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

**JOE SEGAL**  
**NEA Jazz Master (2015)**

**Interviewee:** Joe Segal (April 24, 1926 - )  
**Interviewer:** Ken Kimery  
**Date:** October 6, 2014  
**Repository:** Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution  
**Description:** Transcript, 45 pp.

**Ken Kimery:** My name is Ken Kimery. I am the program producer of the Smithsonian's Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and Jazz Oral History Program. I'm here in wonderful Chicago at the Jazz Showcase on October 6, 2014 with NEA Jazz Master, proprietor of the Jazz Showcase, and all around revered talent I would say, because you are into talent. You have to identify talent that comes in this venue here at the Jazz Showcase. So if we can start in the beginning here, because this is really important in setting the stage there. If you can give me your full birth name, and birth date and birth year.

**Joe Segal:** My name is Joseph Philip Segal. S-E-G-A-L. Not Seagal. Segal. I detest Seagal. And April 24, 1926, in Philadelphia. I don't recall the hospital. But I'm told I had a female mohel, if you know what that is.

**Kimery:** A female mohel.

**Segal:** A mohel is the one that circumcises the young babies.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And I don't remember that wonderful experience, cause I was an infant. I was raised mostly by my mother, cause my father sort of disappeared when I was about a year old. He didn't disappear; he was put away from our household by my mother, cause she found him canoodling with someone else.

**Kimery:** Can we get your mother's name, full name?

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**Segal:** Oh her name was Henrietta.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Henrietta Segal.

**Kimery:** And your father?

**Segal:** Irwin Al Segal.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And I never saw much of him, except now and then, when my mother thought he should tell me about the facts of life, which when he did I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. He says "always wear a... when you do it to a lady." I said, "do what to a lady?" [Laughs]. So... and then he started to take me every now and then to the Earl Theater, which was the main theater down there. It's like our Chicago Theater used to be. To see all the big bands. That's where I fell in love with the big bands. There was nothing as exciting as after the movie, the screen would rise and you'd see the silhouette of the band behind the curtain, and you'd hear them tuning up, and then "Ladies and gentlemen, Benny Goodman!" Or Artie Shaw. Or whomever it was. The curtain would open and then they'd hit, and that got me in love with the big bands. Plus, on the radio they always had... every studio had a resident big band. KYW, which was NBC had Jan Savitt and the Top Hatters, and WCAU had a wonderful arranger named Johnny Warrington and his Band. So I used to hear them all the time. Plus, on Saturday afternoon they would bring in a broadcast from WOR in New York where Milton Cross, the esteemed authority on opera would explain the scenarios of the operas. I'd listen to that for a couple hours and then they'd switch to Town Hall in New York, where Eddy Condon would hold fort with all his guys. Bobby Hackett, Jack Teagarden, Sidney Bechet, Pee Wee Russell, all that.

**Kimery:** Can you give me a sense of how old you were at that time, when you were first introduced to the Earl Theater?

**Segal:** Probably twelve.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Maybe thirteen. And at night I used to sneak into the front room after my mother was asleep and on very low volume put my ear to the radio and listen to the remotes. The remotes would come from New Orleans, WWL, Claude Thornhill and his Orchestra, or from the Newark-Pompton Turnpike. What was it, the... I forget the name of the club, but they used to have all the bands come in. You'd get a half hour of Basie or Ellington or Glenn Miller or whomever it was. Bob Crosby, Les Brown, all the bands. And I loved to see them on the stage shows. I was always interested in the little muted trumpet

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backgrounds, all the juggling acts and all the other stuff they had, rather than the acts themselves. So when I was about fifteen, a buddy of mine used to go on our own every Saturday, get the first show, see the movie once, put our coats on our seats and then go up to the balcony for the second showing of the movie, take a nap, and come back down when the band came on again. And that went on for a while. One afternoon I remember Benny Goodman was in and he had had Cootie Williams with him. And Cootie was not on the band. This was when he introduced Peggy Lee and all that. So somehow we asked one of the members, "Where's Cootie Williams?" They said "oh he left, he's starting his own band, and he'll be in town at the Pearl Theater," which was the black neighborhood theater, "in a couple of weeks with his own band." So I told my mother I was going over there and she hollers, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen," and it didn't. And that's where I first heard bebop inadvertently; I didn't know what it was. But it was Bud Powell, who was on piano with the Cootie Williams Band. And I said, "Well what is this? It's different than the rest of the band." I didn't know what it was at the time. But of course later on I realized what a great influence it was, it changed the way of playing jazz piano.

**Kimery:** Kind of going back here, do you have any siblings?

**Segal:** No.

**Kimery:** No siblings?

**Segal:** I'm an only.

**Kimery:** And did you early on have any music lessons there, or, besides your father taking you and exposing you to these wonderful bands...

**Segal:** Well I wanted to play drums, and I'd still like to play drums, but I don't have much talent for it. But my mother said no because we lived like in a basement apartment. She was afraid it would break our lease and make noise. So I settled on the trombone because Tommy Dorsey was the big thing. So I took a year of that with a great trombonist from the Jan Savitt band, and took a year, and I couldn't remember where anything went with the trombone, so that was that. I never could play it. But I had an old King that I hauled around with me when I went with the army until somebody stole it, and that was fine with me.

**Kimery:** So what neighborhood did you live in in Philly?

**Segal:** I lived in what they called Logan. It's 4800 North. When I was about ten I started traveling the city myself on the subway and so forth. Because being an only child and my mother working all day I had to get around by myself. So that was good.

**Kimery:** Did you... now early on, were you aware of some of the local talent [clears throat] that was in Philly. I know there's certain musicians a little bit older than you like

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Joe Wilder or Buddy DeFranco, but since Philly has produced a wealth of fantastic musicians...

**Segal:** Absolutely. No the first thing I came in contact with there was a radio show on every Sunday on radio called the Horn and Hardart - that was a restaurant chain - Kiddies Hour. And the host was a man named Stan Lee Broza, whose son was Elliot Lawrence. And Elliot had an all-star kid band, which included Red Rodney who was still known as Robert Chudnick, his original name, and then later on he had Al Cone and Tiny Conn and all that. So I used to hear that, and then there was Henry "Hot Lips" Levine, and his, what was it, Basin Street or something? He used to be on, and I'd listen to that. I listened to Kay Kyser's College of Musical Knowledge, and I knew all the answers to that. And everybody thought I should go on the program and blah blah blah. And eventually I did win a 78 album, I like Woody Herman because... It was on the Wild Root album he did, and I knew all the guys: Bill Harris, and all that. I knew who they were, I didn't know them personally. But later on I did meet some of them like Conte Candoli and so forth... and Jimmy Rainey, Lou Levy, of course Lou was from here.

**Kimery:** Yeah

**Segal:** But I hadn't been here yet.

**Kimery:** So I noticed also, I mean there's a little bit of research I've done here, a lot of research I've done here... Behind the Earl Theater was the Downbeat Club.

**Segal:** Right, right. Have you been reading my notes from my book?

**Kimery:** Well, you know I've been... the combination of that and a lot of other resources there, you know.

**Segal:** [Laughs]

**Kimery:** And so that to me is a very... it kind of reminded me a little bit of the Howard Theater. On the off nights of course you also... most Monday nights you'd have the Lincoln Colonnades and all those bands would go over there and play for dances. Well, this wasn't dances, but seems like they also had somewhat of a symbiotic relationship where a lot of these bands or musicians would play there.

**Segal:** Yeah, they'd come there. I happened to meet Serge Chaloff...

**Kimery:** Ah.

**Segal:** ... who was a complete nut. And he took me up there, I was underage but he took me up there. They had Specs Wright on drums, Jimmy Golden, pianist, and Jimmy Oliver, tenor saxophonist. Of course Jimmy Heath was up there a lot, and all kinds of great musicians. Red Rodney, so I met a lot of those people when I was a kid. But I

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actually, even though I saw Jimmy Heath, I didn't meet him until Chicago.

**Kimery:** Oh.

**Segal:** But let's not jump ahead yet on that.

**Kimery:** So in the Downbeat Club were you able to gain access to the club or?

**Segal:** Well only if one of the musicians took me up, and sat me in a corner without a drink.

**Kimery:** So it definitely wasn't... a lot of the clubs of course weren't kid friendly.

**Segal:** No, I couldn't make the other clubs.

**Kimery:** Yeah, they were more kind friendly there.

**Segal:** The other place I went to though to hear the bands was Steel Pier in Atlantic City. That's where they had a lot of the what I call maturing bands where people like Red and so forth would mature. Bernie Glow, the trumpeter... It's called Alex Bartha and his band, house band. They had two bandstands there. And once on the second bandstand was Duke Ellington's famous band of the forties, and that's where I first heard the tune Chelsea Bridge and I fell in love with that tune. I'm sitting there at night with the stars out and the waves lapping at the pier, and here comes Chelsea Bridge. And I being a young, impressionable kid I fell in love with it.

**Kimery:** So you're talking about Jimmy Blanton and Ben Webster and Sonny Greer and...

**Segal:** I think Jimmy Blanton was gone. I wasn't that young. Ben might have been in it, but Johnny Hodges of course, and I loved Lawrence Brown, the trombonist. Ray Nance of course, who was from Chicago, and all the wonderful musicians. It was just when whenever Hodges played everybody just fell out, you know. How romantic.

**Kimery:** So definitely there was Strayhorn's input and touch was definitely part of the Ellington...

**Segal:** Oh sure. Absolutely. In fact I think next year there's gonna be a big Strayhorn promotion here since he's hitting his 100th anniversary, his 100th birthday or something big planned.

