator, borrowing whole sections of my improvisation book. I called *Down Beat* and said, "I won't accept this. You've got to go

to them and get them to admit" – and of course the cat came clean. Maybe he thought I wasn't going to see the book. I don't know.

So I've become a stickler, since I've been an educator, for honesty in writing, that when I have an idea, like this whole notion of the use of the word "contrafact," I go back to [James] Patrick, because that's a word that he coined to use for this. It came from an earlier word – I mean, used differently in earlier times, but I always credit him with that.

Lida: James Patrick.

David: I try to give credit always when I use material, and I'm always upset when I don't see that credit. I'm always very suspicious when I see a book that doesn't have an index, because it tells me that somebody didn't take the time . . .

Lida: Bibliography.

David: No, I meant index – I want to know when I look in the back that the people have taken the time to say where I can find information that I'm looking for on a given page.

I want a bibliography and a discography too, but the index – I really mean index. I want to go alphabetically and see if my name is in the book. I want to see if Jerry Coker's name is in the book. So I mean index. Okay?

In a book that's a scholarly book, I want to also see discographical sources, I want to see a bibliography, and I want to see footnotes. I want to see those things. But it starts with me, if it's a scholarly book, with looking in the index, because that's the first place I look. If I don't see my name in the book and it's a book about something that I know I've written a lot about, then I start to look to see, what did he say about it? Then sometimes I can see full paragraphs that were just simply lifted and not even restated. Then I can get mad and get over it and go on to the next book, you dig?

So I feel like I've had an influence on education simply because I've written so many books, and so many of the books were at a time when there were no other books, no competing books. That of course diminishes as you see more and more people writing books. I'm amazed at how often – I can never forget Ted Dunbar going after Gary Campbell. Gary's one of my students and somebody I respect and love very much, but he came here, and he brought a book that he had just published with Jim Houston. We were downstairs [in my studio] with Dottie – Ted's girlfriend – and Lida and myself and Luke Gillespie and some others, and we were going to play. He brought the book over, and he showed it to Ted. He said, "Here's my new book." And Ted reamed him out. He said, "Man, how can you write a book here? Everything in here is something

David just gave you." Ted would get very protective of me. And when he got done, the next edition of that book had the attributions in it.

Sometimes it's not calculated. People are not being malicious. They just don't think about it. And you know, I think, too, that the statement that says, "Being original means choosing obscure sources" – sometimes people really think, "Well, nobody's ever seen this book, so if I say something out of this book, they won't know where it came from." But I fortunately have something close to total recall once I read a book. That's why kids can't get away with – I don't even bother to ask them to write papers in my big classes anymore, because I can remember where I saw it. Then they're in deep trouble, so I just don't ask for them.

I think the most valuable asset that a teacher has is a good and accurate recall system, because you've got to remember when you need metaphors, when you need analogies, when you need examples, you've got to be able to reach back in your mind and find out what best exemplifies this thing. Every time I run into a situation I haven't encountered before, it goes into the file cabinet so I can call it forth when I need it. I think if you don't have that, you run the risk of not being able to teach.

I love those situations where I'm stumped – when I'm working with a student and they're doing everything I tell them and they're not making any progress – because then I've got to go back to the drawing board and try to figure another way to do it. Once in a while I get a student who will challenge me beyond belief. Ralph Bowen was one of those. I couldn't figure why – I would have to stay up nights before Ralph [would get here]. He was [studying] on the Canadian Arts Council grant. The week before he would come, I'd have to start trying to figure what the hell I was going to do with him when he got here. Then – because, when he asked me to take him as a student, I said no, because I didn't know him. [Then] I said, "Okay, I'll let you come down once and I'll try it." Then I can remember Pat LaBarbera saying to me at Louisville – he said, "How do you like that student I sent you, Ralph Bowen?" I said, "*You* did this to me." And he said, "Yeah, I got tired of trying to dream up what to do with him."

And now I got another student, a little violinist named Billy Contreras, who is the same way. I have to stay up trying to think. I welcome those challenges, because then you've got to find a way. Delfayo [Marsalis] presented some of those challenges. I would have to think of, what am I going to do with him? What would benefit him the most? He's already playing with Elvin [Jones]. Now what? What do I do? We would – I'd stay up at nights. We would try things. I would have – I would do things to force his mind. I would say, "I tell you what. Here's a tune that's 16 bars long, and here's a blues that's 12 measures long. I want you to play the blues changes across this whole tune and make it fit." The tune would come together every third chorus, I mean where [bar] one was again, because 12, 12, 12 is like 16, 16. I would work these kinds of things or whatever.