**Kimery:** Yeah, yeah. I know that we are planning something too; cause of his centennial year is a real important one there. So Steel Pier, just kind of one of those historical facts that kind of jumped out here. Was it the same Steel Pier - this is kind of a novelty question there - where there's this diving horse that dived off a diving board?

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**Segal:** Absolutely.

**Kimery:** Ok. [Laughs]

**Segal:** And a guy that they shot out of a cannon across the water into a net.

**Kimery:** Yeah!

**Segal:** And they had a couple of children's theaters and they had two first-run movies. You could get in for, I don't know what it was, fifty cents? A buck? Or whatever it was.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And they had a sailboat on the side, Captain somebody's... boat you could hire and go fishing in the Atlantic, things like that.

**Kimery:** How old were you, once again? How old do you think?

**Segal:** Twelve, thirteen?

**Kimery:** That's as I can see a very impressionable and critical time of your life, cause there's...

**Segal:** Oh yeah, absolutely. And it was all music. I loved all the music. I loved all kind of music because there wasn't all that crap that they have going on now that they call music.

**Kimery:** It's a...

**Segal:** Do I need to enumerate?

**Kimery:** [Laughs] Well you know...

**Segal:** I can hear the same thing in the traffic jam outside, you know. But anyhow.

**Kimery:** Now I also read that you were exposed to classical music.

**Segal:** Yeah, through the WOR from the Metropolitan Opera every Saturday afternoon. And then I would also go to... They had a place in Philly called the Robin Hood Dell, which was an open-air stage where Eugene Ormandy would lead the Philadelphia Orchestra, and they'd do operas like Aida. I remember a friend of mine used to sneak in through a cemetery, go under the barbed wire and sit up on the hill and watch it.

**Kimery:** Wow.

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**Segal:** And they did Aida and they had the elephant on the stage, and the elephant got so excited that he crapped on the stage. And they had a guy, you know, a park guy with his park uniform on, completely out of context with the opera, with his broom and his scoop. I said, “aww, they killed the whole thing.”

**Kimery:** Funny!

**Segal:** But the orchestra was tops. I loved it.

**Kimery:** So to this day do you still fancy opera? Do you?

**Segal:** Yes I listen to the classical station here in town, WFMT.

**Kimery:** So I know that with the Philadelphia Orchestra, of course Arthur Toscanini was a conductor for a period of time, and very well renowned.

**Segal:** That was after I left I think.

**Kimery:** Ok. So...

**Segal:** Eugene Ormandy was the big one when I was there.

**Kimery:** And he was there for forty-four years?

**Segal:** I think so. I think he was like the original conductor.

**Kimery:** Yeah. Quite a...

**Segal:** He was pretty cool.

**Kimery:** Oh he was!

**Segal:** Yes, yes. He knew what he was doing!

**Kimery:** Did he ever show any sides of having affinity for music outside of opera? Jazz? Did they have any resonance with him? Or was there?

**Segal:** I don't think so, not like they do now.

**Kimery:** Yeah, I was kind of wondering.

**Segal:** There used to be a big schism.

**Kimery:** There still is a little bit of a tension point there.

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**Segal:** When I first started at Roosevelt there was a schism from the music school. The dean came down one day when we were having our sessions and he said, “They shouldn’t permit that jungle music in this school.”

**Kimery:** Ooooo....

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** In Roosevelt?

**Segal:** Yeah. He was a stone Italian opera guy, you know. Staunch, nothing else.

**Kimery:** Well that’s interesting.

**Segal:** But we beat him out.

**Kimery:** [Laughs] So I didn’t ask this: What did your mother do for a livelihood?

**Segal:** Oh she worked wherever she could. She was a switchboard operator; you know what they used to have for telephones before they had all these gimmicks. She worked for the Navy department for many, many years. I don’t know what she was doing, but that was during the war when I was away. I was drafted in 1944, an eighteen year old, and I went into the Army Air Corps.

**Kimery:** Which is now known as?

**Segal:** I don’t know what it’s known as.

**Kimery:** Well, Air Force!

**Segal:** Air Force.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Ok. Whatever it’s known as.

**Kimery:** Well yeah.

**Segal:** I was non-flying because I had had asthma; I also had a punctured ear drum. I don’t know why they took me.

**Kimery:** Huh.

**Segal:** And I was six foot one and only weighed 145 pounds, but they took me anyhow. They said “we’ll put some weight on you.” They put about ten pounds on. But anyhow it

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was good that they took me because I probably would have never ended up in Chicago otherwise. Because the last base I was stationed at was in Champagne, Illinois. And I would hitchhike to the end of the I.C., [Editor's note: Illinois Central Railroad] catch a train right up to the loop, at Michigan and Randolph, and go right down Randolph Street. From Wabash to Wells, it was like 52nd Street in New York. There were clubs along both sides of the streets, and all kinds of jazz, and I was in hog heaven.

**Kimery:** Let's go back just a little bit here. So before being drafted, the informative education. If you could just talk a little bit about the community you were in. Was it a desegregated school, was it segregated? Just kind of paint a picture.

**Segal:** No it was a Jewish neighborhood, that's all.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Need I say more?

**Kimery:** No, that sums it up there. Was there any particular areas of study that you had great affinity for?

**Segal:** They wanted me to go to a trade school, which was ok. So I went to Dobbins Vocational, which happened to be across the street from Connie Mack Stadium, Shibe Park, the home of the Philadelphia Athletics.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And that's where I got to love baseball. Connie Mack used to come over to our auditorium the beginning of each season, and bring three or four of his so called stars, and then invite the whole school over for a game. So one I remember in particular we played one of the powerhouse Yankees, and they just beat the pants off us. Every one of them hit at least two home runs. But I love baseball. And then coming back up Lehigh Avenue - which was where it was - to Broad Street -which was the main north-south street of Philly - the Phillies ballpark was there. And it was an old wooden fence, what they call the knothole gang type, where you could look through the knothole and see the game. On the corner was a little triangular club, a night club, and it was warm, the door was open, and on the sign on top it said "Now appearing: Sidney Bechet." And I said, "What?" And I looked in; it was dark in there. Suddenly a gruff voice said, "Hey kid, can I help you?" I said, "yes, is Mr. Bechet really here?" He says, "Yeah, you wanna see him? He's in the back." And I was so frustrated I said, "no, no, no. Thank you," and I went on my way like a fool. I could have met Sidney Bechet who was the first album I ever had, the first 78 record I ever had.

**Kimery:** Could you tell me what that album was? No?

**Segal:** It was a 78. It was something called "Coal Black Shine" and "I Ain't Gonna Give

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Nobody None Of My Jelly Roll.”

**Kimery:** Did you get a chance to hear Sidney Bechet perform?

**Segal:** Not in person, no. Never. I think I heard him on some of the Eddie Condon broadcasts, but I never saw him in person.

**Kimery:** Yeah, cause he was an ex-pat, in Paris for many, many years.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** You know.

**Segal:** Yeah he was fantastic.

**Kimery:** So it’s a rarity to hear him actually in performance back here in the states there.

**Segal:** No I never did. I heard Bob Wilbur who was his disciple. He was pretty good, but... in fact I think he’s still going.

**Kimery:** I think so.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** Yeah, Sidney Bechet. Hmm.

**Segal:** And my other hero was Henry “Red” Allen and J.C. Higginbotham.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And when I first came to Randolph Street, there was a club called the Downbeat Room. Which unlike the one in Philly which was upstairs, this was downstairs.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Next to the Oriental Theater. Joe Sherman’s Downbeat Room, and there was Henry “Red” Allen, J.C. Higginbotham, with an excellent alto man called Don Stovall, and a drummer Alvin Burrows, and a pianist named General Morgan, whose daughter, Gloria Morgan, became a singer at one of our sessions, and she was excellent too.

**Kimery:** Were these pretty much territory musicians?

**Segal:** No I don’t think so. I think Burrows was from here, I’m not sure, because he played with Earl Hines for a while.

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**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And then later on when I came back on another weekend pass, Red Allen was gone and Red Saunders was there with Sonny Cohn, the great trumpeter, who would later play lead for the Basie band. I became friends with them and met all those people. And he had a tenor man named Leon Washington.

**Kimery:** So you were drafted in 1944 to the Army Air Corp, and I assume boot camp was quite an experience, cause we're talking about Biloxi, Mississippi?

**Segal:** No no. The first one was in Texas, in the panhandle near all the Oklahoma oil fields. And the only water we could drink was mineral water, which had to be ice cold. Otherwise you couldn't drink it, it was filled with oil. So we ended up putting booze in our canteens when we went on our marches. And we had a band made up of ex-Anti-Aircraft guys and Air Corps guys, and they were all old Dixieland players. So we'd march out, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump. After a few swigs, they'd come back swingin' Dixieland style. So that's where I first got the feel for that, and nobody felt any pain.

**Kimery:** [Laughs] Oh boy. Do you remember any of the names of your compatriots there?

**Segal:** Not there, no. But I remember one base, where at - I think it might have been Biloxi - later on Jack Teagarden came through with a big band, cause a lot of bands went touring all the camps. And he had his whole family there, Cubby on drums and Charlie Teagarden, Trumpet, and sister Norma on piano. And I remember he had a trumpet player named Niles Davis, not Miles, Niles Davis, and I thought that was odd later when I heard about Miles, cause I hadn't heard about him then. And he was a nice man, I met him. Very pleasant, and played the hell out of the trombone. I loved his disciple, Lou McGarity - he was featured with Benny Goodman. When I got to Champagne I met a couple of people that were in the band: Billy Byers, the great trombonist and arranger, and Harry Biss, pianist, who played with Georgie Olden and Artie Shaw, and probably a lot of others. Every post had bands.

**Kimery:** What was your - in the service - what was your... what did they have you do?

**Segal:** My MOS?

**Kimery:** Your MOS, thank you very much.

**Segal:** What do they call it when you goof off? I forget the term, anyhow. I spent one year, eleven months, and what was it, twelve days or something trying to get out as soon as I got in. Gold brick or something. I was supposed to learn radio and aircraft radio repair, and I was foolish enough to fluff it off because I wasn't interested. I probably could've been into electronics pretty heavily today. But I wasn't. I even tried changing my MOS from Clerk Typist to Entertainment. I played drums and sang, and it must have

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been terrible, because I lasted for one performance and they changed it back again. Yeah, it's fun. But the best part was coming into Chicago.

**Kimery:** Did you see any of the - I mean there was a lot of jazz musicians that of course were drafted in the service. Did you run across any of those musicians of that time? I know Joe, once again Joe Wilder's one of those individuals that come to mind, because the Philly connection, but of course he ended up enrolling or volunteering for the Marines. But there are a lot of... Hal McIntyre, a lot of musicians...

**Segal:** I didn't meet any famous ones.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** I guess the most famous one was Billy Byers.

**Kimery:** Billy Byers, ok. And just back to Trombone, since you're talking a period of time, Jack Teagarden. Did you in those early days run into or have an encounter with Herbie Green?

**Segal:** No, he was much later.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** He was much later. Yeah. He's fantastic, but I loved all of the... Bobby Bern was right on Tommy Dorsey's behind, and like I said I loved Lou McGarity. I liked Juan Tizol, and Tricky Sam Nanton from the Ellington bands. Bill Harris of course from Woody Herman, he was fantastic. He could out-blow a whole brass section. And I remember later on when I was here in Chicago on Rough Street I had Supersax come in, and Conte Condoli was supposed to be with 'em and he wasn't. Instead they got Carl Fantana, and he outblew the whole sax section. He said "oh, my chops are down, I can't make it." But he was crazy.

**Kimery:** [Laughs] Oh my god. So Champagne-Urbana.

**Segal:** Mhmm.

**Kimery:** Which we know of course is a university town. It's a primary industry for Champagne, and they were historically known for a lot of things. So you found weekend passes to be able to venture up to Chicago?

**Segal:** Yeah they were just holding me until they could discharge me. They had nothing for me to do.

**Kimery:** And in period of time, about how long was that? Not necessarily date to date, but?

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**Segal:** There were three of us that would run a mimeograph machine to run off special orders, it didn't take but one. But every other week two of us took a pass and went wherever we wanted. So I came into Chicago about every other week.

**Kimery:** And what was the year, the first time in Chicago? That was experience, was exposure.

**Segal:** Oh yeah, when I came down Randolph Street and I saw all these... There was the Brass Rail over on Dearborn. In fact the first jazz I heard wasn't on Randolph; it was on State Street, at a place called Elmer's. It's where I heard Jimmy Rainey. He had just come up from Louisville, he was just seventeen I think, and he was just playing fantastic. Later on when I heard Bird, I had never heard Bird until then; I thought he was playing Jimmy's tunes. I had it bass-ackwards.

**Kimery:** Oooh.

**Segal:** Yeah, Jimmy had been playing Bird's tunes of course, and I didn't know. I remember he used to spend hours with his amp trying to get the sound out that all the guitars put in the amps now. All the fuzzes and buzzes and crap that they put in there. And he had a pure tone. There were two other guitarists here who were pretty good, named Jimmy Gourley, and one that a lot of people never heard of, he was better than Rainey, Ronny Singer... who unfortunately fell under the spell of the illness a lot of jazzmen went through. He died in New York City, and there isn't much recorded of his. Ronny Singer was really a great guitarist.

**Kimery:** So it seems like your target was Chicago after you were finally released from your service to your country.

**Segal:** I had a friend of mine I met there, when I met Jimmy Rainey. He said, "come to Chicago, and I'll get you a job taking tickets at the Aragon." It ended up that I got this guy a job hanging coats in the basement of the Sherman Hotel by the... what do you call that room... the Panther Room, where all the big bands played. And I was a runner for the girl photographer who used to take pictures of the conventioners. I'd run the film down, they'd develop it, and I'd run it back up there and she'd sell it to the conventioners.

**Kimery:** I'll be darned.

**Segal:** Meanwhile I heard all the bands. Anyhow I also, of course they gave us the GI Bill, and I registered at Roosevelt, because that's where most of the Afro-American, or I guess it was still black then, and Jewish people would go because they had a non-quota system. They were the only ones of a public college that had a non-quota system. I registered there and started taking courses.

**Kimery:** It's noted... Founded in 1945, so you started?

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**Segal:** Around the end of '46 or '47. The beginning of '47.

**Kimery:** And a co-ed private university. At least that's what I was able to glean from some of the information. That seemed to be focusing on... well here's at least as they're listed today: Arts and Science, Businesses, the colleges. Education, performing arts, professional studies, pharmacy. Was there a particular point of interest there that you saw when they...

**Segal:** No, I just wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill and have some reason to stay there. Because my mother - while I was gone - had re-married and I didn't feel there was room for me, you know, at home, that she wanted her own life. Which was fine with me. They placed me - at first I was staying with an uncle, one of my father's brothers over - I slept on their couch over on the West Side at Madison and Kensy. And one day they called me and said would I like to, could I stay with a black family out south? Would it be ok? I said fine, and it was at 48th and Champlain. Richard Davis lived down the street. About three blocks west of that was the Savoy Ballroom and the Regal Theater. So I was in hog heaven. So I used to take a lot of courses in school, but I flunked pretty quickly out of the early morning ones. It's because I'd be out 'til 4 AM. And there was a Congo Hotel with a place in the basement called The Hole, and it was so dark you really couldn't see your hand in front of your face. And Gene Ammons and Tom Archer would play there and I'd go there six nights out of seven. The seventh night I didn't go and somebody would come in the next day and say "were you there last night? Fats Novarro came in and Leo Parker." And well I said, "Well, shit."

**Kimery:** Do you remember the names of the family that you stayed with?

**Segal:** Oh yes, the London family. Yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Her son Bill - She had a big brownstone with I think three or four floors and she leased one floor out for... she took students in. And I shared a room with a couple of students. And she had a son, Bill, who became a very well-known physician later on. And he... he annoyed the hell out of me because I still had the trombone, and he could pick it up and play the damn thing, and I couldn't get a note out of it. Finally somebody stole it and it was good.

**Kimery:** So would you say that - of course we're talking about, you know, Chicago being a benefit of the Great Migration there, so... what do you call it... Desegregation or tolerance or... there was more openness and understanding of base humanity, and not necessarily this whole notion of race divide. Is that something that was more common?

**Segal:** I don't know about that, because most of the black population was on the south side or the west side.

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**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** The north was predominately white, and in fact the jazz center was at 63rd and Cottage, and there'd be fifteen, twenty clubs within a radius of five or six blocks. You could hear all kind of jazz there. I don't know, I guess individuals moved up as their economics would permit them to. I got in a friend of mine from Roosevelt, worked with the CHA, the Chicago Housing Authority, and he got me into the Cabrini project.

**Kimery:** I'm not familiar with that.

**Segal:** The CHA, yes it was row houses, and it was fine and it was mixed. White and black. And my wife was black. I married her, and we had five kids, including my youngest, Wayne, who now actually is owner of the Jazz Showcase, and he's the one who built this room in fact. Nothing bad happened there until they built the high-rises, and then the gangs came in. That's when shit hit the fan.

**Kimery:** I just think - going back once again - that Roosevelt University, and of course... was it Edward Sparling.... The curriculum as it was stated was based upon social justice, and so it seems to me there was a - he was a real pioneer of challenging the time.

**Segal:** Yeah well there was all kinds of clubs there. I think CORE originated there, the Committee of Racial Equality.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And there was a communist club I believe, all kind of clubs. And someone founded the jazz club, but what they did mostly was just listen to records and discuss them. So when I come in I saw these musicians walking around, and said, "let's have a session," and it got very popular. It was originally supposed to be a dance.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Put on by the student council. But the music was so challenging and interesting then, that was when bebop was coming up, and the kids found it so interesting. The music of Monk and Charlie Parker, Dizzy, and so forth. They pulled their chairs up to the stage and sat down, and made a concert out of it. All these young people came in that later became famous, like Ira Sullivan who's still with us, Richard Davis, Andrew Hill...

**Kimery:** Andrew's passed though.

**Segal:** Yes, yes. Sun Ra used to come up with his guys, John Gilmore and all. And I remember one year we had a set going with Ira and Nicky Hill, they were burnin' up. And in walks this group from Memphis: George Coleman, Booker Little, Frank Strozier, Harold Mabern, and they had Bob Cranshaw on bass and Walter Perkins on drums, and

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they proceeded to burn the place down. And I remember George had on a big Army overcoat, it must have been in the winter, and an open pair of galoshes. He didn't take them off, he just opened up the sax case, took out the horn, and they start playing. And it was just fantastic.