But you're forever trying to find different ways, which is why I had to keep teaching, because my own playing is dependent on my teaching, man, because I work on everything that I assign. And sometimes I forget. "Damn. You know, I have forgotten to do this. I haven't done this in a long time." Then I sit down there [in my studio] with that cello, boy, and I try to get myself ready, so that the next time I encounter the tune . . .

And I have some other things. For instance, my students – and when you hear people talk about it, it means they've gone to my how-to-practice book [*A Creative Approach to Practicing Jazz*]. I always tell everybody, the tune you work on the next day is the tune that you didn't know the night before. You ain't gonna never get me on a tune twice. You might find a tune I don't know, but when you call that tune the next time, I know that tune in all keys. You'll get me on another tune, probably, but I'm going to learn that tune, so that every time you're building a cumulative experience.

So basically I try to think along those lines when I'm dealing with students and in my own thinking and my practicing. They then ultimately become books. Everybody kept asking me, "how do you practice this?" "How do you practice this?" "How do you practice this?" Sometimes, even after they get the book – [James] Moody called me two weeks ago and said, "David, I really need some help." He said, "I got your book on how to practice," he said, "but I can't seem to get myself organized about how to get the most out of my practice." Then we sit down, and we go through the book. And I talk about, "Well, here's a page. Here's something have you ever tried?" For instance, when I'm playing, some days I don't feel like playing scales and all that. So what I'll do is take one tune, or take one key. And I say I'm going to play every tune that I practice today in that key. Or I'm going to play every tune that I play that day starting on A-flat. So it's throwing me in all kinds of keys, because if I start on A-flat and I'm playing *Misty*, that throws me into the key of D-flat [Baker sings "Ab-F-C" and continues the opening phrase of *Misty*], or whatever. But if I take *How High the Moon* and I start on A-flat, I'm in D-flat. If I start [*I'm*] *Getting Sentimental Over You*, I'm in the key of A major, because it's G# [Baker sings "G#-A-C#-E-G#"]. Or if I'm playing *Misty* – or *The Shadow of Your Smile*, and I have to make that adjustment.

Or sometimes I'll play all the tunes that have "spring" in the title or "fall" in the title. And now you've got a double whammy, because not only are you trying to think of where the tune starts, but then you're trying to think of tunes. How many tunes can you name? Can you name 20 tunes? I have a thing with the students that I take. They have to learn the 34 bebop tunes first, because that's the foundation. [Baker has a list of 34 tunes that exemplify the essential bebop vocabulary.] I say, "If anything happened to me tomorrow, or you had to leave and go somewhere else, if you knew those 34 bebop tunes, you'd be ready to play." It's that stack I gave you, [James].

James Zimmerman: Yes.

David: If I get somebody who can do that, man, I can teach him the rest pretty easily, because I've given him all the vocabulary. And I tell them it's always cumulative. For instance, one of the reasons why it's possible in the English language to count to a million – you don't need to know but 1 to 9 and zero. That's all you need to know. If you had to learn a different digit, it would go 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-pick-flank-snick-snort-crook-cricket-purpa-fribble-zinka-booma. Pretty soon you wouldn't remember anything. It's why they tell you, like when they give you telephone numbers and they give you social security numbers, that our capacity usually is limited to 3 plus 3 plus 4. If you look at your social security number, it's broken up a different way, and you look at your thing – it's getting more than that now because of what's happening with the internet and that stuff, but generally speaking, that's as much as you can remember unless it's in sequence. They've done the studies, the tests, to tell you that. As a teacher, I've got to know that when I make an assignment, or [am] telling somebody to remember something, or give them a way to remember tunes. If I'm telling somebody – they're learning a tune, and they're learning the changes – if I tell them that here are 25 tunes that the "A" section is the same changes as *Take the "A" Train*, man, I've done them a service. They ain't got to learn that shit over and over. And I'm too lazy to learn anything that I can only use in one circumstance. I don't even want to hear it. Don't give me a word that I can't use every – that's why I don't want to know about supercalifragilisticexpialodocious. I can't use it. Where am I going to use it? In the middle of a conversation? I'm trying to talk some shit to somebody, and I stick that in there? They think I'm nuts.