**Kimery:** Wow, wow. So the Jazz Club. Ok, so it really was just a listening club. That's why it started.

**Segal:** Yeah, that's what it turned out to be.

**Kimery:** And so you saw an opportunity here to expand it, extend it beyond a listening club here.

**Segal:** Well I didn't actually look at it that way, it just came about. Like we say "like topsy" it just happened. People would hear these groups and they'd say, "Say, can you get this group for our fraternity dance or something?" And I'd say "sure," you know. And that happened and then somebody came to me and said, "Would you like to work on weekends at the Bee Hive in Hyde Park as the host?" "Sure." "And do Monday night sessions?" "Sure." I was tryin' to earn money of course to raise my family, so I did that. I worked a lot of other places. I worked in record shops. I worked in one at back of Roosevelt called Seymour's, which was... Seymour Schwarz had a record shop, all jazz and pop stuff. This was when it was still 78s. He had a room upstairs, which sat about maybe fifty people, and on Saturday afternoons we'd have alternate sessions. He'd do Dixieland because he was a cornet player that admired Louis Armstrong, and he'd have all the Dixie guys, and I'd have all the modern guys up there. People like Al Cohn came up, Tiny Kahn, even Sonny Rollins when he was hangin' out here in town, playing an alto. And...

**Kimery:** Wait, wait, wait. Go back. So Sonny Rollins playing an alto.

**Segal:** Yeah. That's all he had then.

**Kimery:** I wanted to make sure that was clearly heard there for the historic record, because we all identify Sonny as a tenor man, but...

**Segal:** Oh yeah, and that's where I think Jackie McLean must have heard that, cause he took that style and refined it, and became his style. I don't have a recording of it but I was there, I remember. And there was some little trumpet player with a fez on named Zophra, who I never heard of or heard again, but he played sort of like Miles, way before Miles, that I knew of. It was funny because there was a liquor store opposite - across Congress Avenue - this was at Congress and Wabash, where the Congress Hotel parking lot is now. So on the Dixieland days they would sell out of whisky and wine and so forth. On the modern days, nothing, cause I think the guys came prepared. One afternoon on the trad day some guy got too blasted, fell down the steps, and broke his head open, so Seymour immediately stopped the sets so he didn't want to get sued, and that was it. But I also

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worked for Hudson Ross, which was the precursor to Rose Records; I worked for Decca Record Distributors. At Hudson Ross incidentally Ramsey Lewis used to work as a clerk at one of the stores, before he became famous as a pianist, and a man named Norm Spalding, who became a disc jockey. Herbie Field's brother, I forget his name, he worked at George Hafer, the wonderful historian from Down Beat, worked there also at the Randolph Street store. They had several stores. They used to call me "Half-Price Joe" cause I'd be ordering all these Charlie Parker records, and they say, "well, we're not selling these. Where are these orders coming from?" "Well, I don't know..." What do I know? I remember once after Charlie Parker With Strings came out I started a rumor that he's gonna make a Christmas album, and people started inundating me, "when's it coming out? When's it coming out?" Cause Bird was at the peak then.

**Kimery:** Oh yeah. So... very entrepreneurial, which is a testament to your longevity and this music that we love so much. So going back to the jazz club itself, now you're bringing musicians in, so there's a financial base there that you know... what do they call it... economic base there, that's now changed from listening, to now bringing musicians in. You've somehow got to pay the musicians...

**Segal:** You mean at Roosevelt?

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Oh no, no, no. That was strictly volunteer.

**Kimery:** Oh it was volunteer?

**Segal:** Yeah, we charged a quarter so we could rent the bass and the drums down the street on Wabash Avenue.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And later the guys started bringing their own stuff. We charged a quarter and it went to the student fund.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And no, these guys would come on their off night like Monday or Tuesday would be an off night. They'd come up in the early evening before they went to work and so forth. Actually the first time Bird came up was sort of a mistake. Some fraternity or social club had booked Charlie Ventura who was hot then for their dance at the school. But Charlie had just finished a week at the Chicago Theater, and the union had a rule that you couldn't play another gig for a period of time in town. And it so happened that Bird's manager was up at the booking office at the time, so he said "well, let's give Bird the gig." So they didn't know one Charlie from another anyhow. But we put out calls to all the Bird fans. We couldn't get too many of them there, but he came up with his full band

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and I mean he had...

**Kimery:** Wow.

**Segal:** I don't know if it was Al Hagert, Duke Jordan, you know. It was one of those groups.

**Kimery:** Maybe Stan Levey? I don't know. Stan was with him at that time.

**Segal:** No, no. It was probably Max.

**Kimery:** Oh, ok.

**Segal:** In just a few weeks we got a wire recording - that's how early it was - it was still wire recordings, but his manager wouldn't let us record anymore. Bird said it was ok, but he said no, he cut it down.

**Kimery:** So do you still have that? Is that?

**Segal:** I don't know, it's somewhere.

**Kimery:** Yeah, wow. That's...

**Segal:** And the other time he came up he was playing at the Bee Hive, and at the time I was writing a column for the newspaper, The Torch, the school newspaper. And I wrote a very complementary column about Bird, a genius on the way back and all because he had been ill and so forth. He says, "well, I guess I'll have to come," and knowing that a lot of his promises were never kept we had the Jazz Club All Stars, which was made up of different people playing upstairs, and we had a guy down in the lobby looking out for him. And it was just a handful of people there, and they refused to pay their quarter until he showed up. And finally the guy came running up the steps, and said, "he's here!" And the place just filled like that. And I got so excited I forgot to collect the money, I think I collected thirteen dollars. And Bird got up and played with our guys until there was an inept tenor man from here who I won't mention who has passed on, who sat there with his case on his lap with it open, saying "can I sit in? Can I sit in?" Finally Bird let him sit in, and he was so bad and played so long that finally Bird packed up and said, "I gotta go to work." So that was the end of that.

**Kimery:** Aww. Did you get a chance to actually have any one-on-one conversation with Bird?

**Segal:** Not much. Only on the last time he ever appeared in Chicago in 1953 at the Bee Hive. He only said a couple words to me, he said, "would you like to start a record company?" And I thought oh boy, I heard about that. And then the last thing he said to me before he left was, "I'd tell you a joke but you're too hip." That's all I know. I don't

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know what he meant; I don't know what he meant. One thing he said during the engagement which was during a cold winter... he came running outside with no coat on and I was outside with the Chicago tenor man Ira Sullivan, and we said, "man, why are you running out here?" He says "oh, this owner! Why is he telling me that?" He said, "Be careful, he says. The man is here, the narcotics man is here." And Bird said, "I don't do that." He said, "The next thing for me is pneumonia, I don't want another winter." And that was it, he went back inside.

**Kimery:** Wow.

**Segal:** And I got some pictures of that. That's when Ira worked with him. Ira Sullivan and Norman Simmons, Russ Freeman and Victor Sproles.

**Kimery:** You had the benefit a few years back to hear Sir Charles Thompson talk about Bird and put him in the light that unfortunately is not necessarily... he hasn't been presented as... Bird was... one could say really a genius. Well versed in many different areas and a genius, but unfortunately seems like what the general population sees and is unfortunately one side of him that is not so flattering.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** But in many encounters like that I just heard that he was absolutely a brilliant person across the board. Very inquisitive, a lot of knowledge.

**Segal:** You never got that from that lousy movie they made.

**Kimery:** Yeah, that's not one of my favorite movies, no.

**Segal:** That was a disgrace.

**Kimery:** Yeah, not a good one.

**Segal:** The only one that's worse than that is the Gene Krupa Story, which sowed many a plain Krupa.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** That's horrendous.

**Kimery:** Yeah, I don't know what they were thinking then. So the notion of the Jazz Showcase... I mean we're talking about 1947 is when the...

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** ... concept came into fruition there. What was, I mean, tell me about that! I

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don't want to try to illicit any thoughts out of you that I'm trying to convey, but what was it that made you decide, "ok that's the direction we need to go," and you start to formalize the Jazz Showcase.

**Segal:** Well, I was at Roosevelt for ten years and they finally said, "Segal, the farce is over." Because I wasn't getting anything but C's and C+'s because I was hanging out all night you know, and working these other gigs, raising a family. So my mind wasn't on studies. So I had met this same guy, Al Grossman who was in CHA and got me into Cabrini. He also was a partner in the folk music club called "The Gate of Horn." And he said, "Well we've got Monday nights open, why don't you put some jazz in there." So we contracted to do four Mondays of jazz, and we did four years of Mondays, it was so popular. And that's where I really started to get into it. So I had Monday night there, I had Sunday afternoon and night at a little club at Clark and Oak called The French Poodle. And then I got Tuesday nights out at the New York Room at the Sutherland Hotel at 42nd and Drexel.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And every now and then I'd do a Monday night at the Bee Hive with people like John Gilmore. I remember one funny thing at the Bee Hive: The first time Max Roach and Clifford Brown came in the place was just jam-packed. You couldn't get out the front door; you had to get out through the back for the next group to come in. And one night at the sessions there was this little white guy up there, leaning against the piano, going tit for tat with Clifford, and he said "who the hell was this?" It was Red Rodney, back from Las Vegas. I thought he had passed years ago, cause the last time I had seen him before that he was outside the Alvin Hotel in New York with his horn and a paper bag, and he looked like a scarecrow.