So when I learn words and when I teach, I have people learn things that they can use. If you can use them immediately and continue to use them – how many times when you get ready to take a solo have you found yourself – you hear somebody play something and you say, "I used to do that when I played"? So what I try to do is keep it in a rotation, so if I hear – give me a glance at it, it brings back all the things that go with it.

I wanted to make up some games that would be, like, syndicated games, where you had to have enough of a vocabulary that if a cat sang a lick from a tune, you had to tell him what was the lick that came from the phrase just before that, or if he sang a phrase, you had to sing the phrase that went before it in the tune. So you hear [Baker sings bars 3-4 of *Joy Spring*]. What's the next phrase? [Baker sings bars 3-4 again.] Or the phrase that comes before it? [Baker sings bars 1-4 of *Joy Spring*]. I want them to sing that. Or they go [Baker sings bars 5-6]. Or I sing the first 8 [bars].

We got hung up, man, doing this with David Lahm, I couldn't [remember] for the life of me – none of us [could] – and I said, "the last phrase of the bridge is 'and what's more she's got arms.' " We went around a whole evening trying to remember what tune it was. Do you know what it is? [Baker sings] "And what's more she's got arms."

Lida: *Love Is Just Around the Corner.*

David: *Love Is Just Around the Corner.* [Baker sings] "Venus de Milo was noted for her charms. But strictly between us, you're cuter than Venus, and what's more you've got arms." I would play this game with Patty Coker.

James Zimmerman: It's called what?

Lida: *Love Is Just Around the Corner.*

David: *Love Is Just Around the Corner.*

I would play the game with Patty Coker, and we would go at it. She would sing a phrase, and I'd have to sing the next line. Or Jerry [Coker] would sing a phrase. [Baker sings a phrase]. The next phrase is [the Bakers sing it together]. Miles [Davis]. Or you hear [Baker sings the beginning of Miles's solo from *So What*]. That's *So What.* And, again, you start to sharpen your perception, but it's always a constant battle. Like I said, [it's] like lifting weights. If you lift weights and you're lifting 150 pounds every day, all you do is stay basically on the same plateau. But if you start every week adding two more repetitions or adding two more pounds – somebody told the story, man, of a cat who ultimately was able to lift a bull by standing on the thing every day with a pulley under that calf when it was a calf. Every day he lifted the calf, every day. When it got to be a bull, he could still lift it, because he had never felt the change. You dig? Now you can get a hernia . . . [laughter]

But again, what I'm saying is I write books that are challenging books, and I never write a book that covers something that I feel like is already covered very, very well. I don't bother with that. That's why people get headaches trying to deal with that book like the advanced concepts. Moody told me the other day, he said, "You know, I live in that book," [*Techniques of Improvisation. Volume 4: Cycles*] and then Nathan [Davis] said, "Me, too." And I can hear it in their playing.

Lida: It's the contemporary techniques book.

David: It's part of the [*Techniques of Improvisation*] series.

Lida: One other thing that I wanted to cover with you was the evolution of what is now the International Association of Jazz Educators [International Association for Jazz Education]. You were a part of that almost from the beginning. Now [as president-elect] you're going to be incorporating your vision into what's going to be happening in the future with that organization. Could you speak a little bit about that?

David: First of all, it was a long time aborning. We were a part of MENC, which is the Music Educators National Conference. I can remember in Chicago, when we first began to talk about this with Leon Breeden, with Matt Betton, with Stan Kenton. That picture you saw in my book, that was [a photograph] from that conference. We began talking about the formation of such an organization. I didn't follow through about it, because it was just an idea. Matt Betton and the rest of them did. They started the organization [NAJE: National Association of Jazz Educators], and it started as a mom and pop organization. You thought little, and you did little. We were still an arm of the MENC. Then they broke away from the MENC. [They] still remained basically a mom and pop organization for years, because they thought small. I can remember one of the most dramatic breakthroughs was when they called in the National Jazz Service Organization – Eunice Lockhart-Moss, myself, James Jordan – and asked us to give them some thoughts about how to make this a national organization.

Lida: When was that?

David: It was when the NJSO was still functional. It's been – so it's got to have been more than – probably 15 years ago, maybe. I don't remember for sure. But I remember that's when they [NAJE] hired an executive director, in Bill McFarlin. That's when it ceased to become two people running it. Then I can remember we – it was when we were in Los Angeles. So it's one of the times when we were in L.A.

Lida: When the convention was in L.A. – the NAJE convention, IAJE by then, I think.

David: No, it was not.

Lida: It was still NAJE?