**Kimery:** Wow.

**Segal:** He had gone to Las Vegas and cleaned up and everything, and made it back. And then of course later he formed a group with Ira Sullivan and they toured the world. So that was pretty funny, and Max and Clifford were playing their buns off, that was something else. And you had Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, and you had Jay and Kay, and you had all kinds of groups going then. Jackie and Roy, The Four Freshman, there were all kinds of groups you could hear. Ammons and Stitt, Johnny Griffin and Lockjaw, now I don't know what you can hear.

**Kimery:** So how did you go about then identifying, booking these bands? Cause we're...

**Segal:** Well, it first started as off-night stuff. And before I started booking five nights a week on Russ Street, I had a place called the North Park Hotel, which is up near Grant Park. I was doing Sunday afternoons and evenings, and they were well attended, and it was all ages. It sat a couple hundred, maybe five hundred in the ballroom. I contacted Yusef, cause I had known him from Chicago, and he said, "well I can't really" - he was

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in Detroit then - "I can't really come down for one night." I said, "well..." so we tried Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and it worked. And then I booked Elvin; I booked Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and became a sensation here. Then we had a chance to move. Let's see, we had a place on Wells Street called the Brown Shoe, which was a huge place. It used to be a restaurant called Paul Bunyan. We then moved to the basement of the Happy Medium at Rush and Delaware, and of course Russ Street was a big entertainment center then. Wanna take a break?

**Kimery:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

[Recording fades out]

[Recording fades in]

**Segal:** Well, there's a couple of detours but I'll get to those.

**Kimery:** Ok. So once again... So the Jazz Showcase was really more of - in the beginning days - was more of a presenting organization than looking at actually finding a location that would be a permanent home.

**Segal:** I derived the name from my initials of course, JS and jam sessions, and Jazz Showcase. So as I said we did the Gate of Horn, then we started doing stuff up on Rush Street, different places. And then on Wells Street when the hippie era was going in the sixties. We had a place at Mother Blues, at the Old Town Gate, at the Club Nickel, and I used to do off-night sessions there also. A place called The Window, I had people like Freddy Hubbard and Jackie McLean. We collected money and we paid them whatever. If there was something left, fine. Most of the time there wasn't too much left.

**Kimery:** So how did you support yourself then?

**Segal:** Well I was, I told you, I was doing other jobs.

**Kimery:** Oh, at the same time! Oh ok.

**Segal:** Actually during the sixties I had only one night, a Monday night at Mother Blues because the business was way off. That's when Rock & Roll came in and killed everything. I got a job at an automotive plant as a foreman. I knew nothing about cars, I still don't drive. I had a lot of the cats in there like Wilbur Campbell and so forth. And it was amazing that nobody killed themselves, cause they were all stoned. And they were driving around these forklifts. They had on these protective shoes, and it was fun. [Laughs] So I did that for a couple of years, and that supported this, along with the other things where I made a few bucks here and there. But when I was still having sessions at Roosevelt in 1955, and somebody came running through the hall and marched up and said, "Man did you hear Bird died," and he had tears rolling down his face. And we had a session scheduled that night. So we went ahead with it and it was like everybody heard

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and they went ahead with the sessions like automatons. There were, you know, “what do we do now?”

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** So that was the first one. And then for quite a few years on March the 12th I would have a Charlie Parker memorial concert. So one year in the sixties it was scheduled at Mother Blues, it was supposed to be Dexter Gordon - was supposed to be the feature. And Paul Serrano, a trumpeter, who was also staying at the Sutton Hotel with Dexter, came to me a few days before and says, “Hey man, did you hear Dexter’s split!” I said, “What do you mean he split?” He says, “Well, the man came and told him that either leave town now or you’re a three time loser.”

**Kimery:** Ooh.

**Segal:** So Dexter didn’t say anything, he split, went back to L.A. I said, “Aw jeez, it’s too late to get anybody. That kills it.” So a friend of mine came up with the idea, he says, “Well why don’t you do it on Bird’s Birthday, August 29th? The weather will be better, and it will be more celebratory than a sad thing.” So I said, “That’s a good idea.” And then we started to do that. Then in 1980 I made it a month, August is Charlie Parker month. So we took the whole month of August, culminating with August 29th, his birthday, and we’d bring in as many of the progenitors of bebop as we could that were around, you know, of which now there aren’t many. About the only couple I can think of is Ira, who keeps coming up, and Roy Haines, who only wants to play a few things cause, you know, he’s getting up there. It’s hard to play. And Lou Donaldson, same thing. I guess there’s a few others, but...

**Kimery:** Jimmy Heath?

**Segal:** Yeah, Jimmy. And Benny Golson.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** He’s coming in in December here.

**Kimery:** Phil Woods?

**Segal:** Phil doesn’t play much anymore. He’s got the same thing, the emphysema. He can’t play clubs, he can play maybe a concert and that’s it, with his oxygen tank handy.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Yeah. There’s probably others around, but that’s who I know, you know. Where we? I lost track.

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**Kimery:** Well, your automotive plant... But more so... So let's talk about Bird a little bit here, and the celebration of Bird and that month-long celebration. So was it - besides the musicians themselves - and of course Bird being the focal point, was there any kind of creative, artistic vision there? Or more to bringing those musicians...

**Segal:** Just coming in and playing the tunes Bird was associated with. Or the bebop stuff like Monk, Bud Powell, Tadd Dameron, you know. Fats Navarro, that kind of stuff. Like I always say, like Dexter used to say, "bebop is the future." And I always add, "as soon as they learn how to play it." I said, "it's not just a bunch of notes as fast as you could play them... and a bunch of noise on the drums. That's not what bebop is."

**Kimery:** So I assume you've had Dizzy many times.

**Segal:** Oh yeah, many times. Many, many times.

**Kimery:** You told a story last night, I hope you can tell it again, because this is one of those stories about the trumpet itself, but we, you know, expand beyond that too. I want to hear the relationship between you and Dizzy cause I can tell, based upon looking at the photos on the wall there that it seemed to be more than just a musician coming in here, and Dizzy had that really, kind of wonderful personality.

**Segal:** He was a very warm person. I saw him on some of the Jazz Cruises, and also... One of the most exciting things I ever heard was at The Pershing in 1947, the Pershing Ballroom with Dizzy - with one of his original big bands - and Bird was guest soloist. In fact I think I have a picture that Down Beat printed that you can maybe use. That was the most exciting thing you could ever hear. There's a wire recording of it, but the fidelity is so bad. You'd have to really be a Birdophile to dig it, you know. You can tell what it is, but if you played it for somebody and they didn't know what it was they'd say, "what the hell is this?" you know. But he played *Like Things to Come* and *Emanon* and all that good stuff. *Good Bait*. Dizzy... The story about his trumpet being bent up?

**Kimery:** Yeah!

**Segal:** Well I know there's several stories about it, like somebody stepped on it, or his wife sat on it... But when I was at Roosevelt and writing for the newspaper, I used to do reviews, and next-door was a theater, and Spike Jones and the City Slickers were appearing there, and I did an interview with him. I went up to his dressing room and he told me that - he came out in his long underwear - and he came out and told me that Duke Ellington was his favorite musician. And in the background I could hear a beautiful classically sounding trombone playing... and then out came trumpet player George Rock! And he had this bent-up trumpet thing, same as Dizzy's. And this was at least a month or two before Dizzy came out with an announcement about it. And I think it was just something that was invented to help them play, look at the music, without sticking - looking at the mic and looking back and forth at the music. That way they could hold the trumpet down, the sound will go into the mic, and they could see the music at the same

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time. I'm not questioning Dizzy's story about it but I'm just saying that's what I know about it.

**Kimery:** It adds another angle, or at least a insight into the many stories of the trumpet, the bent trumpet itself.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** So Dizzy was known for of course being one of the fathers of - of course - bebop, but he seemed to be very active in promoting this music to youth. Was he engaged in any way with you and helping, giving youth access to this music and helping them understand, or at least see the value of this music?

**Segal:** Well I don't know except that he came up to our sessions and he also played for me at the North Park, which was open to all ages. He also played for me down on Rush Street. They had a 25th Anniversary of my promoting, and he was a guest, and he played there, along with the Pieces of Eight, which is an eight piece big little band, little big band. He was always very, very friendly. There's a picture of us together that has been published around here and there. I never got in to talking about music that much with him, but one thing I do remember: When I was at the Blackstone, there was some kind of convention across the street at the Hilton. It so happened that Billy Eckstine was there. This is long after he had quit playing and all; he was playing solo with the guitar. And I went over with Dizzy and sat down, I met B and I had seen his band the last week they were in existence - when he had Miles Davis and Doug Mettome in the trumpet section at the Regal Theater.

**Kimery:** Bobby Tucker also?

**Segal:** Bobby Tucker?

**Kimery:** Was he with?

**Segal:** I don't know.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** That doesn't sound logical to me.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** Well he became his accompanist later on.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Oh yeah, but not with the big band, no.

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**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** John Malachi, I think, was the pianist with the big band.

**Kimery:** Yeah, you're right, you're right.

**Segal:** It's funny, he had at the Regal, he had an alto player that played like in Bird's old Kansas City swingin' style. His name was Flap - John Dungee - and he used to wear his saxophone strap over his shoulder instead of around his neck, and he sort of played like that. And he was just swinging and singin' the band.

**Kimery:** Wow.

**Segal:** Yeah, he was great. I think Jug was still on the band, Gene Ammons, but Flap was the man for me.

**Kimery:** So going back to Dizzy. Did you ever encounter his band? Was it '47 with Chano Pozo and that?

**Segal:** I saw them on 52nd Street, yeah.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** They were in a place that was so small; it was like a cracker box. I mean, I don't think there was six inches between the space of the ceiling and the top of the trumpeter's heads. They had to go up first and then the trombones and then the saxes, and they had to leave in reverse. That way. It was so small. Yeah, Chano. And Dave Burns in the trumpet section...

**Kimery:** Mario Bausá?

**Segal:** Him I didn't know. I'm not sure, could have been. Al McKibbin on bass, and Ken Gates on piano. Who was it? Maybe Joe Harris on drums.

**Kimery:** Ok. What was your impression, because I mean they were, you know, exploring and pushing the envelope here.

**Segal:** I loved it!

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** I loved it. I loved all that big band stuff.

**Kimery:** And the Afro-Cuban now entry into big band and bebop since there.

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**Segal:** Yeah, well *Cubana Be Cubana Bop* and all that, and *Manteca*.

**Kimery:** *Manteca*.

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** There's a wonderful story where Al McKibbin talks about *Manteca*, how it came about, and he kind of does it in the voice of Chano Pozo, and it's really quite cute there. But you know there was - it was a collective effort there. Because Chano had the idea, and then Dizzy and - was it Gil Fuller - then kind of put the finishing touches on it. Just to be there and experience that, cause this is new territory, forging new territory that hadn't necessarily been part of the jazz landscape there.

**Segal:** Right.

**Kimery:** How was it received? I mean were people/audiences excited? Did they embrace it?

**Segal:** Oh yeah, the street was just burgeoning. Everyplace was packed, you know. You could hear Eddie Condon's guys on one side and hear bebop. You could hear Billie Holiday or Eckstine, Errol Garner, everybody, you know. Art Tatum, go nuts!

**Kimery:** Wow, wow. So I was thinking now with... Because Dizzy - we're talking about Dizzy - your first encounter with Dizzy as the Jazz Showcase, was that late forties or in the fifties?

**Segal:** No. The Showcase was - When I was at the North Park, that was in the sixties.

**Kimery:** Sixties, ok. I got my chronology off there.

**Segal:** He came in and played and I think Roy Haynes came and played with him, Bunky Green, and Jay Peters, a saxophonist from here, who had played with Hampton.

**Kimery:** Now I also had in my notes here when I was researching this, there was one gentleman that jumped out here. It was identified as a favorite of yours... Johnny Griffin.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** And Johnny, being a part of those early days with the Jazz Showcase?

**Segal:** Oh yeah, he's - I have pictures of him up at Roosevelt.

**Kimery:** Ok.

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**Segal:** After he came off the Hampton band, because he came off very early, he was just seventeen or eighteen. And Griffin was around, and then we did an album with Ira and Griffin, where they changed saxes and all. Baritone, alto, and tenor, and then Ira also played trumpet and flugelhorn. Griffin has the same birthday as me, April 24th, as did Joe Henderson, and I happened to get them both together one time at the Blackstone Hotel. Pardon me for saying it, but it was no contest.

**Kimery:** Oh really?

**Segal:** No. Griffin just overwhelmed Joe Henderson. It was a completely different kind of playing, you know. But Griffin, I don't know how he could play, cause he used to get pretty blasted, and when he'd come home from Europe for his birthday week he'd start out the beginning of the week at his south side home with his mother and family and friends, and they'd have a party. They'd have a party all week.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** But at time he came to the club, I mean you think he couldn't even lift the horn, cause you know, tenors are pretty heavy if you ever lift one.

**Kimery:** Yeah, yeah.

**Segal:** And he'd play his butt off. So later on, toward the end of his stint with us we had the bar there in the club. He said, "Joe, I can't do this anymore because the doctor told me, you know, I can't drink." I said, "Well, ok. We'll close the bar down." He says, "Well, then I'll have to go next door and drink!" [Laughs] But he was a sweetheart.

**Kimery:** Wow, wow. Did he ever talk about, I mean of course because he was an ex-pat, talk about his life over in Europe? And the difference between Europe and here in the United States? Cause I know there's a lot of ex-pats that left for a variety of reasons, but there was definitely more of a celebratory and support and interest within the music.

**Segal:** Yeah, I think so.

**Kimery:** Did Johnny talk about that to you at all?

**Segal:** Not much. But when I read his book *The Little Giant*, which I contributed some pictures to; I learned a lot about what I hadn't known. I hadn't known that he started off on alto, and when he got to Hamp's band he said, "Where's your tenor?" He had to go up against Arnett Cobb, he said, "oh my goodness. Give me a break." But he handled his own, and then Jay Peters went in there, Kenny Mann went in there - he was the first white guy to go in there before Herbie Fields- and it was a helluva band. We gave out awards at Roosevelt, the most prominent one is for Lester Young, a Lifetime Achievement Award. We gave one to Lee Konitz and Lennie Tristano because Lee was a fellow student. We gave one - we made one - for Hamp, but Hamp never showed up so we never gave it to

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him. I used to watch that band, it was amazing. His energy, and he was funny. I remember once he played at our Grant Park Festival, and the stage sort of curved out from under the canopy. And he had his vibes out there, and they wanted him to pull them back because it was threatening to rain. He said, "No, I want to get as close to the audience as possible." So the clouds start coming in, the dark clouds, you hear "boom, boom." And he's playing, and you hear - you know how they go - "da da da da da da da." BOOM. It came down, and there's a story - I didn't see it - that evening that he stepped on the wire and his piece went up.

**Kimery:** Oh that's fantastic.

**Segal:** I can believe it, but I didn't see it.

**Kimery:** Playing *Flying Home*.

**Segal:** They were Flying Home all right.

**Kimery:** [Laughs] Fantastic. Oh god. So now you're, you're of course venturing into looking or to having looking at a permanent home for the Jazz Showcase, and the challenges with that of course, and as we know, finding the right location, the economics, liquor license, all those things. You were having to negotiate them and navigate through all of that on your own, trying to figure out how to make it work.

**Segal:** Yeah, actually Wayne took over all the problems of that.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** He's got them handled pretty well. He's actually the President of our corporation now.

**Kimery:** Ok. So prior to Wayne coming in, liquor license and stuff like that. It wasn't really part of what you had worked out?

**Segal:** No at the North Park we didn't handle it at all, we had nothing to do with it. And in fact, they handled all the licensing and they also gave us rooms for the traveling musicians at the hotels, which was great. Now we've got all that expense on us.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Plus the rental for the room. It means we've got to really push, and now it's harder and harder because there are less and less of the real playing artists that want to come and play three or four nights. They like to do these one-night concerts, get in and get out, all-star things.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** And you can't afford that, because if you have an all-star thing with a big nut and

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you have a bad night, that's it, it's over.

**Kimery:** You're sunk, yeah; you're sunk there.

**Segal:** This way at least with four nights we've got a chance.

**Kimery:** Yeah. I had the privilege of seeing Dave Brubeck at Blues Alley, it's one of those rare moments - this is two, three years before he passed - that he actually agreed to play in a club, and I always thought as a musician... I mean I understand the appeal for a concert hall, but there's nothing like playing in a club. Cause you have that immediacy within your audience. You have the opportunity, like you said, to play for multiple nights, and so you're starting to develop a chemistry and a repertoire, more so with your musicians but also with the space. But it's one of those things - there's very few places around the country that still do that. And I know you do it with the Jazz Showcase, it's one of those unique places. How do you balance it? I mean the fact - we talked last night - on the on nights or towards the weekend of course you have name artists, but you also balance it with local artists during the week?

**Segal:** During the week, yeah. During the week we charge a lot less and of course we have to pay a lot less. But we pay them a nice wage, you know, and they come in. And there's a lot of great local people. And actually we're going to start featuring them more on the weekends too, come next year, so we don't have to fight these hotel prices which are ridiculous.

**Kimery:** Do you find that where you are right now - and I'm just kind of jumping ahead here - that with Columbia College being in close proximity, there's a benefit to the club that you're seeing the students coming in and there's a relationship that you've forged?

**Segal:** We have a good relationship with three universities. Roosevelt of course, Columbia, and DePaul.

**Kimery:** Oh, ok.

**Segal:** They bring in their big bands and their student bands, and a lot of times they have artists coming in. Like we have Wycliffe Gordon coming in with Columbia College. He'll play there a week in residence and tutor the students, and then play here on the weekend, and we share the costs with them. Of course there's some profit to be made, and we do that with the bold Bob Lark from DePaul, and Roosevelt has... they buy the place out for several nights, and they have their students come in and we don't charge any admission and so forth.

**Kimery:** The other thing you do is, which is really quite unique and wonderful, is you have a matinee.

**Segal:** Mhmmm.

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**Kimery:** Can you talk about the idea, the concept of the matinee and the audience and everything else that surrounds it?

**Segal:** Well we started the matinees way back when we had the... I guess the French Poodle in the early fifties. We found that people didn't want to stay out late, and so forth, and they came to the matinees to hear the music and they got home. Because a lot of people from the suburbs, they had to travel far, and they had this misconception that Chicago was all gangsters and stuff, you know. Only parts of it are, unfortunately parts of it are. That's followed through now. We get an elderly crowd on Sundays and they bring the kids. We don't charge if they're twelve or younger, don't charge the kids. A lot of them... a lot of people come in now that said they used to come on Rush Street when their parents used to bring them, and now they're bringing their kids and grandkids.

**Kimery:** That's fantastic.

**Segal:** And that's very fulfilling to know that we are making a difference - that there's some people coming through with intelligence about music.