David: It was NAJE. It did not become IAJE for quite a while.

So basically it went through all the growing pains, and it is only within the last 10 years that they began to draw in international kind of things and also having the kind of sponsorship where people felt there were enough people and it was prestigious enough that they could send their record company to pay – because they don't pay anybody to play or be there. So all of a sudden you have to be able to attract – know that there is a track record before people are willing to send somebody from Columbia Records, and schools are starting to have booths. Now, you know, we're at, what? There are people from, what? How many people were at this last one? They said 8,000 people from 160 countries? I thought, boy, this is really great.

So it's been a long time moving from the mom and pop organization to the National Jazz Service Organization [Baker means the International Association for Jazz Education]. I wish I could think of all the people that are in the picture [photograph]. It

was Kenton. It was Matt Betton. It was the guy who is from upstate New York – nice looking guy with a round face. He's still an active member. He's a past president of the organization [Lee Bash]. Then they came up with by-laws and guidelines and things that allow them to have president-elect, president, past president, and all the other trappings that go with big time organizations.

So basically, all I can say is that it was one of the most valuable things that could have happened to the field, because now that's almost a must. I went though several years when I wasn't involved or didn't get involved, just like [Jerry] Coker never got involved, because I was upset, because it was largely neophonic bands that were patterned after Stan Kenton. There was not much attention being paid to small groups nor to anybody but the white players who'd come out of those kinds of bands. They were mostly teachers without any experiential knowledge. Coker and I were among the first, along with the guy who used to play with Horace Silver, a trumpet player from Michigan, and he never followed through – Smith – Louis Smith – among the first people who were practitioners. Then later on Bunky Green and cats like that who became bigwigs in the organization. I said only kind of jokingly at the keynote [speech I gave at the January 2000 conference] last time that it would become the intergalactic [Intergalactic Association for Jazz Education] – I don't know at what point we'll start getting aliens in there.

Lida: They are already there.

David: Some of them, I think, are hiding in there already.

Lida: You served as a vice president in that organization as well.

David: I was vice president in the organization for two years and chose not to let them put me forward for a presidency at the time, simply because there was turmoil. We had offered the job to David Robinson, Scott's brother, and then had to rescind the offer, because it hadn't gone through the proper channels. We were having great financial troubles at the time. I didn't feel like, without compromising my creative energies, I could take the job at that time, and I said, "No."

When I was approached before Christmas or whenever it was this time, I said, "Let me think about it." They gave me some guidelines, and I gave them guidelines about what I could and couldn't do, or would and wouldn't do. And I think now is a time that – as the oldest person to have been a president in the organization, I bring a lot of experiential knowledge and perhaps vision that they may not have in the younger cats that they've had. I think maybe I'm the – I'm parallel – I'm probably the same age as some other people, but I mean, to take the office I'm probably the oldest person, 'cause I will be 70 when I take the office and 72 when I exit the office.

Lida: You were notified [the] day before yesterday that you will be the . . .

David: I told them [Ken and James] that I'm already the new president. I will be the president-elect.

Lida: To wrap up, I know you've got to be very proud that you've got some upcoming generations of musicians in our family.

David: My daughter chose to go into music, but she chose to go into music at the last minute. When she was getting ready to graduate from high school, she made the decision the last year, because she said she thought I wouldn't be happy with her if she didn't do all the same things that I did. I convinced her that was not the case at all. So she took up violin. But when she graduated from college – she was the first string player to graduate from the jazz program [at Indiana University] – when she graduated from college, [and] she even was my teaching assistant while she was a senior, she went to work for J. C. Penney as a buyer – first of all, a sales person, and then as a buyer – and rose very quickly to big money, because she's got a real knack for it. She was smart and was doing very, very well in that thing. There was no music at all. She wasn't doing any music at all. She was simply doing this. And I thought it [was] kind of ironic, because when they had the bi[centennial] – the centennial, or whatever the sesqui[centennial] – whatever it was . . .

Lida: Bicentennial of the U.S. in 1976.

David: I was one of the people that they [the J. C. Penney Company] asked to write music for that. I was the jazz person. I wrote a big piece which was for – Benny Goodman played it. They had all music represented, and they gave all these [away] – gave these [scores and parts for the commissioned compositions] away to all the schools. And then I thought, boy, now here she is, working for J. C. Penney . . .

Lida: Because [the J. C.] Penney [Company] was one of the main underwriters of that whole commissioning [program].