**Kimery:** Do the artists - for the matinee - do they modify or change the program a little bit? Or?

**Segal:** Some of them do, some of them are very good and talk. Eric Reed is very good, he explains the songs: Four bars, four bars, a bridge, four bars, and all that kind of stuff. Some of them are very good; some of them just go ahead and play their regular stuff. It's always good. Sometimes we have the kids come up afterwards and sit down at the piano or whatever they do, there's a lot of them learning. Willie Pickens is teaching a lot of people, and sometimes when he's on the bill, he'll have them come up and play, like in between sets and so forth.

**Kimery:** Just for the historic record, Willie was here last night -

**Segal:** Right.

**Kimery:** - as an audience member there.

**Segal:** He usually comes in every Sunday evening.

**Kimery:** Do you have a lot of musicians of that caliber coming in here on their off nights just to hang out?

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah. There were several guitarists last night, Henry Johnson among them. They come in and we let the musicians in free, because, you know, we're one big family. Of course there's some people, like at Roosevelt, they used to have people come up to the sessions every week with their cases, and they'd never open up the cases to play, and

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they'd always leave with a couple of chicks trailing 'em, you know. I said, "I bet they don't even have horns in there." So when they come to the door and they say "we're musicians" we have to sort of try and verify that some way. "Here's my union card." I said, "A union card doesn't mean you're a musician. It means you gave them some money." Yeah.

**Kimery:** Wow, that's extremely generous.

**Segal:** Well, what the hell. It's a hangout. We were trying to make it a hangout like the Green Mill is.

**Kimery:** But those places - now back to that - there are very few places that still exist. I remember moving back from Europe and I moved down to San Diego. There's the Blue Parrot, of course some of the places, and that was kind of the end of that era, where musicians used to go and hang out afterwards. And just cause, you know, unless you're on the bandstand together you really didn't see each other that much, or rarely. And so those places tend to have really gone by the by, whereas here it seems like you've carried, you are carrying on an important tradition there.

**Segal:** Well you know I have to listen to music, so what the heck. I'm not gonna sit at home and watch the television all the time.

**Kimery:** Well I think it's too, the further development/cultivation of an audience, but also the musicians you know. Case we look at it, musicians having the opportunity to actually come in and hear another musician of that caliber, to be... Because that's part of the learning process, you know.

**Segal:** Absolutely.

**Kimery:** You can sit in your practice room and practice scales and arpeggios and rudiments, all that stuff all day long, but until you actually see it put into motion there...

**Segal:** It's gotta swing.

**Kimery:** It's gotta swing, you know. And you can't say, "oh, swing is this." You gotta hear it, you gotta feel it, you gotta understand, and it represents itself in many different ways depending on how that group...

**Segal:** Well the guys today "swing don't mean nothin'." I wish they could've heard Willie Jones III this past weekend, he does it all and he does it in a fear with the playing. A lot of the guys play so much technical stuff they're bashing away like they're in the front lines. They're not in the front line. Even Max Roach and Art Blakey who were the stars of the show - they didn't overshadow their instrumentalists. You know, they play to accompany them. Roy Haines still does that; he's a master of it.

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**Kimery:** Yeah. Snap, Crackle, Pop.

**Segal:** Yep. And I was fortunate to see a lot of the great ones like Big Sid Catlett... Louis Bellson played for us a lot, and even the character Buddy Rich played for us and played great.

**Kimery:** Who was Big Sid with at that time, when you saw him?

**Segal:** Oh, I don't remember. I think he might have been sitting in with Basie or something, I'm not sure. I saw Papa Joe Jones when he played for us, with Milt Buckner. Of course Philly Joe Jones played for us many times, and he was great. He was mashugana but he was great, you know. [Laughs] You know, you mentioned Stan Levey some time ago; yes he was very good too. Tiny Kahn was wonderful.

**Kimery:** I met Stan in - was it Redondo Beach? - And he had since, long since given up playing the drums. Actually, his... actually I think he stopped then, but he had transitioned from being a professional musician to actually taking up photography and opening up a studio.

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** And when he talked about it... For him, it was one of those things like... I played with the greats, went to L.A., did the studio scene, and realized... that's it.

**Segal:** That's it.

**Kimery:** That's it, where do I go? There's nowhere else to go. So for him it was a conscious decision that he needed to go in a different direction.

**Segal:** I like Mel Lewis.

**Kimery:** Oh, Mel.

**Segal:** Shelly Manne.

**Kimery:** Oh, Shelly.

**Segal:** And Dave Tough, old Dave Tough. I saw him with Woody.

**Kimery:** Oh, you did?

**Segal:** And Don Lamond and all that.

**Kimery:** Talk about Dave Tough a little bit there. Cause Dave was one of those drummers that... he was an extrovert off the bandstand. His playing was absolutely

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perfect.

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah. He had all the cut-offs and all the lead ins and everything, and he never interfered. You didn't really hear him, but the band felt him, and that's the idea. But I don't know. They tell me all the bass players [have] got their amps, and it got so loud I had to play louder, and blah blah blah... That's baloney.

**Kimery:** Yeah. Of course, Mel, of which I saw the poster there, with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis... Multiple times had you hosted the band there? Or was it...

**Segal:** Yeah, a couple times down on Rush Street when they came through, yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** How was that?

**Segal:** Oh, how was it? It was wonderful.

**Kimery:** Yeah?

**Segal:** One of the great times was when I had the Basie Band when Basie was sick, and Nat Pierce played piano.

**Kimery:** Oh man...

**Segal:** And Joe Williams happened to be in town, and he came and sat in. And like the whole South Side came down, it was wild. Even Freddie Green played a solo.

**Kimery:** Was - I'm trying to think - was Duffy Jackson with them at the time?

**Segal:** No, no.

**Kimery:** Before Duffy?

**Segal:** Oh yeah, it was way before Duffy.

**Kimery:** Sonny Payne?

**Segal:** No, it was... Oh who the heck was it... Butch Miles.

**Kimery:** Oh, Butch! Ok.

**Segal:** Yeah, I didn't care for Sonny Payne. Butch Miles was with him. Actually with Duffy, Wayne and I went down to Florida and did some stuff around Tampa, and we had the band. It was the first night Thad was leading the band, and Duffy was with them, with Cleveland Eaton on bass, and they had a constant fight all night at the time. [Laughs] It was really funny.

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**Kimery:** Duffy...

**Segal:** But the band was cookin'. They had Danny Turner on alto, and Kenny Hing on tenor, he was marvelous.

**Kimery:** Ok. Did you ever hear Duffy's father?

**Segal:** Oh yeah, Chubby? Sure!

**Kimery:** Chubby Jackson? Yeah?

**Segal:** Sure. Chubby one-note.

**Kimery:** Chubby one-note, yeah. I saw him many years later; he actually lived up in - when I lived in Southern California - in Escondido, California, and met him. And he walked in, this very slim guy, and he said, "Yeah, my name is Chubby Jackson." I looked at him and said, "No, this can't be Chubby Jackson!" Not the person I envisioned to be Chubby Jackson.

**Segal:** Yeah, he had a kid show here on television for a while in Chicago.

**Kimery:** Oh, he did?

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** Talk about it please.

**Segal:** And he had people like Cy Touff was with him, the bass trumpeter, and I forget who else. He had a little band, and he played music for the kids. I guess it was something like Sesame Street-type stuff, and he did that for a few years to keep the money coming in, you know. And then he broke out and had his little band again, with Conte Candoli and Lou Levy and I forget who all else.

**Kimery:** I just remember one of his - one of the pieces the band played - was Father Knickerbocker.

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** Smokin' band.

**Segal:** And he formed a big band here for Chess Records, and had a picture of Chubby's back leading the band, called "Chubby's Back". And he had Sandy Moss on tenor, and Lido Price, and Johnny Howell, the lead trumpeter, and a lot of great people.

**Kimery:** Wow.

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**Segal:** It sounded great, yeah.

**Kimery:** Man, you've been just blessed with having access and experience -

**Segal:** I know!

**Kimery:** - with all these incredible moments there.

**Segal:** During the eighties when we moved up on Clark and Grand, for a while there... That was after we had left the Blackstone - it took us a while to find a place. And during our search a bass player and pianist, husband and wife, Kelly Sill and Kelly Brand, came to us and said, Kelly Brand's uncle or cousin or something was in the restaurant business. They had something called the Chicago Restaurant Association. And they had a space open on Navy Pier, and they asked us if wanted to go in there with the Jazz Showcase. And we checked it out and we said no, it's too off, you know. And we came up with the Grand... and then they came back to us, and said, "Well look, we're going in anyhow, do you want to open?" So we came up with the concept of Joe's Bebop Cafe and Jazz Emporium on Navy Pier.

**Kimery:** Ahh!

**Segal:** And we had to satisfy the Children's Museum, which was upstairs, before they would give us an ok, knowing that we were legitimate. Because they had qualms about a liquor-selling club below the Children's Cafe and all that.

**Kimery:** Oh really?

**Segal:** So I went up there and they knew of me, and my reputation was good, so they gave us the ok. And we were there for ten years, the same time we were over on Clark and Grand, and we lost both of them the same time. And that's when we started - it took us a year - to find this place.

**Kimery:** Let's take a pause right there.

[Recording fades out]

[Recording fades back in]

**Kimery:** Ok we're back on here.

**Segal:** Alright. When we used to have the Pier, the Navy Pier, we had bands there every night. We had a pianist for two hours in the evening, and then we'd have a four or five piece band there. A different one every night, people like Franz Jackson and his band, and we'd have Semi Blues Band, and solo pianists, and we also had the Basie Band once,

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under the direction of Grover Mitchell. That was later.