David: No, it wasn't the main underwriter. It was the only underwriter.

Lida: It was the only underwriter?

David: Yeah. It was J. C. Penney's project. April then came – was working as a buyer and moved to Chicago – to New Palatine [Palatine, Illinois]. Then she got pregnant. She thought she would still put the baby in a . . .

Lida: Daycare.

David: . . . in daycare. I remember getting a call one evening. She said, “Daddy, I want to come home.” I tried to hide my joy, not very well probably. She decided – I said, “If you want to move back, we’ll come up and get you.” So she moved back. For a while it was – I’m not sure – she still was working. She started working down here. Then she decided she was going to take some students, because she had come up with some methods of her own. First thing I knew, she had about 25 vocal students. Then they offered her a job teaching strings in the school system. So now what she does is, she’s got a full studio of vocalists – mostly my college students, vocal students, are her students – and then very young violinists, up to probably [age] 14 or 15. So that’s been very satisfying, because she’s a very serious teacher. She uses my books probably more efficiently than I do, simply because I refer to them, but I wrote them, so I don’t feel like I have to really deal with them in the same way she does. But when somebody comes to her – for instance, Amy Fanning, who’s one of my best students. She is going to be working on a doctorate. She’s got her master’s in jazz studies. But she’s a singer. So she studied with April – her and Dimitri, one of my students from Greece.

She [April] has a six- or seven-point plan. She has them learn, say, *Hot House.* When they learn *Hot House,* then they have to learn to sing the roots of the tune without – this is all without piano. Then they have to be able to sing patterns – simple patterns – on the tune. So the tune is [Baker sings] “What is this thing called love?" The changes go [Baker sings] “G minor, C seventh, F minor, B-flat seventh, D minor, G seventh, C" and they’ve got to be able to sing [the roots and note names for each of these chords] [Baker sings] "G, C, F, B-flat, D, G, C." Then next they go [Baker sings a simple pattern of roots and seconds on each of these chords]. Then they go [Baker sings through patterns made up of chord outlines to the seventh, connecting with descending phrases derived from the bebop scale]. She has them go [through] a six-point step before she lets them sing with the piano. Then they sing with the piano, but now they’re singing changes. They know the tune. They can sing on the changes. And she makes them learn them in all keys, because your voice feels different in different keys.

And if it’s – she teaches the traditional ballads and stuff, too – style – but it’s been a joy for me, because I learn from her. I learn – 'cause I tend to let people slide. If they’re making the effort, I say, shit, I want to go on to the next thing. [Jerry] Coker was somebody who was a fiend for having everything be perfect before they could move [on]. I tend to be lax about that. I let people move on to the next thing, figuring I can clean it up at some other point.

The same thing with her violin players. She uses my – the book that’s called – the one you have – the one that she gave you. The one that's for the violin. It’s called *Explorations.* Something and explorations. [*Jazz Treble Clef Expressions and Explorations*] She uses that now to practice, and I see results.

Now my granddaughter [Kirsten] – and that's been really a joy – we bought her a violin about like that [Baker gestures to show the size of the tiny violin] when she was three, because she wanted one for her birthday, and she's now making it up through the ranks on the violin. She went through a thing this last – she fell in love [with the piano]. We gave her a piano for Christmas, an electric piano. She wants to play *Für Elise* all day long on that one.

Lida: And *Heart and Soul.*

David: And boogie woogie and *Heart and Soul.* So she told her mother, "I *hate* the violin. I'm not going to play violin. I want to play piano." Her mother said, "No. If you get the violin together and keep that together, then I'll give you piano lessons." [Kirsten said,] "I *hate* you. I don't want to do that." So I bribed her. I said, "Look. You're going to be switching to the next size violin pretty soon. Every time you have a good lesson, I'm going to give you 'X' amount of dollars." Now she's really hooked again on the violin, because she's going up to the next size violin.

But it's really nice to see the lineage keep going, because – and fortunately, they're – my nephews. I started up all them on [instruments], and they were really bright. Kim could have learned flute in two weeks, if he'd really wanted to. He's the one who lives in Australia now. David played the trombone. Finally I just let that alone, because it was too much work.

But with April, she came voluntarily to it. And Kirsten, she just said, "I want to play." When she was three years old, on December 11th, her birthday, she got her first violin, and still now plays in little recitals and stuff. So that's been kind of a reward for me.

April sings very well. She doesn't do that, primarily 'cause she's a violinist. But she really can sing. I heard her do – what was it? It wasn't [*My*] *Funny Valentine* that she did down there, was it?

Lida: Yeah, it was.

David: And she kicked ass.

And, of course, she has her singers imitate. She says, "When you can imitate enough people, then you can find your own self in there somewhere." So she has them sing until they sound just like Ella [Fitzgerald], or they sound just like Billie Holiday], or they sound just like Tony Bennett. That may be one month. Then the next month they have to sound like somebody else. By the time they've done that through six or seven singers, all of a sudden they find out that they've got their own shit. And you can tell that they borrowed stuff.

So basically, at a time when I'm raising other people's children daily, it is really nice to see my own child and grandchild doing what they do, 'cause if – I say it caustically to the students when they don't do what they're supposed to do, I say, "Look. I ain't got no time to raise nobody else's children. Now you either do the stuff or you don't do it." And then I make them do it anyway, so . . . [laughter]

Lida: How would you like to be remembered? What do you see as your . . .

David: I don't like that question. If you ask me what I see as my legacy, that's one thing.

Lida: Well, what do you think have been your major contributions to the field?

David: Everything we talked about. Education – certainly I think I'm one of the pioneers there. I think probably, if my music continues to get played – the classical music – I think they will stop the nonsense of believing that people such as Hale [Smith], and I, and Olly [Wilson], and the cats, that we have no place in classical music. I think that's important, that we persevere and let people know that environment and training are as important as the DNA. That would be something.

And I'd like to think that maybe what my grandmother used to say when we were with people, that if you can't get along with me, you can't get along with anybody. That would be enough, if I had just that, that people know. Like at my office, there's 20 people outside the door all the time – people I don't want to be bothered with, but people that I'll be bothered with, because they need to have somebody to talk to. It means I don't have time for myself sometimes, but I think you have to be willing to – I was given a gift, and I know that. And I take very seriously the responsibility of utilizing that gift to its fullest. Sometimes I have to listen to you go through your thing about, "I just can't keep up. I can't do this. I can't listen to music all day long." [Baker turns to Ken and James] She [Lida] told me, when she wanted a bigger house, "We're going to have to soundproof that room down there, because I can't handle it, you getting up at 5 in the morning and playing." I knew what the ploy was, so we were cool. We didn't get the bigger house, but we did the house over here, so that was cool.

Lida: That's all I wanted, just some peace and quiet.

David: Well, you didn't get the peace and quiet.

Lida: No.

David: And I'm sorry about that, but I did get that funny little cello you all [Ken and James] put together, that don't make no noise. [laughter]

No, I'd rather be remembered as a nice human being than all the other stuff. The other stuff will come if anybody's interested in it. But just somebody that people liked and somebody who liked people. And I really do like people. I can't imagine being mad at anybody for any length of time. I'm already over the [Indiana] Pacers [basketball team]. I can get along with them now. I like Reggie [Miller] again. Mark Jackson's okay. Fact is, I've got to tell you this – and it can be on here [on the tape] if you want it – I got a little upset in reading the big article on Larry Bird today, because Larry Bird said something that really bothered me. It's out of context, when you start talking about, forgetting that it's a game. Larry said today, he cannot stand the nonsense of people being friends with their adversaries when they play the game. He says he doesn't like them to shake their hand after the game, and he doesn't want them hugging and stuff. He said Magic [Johnson] and Isaiah [Thomas] started all this nonsense. He said he wants them to *hate* the people that they're playing. He said he did it when he played. He said that business of them hugging each other at the end of the – after the series is over – he said – and the guy who wrote the article said Jack Nicholson didn't give him any choice. He reached out there and grabbed him.

But I for one cannot imagine that you *ever* forget that that's a game, or that you ever forget that music is not everybody's entire life. When somebody tells me, they don't want out there – with the exception of Kirsten – then I think that they should do something else, and I think they should not lose the respect of other people because they're – I don't think you should force people to do things. I think you can entice them, bribe them, do whatever you are if it looks like it might be in their best interest. But I don't ever forget that the most important things are family, health, and those things that we have no control over, except in a certain measure. We can eat right. We can do that right. But I ain't got time to worry about shit that I can't fix. I get excited about the game and raise hell, but when the game's over, if they had lost . . .

Lida: If the Lakers had lost.

David: Yeah. I would have found a dog or something and kicked the shit out of him for a minute [laughter]. I'm kidding. Folks, that was a joke [laughter].

I think we've got some days of good stuff. You did nice questions.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)
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