**Kimery:** Yep.

**Segal:** We did big New Year's shows there, and I did a couple of my birthday celebrations there. People like Conte Candoli came in and Ira and, oh, all kind of great people. We've got a lot of videos of that. And I even mistakenly sat down and played the drums with my little African beanie on. That's not too bad, maybe I'll dig it up for you if you want it - just to prove that I can't. But we lost the lease on that, now they've got Harry Caray's restaurant over there. Guess we didn't raise enough money; they got a sports bar there now. So we lost that, and we lost the Grand Avenue the same time, and so we... Oh! One thing! Before we did Grand Avenue we were looking for a place, and I was looking in the window of the Grand Avenue place, which was empty, and a friend of mine came in who was part owner of the Bigsby & Kruthers clothing store, Joe Silverberg. And he said, "Oh, are you looking for this place? This guy's my landlord. I have a tie store upstairs." And so he got us that place, and he also was associated in some way, around the corner, on South Street with Michael Jordan's restaurant. So I said, "well, what the heck, let's do some Monday nights up there on the third floor" So we did. We had Maynard Ferguson up there, we had the all-women's band Diva, we had Wilbur Campbell and a group, we had Bethany Pickens, and we had several things up there. It didn't go over too well, but at least it established us in the neighborhood, which was then burgeoning.

**Kimery:** Was... with Maynard, Nouveau Bop?

**Segal:** Yeah, the Big Bop Nouveau Band. Yeah, yeah.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Then we got into the place on Grand, and we stayed there for ten years. So now here we are.

**Kimery:** So have you... you know... recordings? Are there a fair amount of recordings that have come out of these many years of?

**Segal:** How many do you want?

**Kimery:** Well, I mean I went searching and it wasn't - there's nothing there that I could find as the definitive place to find it, or documentation there to find all the recordings.

**Segal:** There's a few that are recorded live, but there are many more that were recorded live that have not come out. They're still on tape, and I doubt I'll ever get releases for them. So I'm going to donate them to the Roosevelt Archives. There's stuff that you'll never hear. I mean it's... we did a few. I did some work for Chess Records in the sixties, one of my many jobs. When Dick LaPalm came on board - he was the former PR man for

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Woody Herman and Nat Cole - and he's a jazz instigator like I am, he's from Chicago, he's passed now - he got me on at Chess and I started doing re-issues for them. I'd go through the vaults with Phil Chess and he'd say, "Oh, this box is so-and-so and that box is so-and-so." No writing on there, he just knew, and I'd take them out and I'd edit them, and I did the first James Moody album, *Flute 'N The Blues*.

**Kimery:** Oh right, ok.

**Segal:** That's where I met Johnny Coles, and Clarence Johnston, his drummer, Jimmy Boyd his pianist and F horn player, and Tom McIntosh, and Eddy Jefferson. They were all in that band.

**Kimery:** But you knew Moody prior with Dizzy? Did you know him during that period of time?

**Segal:** No, no.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** I knew of him from his solo in *Emanon*, his famous solo.

**Kimery:** Oh yeah.

**Segal:** I didn't know him. I met him at *Flute 'N The Blues* and we became fast friends. He worked for me many, many times. What a sweetheart.

**Kimery:** Oh yeah.

**Segal:** And funny as he could be, he'd crack you up. As many times as he had to do *Moody's Mood*, he had to invent new lyrics and different stuff, and he just cracked you up. I have a recording of him from the North Park Hotel, when he was on the bill with Gene Ammons. And it so happened that Moody had cleaned up, he was not a drinker anymore, and Jug was the drunk. So this particular Sunday Jug was pretty sober and Moody had fallen off the wagon for that day, so he proceeded to take apart the *Star Spangled Banner*. Phrase by phrase. And he'd go, "dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-dah. Now isn't that corny?" You know how he lisped... he said, "Now, and look how they resolve it: dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-dah. That's terrible." And he went through the whole thing like that, and we were crying. We were laughing so much. And at the end of it, he said, "now wouldn't this be a hipper national anthem?" and he started playin' *The Shadow of Your Smile*, and that was it. I didn't dare put it out, cause Nixon was President then and we were in Vietnam and all that, and I said, "they'll throw us all in jail!" But that was funny.

**Kimery:** Oh, that's classic Moody. Oh my god... So we're now here on Plymouth, South Plymouth Avenue. Is it South Plymouth Avenue, or South Plymouth?

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**Segal:** South Plymouth Court.

**Kimery:** Court. How did - and this is Dearborn Station - how did this come about? Cause this space is a very, as I've mentioned earlier, just a very inviting space across the board.

**Segal:** Well, Wayne and I were driving around; we must have looked at thirty different places after we lost Grand Avenue, trying to find a place. We were all down on Michigan Avenue, all the old auto stores and this, that, and the other thing. We came down Clark Street and turned a corner, and we saw this place, and we said, "Ah! This is it." We saw the clock tower, and this is historic, over 100 years old. So we came up to see, and in here was a ballet school. So we talked and talked to the owner, and he finally saw the wisdom of us doing it, he heard about us and all, and he moved them downstairs. They have a better facility downstairs, and they gave us this. But we had to remodel this, it was all on us. So Wayne and his buddy Chuck got ahold of it, and we got a contractor and a - what do you call it, a person who makes plans?

**Kimery:** An architect?

**Segal:** Architect. We laid it out and had to go through all of the plumbing downstairs.

[Phone rings]

**Kimery:** Oh, oh! Sorry about that.

**Segal:** Hello, Duffy's Tavern.

**Kimery:** Aw...

**Segal:** Archie speaking, Duffy ain't here.

[Ringing stops]

**Kimery:** There we go. [Laughs] Sorry about that.

**Segal:** And we put all the air in and all, everything. Everything in.

**Kimery:** So this is... it was pretty bare?

**Segal:** It was nothing.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** There was even some railroad stuff up there we had to take out. Some old things that supported some of the railroad stuff.

**Kimery:** So definitely a capital improvement here. What - you know - now we're coming

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into, I assume, this entailed loans and everything else to be able to...

**Segal:** Yes. Yes.

**Kimery:** And having to convey to a bank that we're opening up a jazz club. Was that - and we need finances to do that - was that difficult?

**Segal:** I don't know, Wayne handled that, so I don't know. He's the main man now.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** I'm just the historian.

**Kimery:** When did Wayne take over the business? At what point?

**Segal:** I think when we were on Grand Avenue; I think that's when it was.

**Kimery:** I'm remiss if I don't ask this - the name of your wife, who passed away?

**Segal:** Her name was Helen.

**Kimery:** And all of your kids? As we know, Wayne, but I don't know the names of the other...

**Segal:** Wayne's the youngest.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** I have an older daughter, LaTonya. Well the first one was Joe Jr., he's the eldest. LaTonya, and then I had a son, Jeffrey, who passed away when he was twenty-one. And then another daughter, who lives down in Florida, Julia. And then Wayne.

**Kimery:** Any of them follow the music business there, or go into music?

**Segal:** No they don't.

**Kimery:** No?

**Segal:** No, Wayne's the only one.

**Kimery:** I had an interesting conversation with Wayne. You know, I guess his early pursuit professionally was not where he ended up now, but...

**Segal:** No, he was into disco and all that stuff, and I got him working with me when he was about twenty - I guess he started. And he worked with me at the North Park and he

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worked on Rush Street, downstairs, and subsequently at the Blackstone he started to take more active, you know.

**Kimery:** And Wayne does, besides the finances, he also books all the bands coming in? Or are you involved in that process?

**Segal:** Well, we both do that.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And we get our heads together and we get our heads together and see what's what, and see who were losses last time and we don't book them again, or whatever, you know. He takes care of the hotels and all that.

**Kimery:** Ok.

**Segal:** And all the banking.

**Kimery:** So are you still pretty - you keep pretty current with what these artists are doing today, just to - what their artistic output is?

**Segal:** Oh yeah, yeah. There are a lot of them that I guess we could bring in that would bring a lot of people in, but the music isn't there. It's all BS as far as I'm concerned. We have eight million singers who want to come in that can't sing. They all just holler and scream and all that. And I grew up with big band singers where they stood in one place, they sang, you understood the lyrics, they were in tune, and they work with the band. Now they dance all over the stage, they holler and scream, and blah blah blah. Forget about it.

**Kimery:** So do you - just to talk about your taste within the music itself, and just thinking about those particular periods of time where the jazz itself started to go in various directions there. We're talking about the jazz rock era, and I know there's some of the musicians that came through that particular period of time that I've seen on here through some of the posters. How did that fair within your interest in the music? Was it something that you embraced, or do you find that that integration of the electronic music and jazz rock was something that maybe didn't have? Because remember, we're talking volume, I wasn't sure if I heard you before, volume becomes an issue too. Is that something that you weren't so crazy about?

**Segal:** Yeah. When a five-piece band is louder than an eighteen-piece big band, something's wrong as far as I'm concerned. But I even got into the weird stuff with Sun Ra, you know, and he was a trip. He's funny; he started to believe his own bullshit.

**Kimery:** [Laughs] Did he do well when you booked him?

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**Segal:** Yeah, yeah. I booked him mostly because of John Gilmore and Pat Patrick on the band.

**Kimery:** Ok. I see you also booked the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

**Segal:** Yeah, I dug them. They had some humor about them and some... Lester Bowie has a humor about him. He wasn't all "oh boy, this is," you know. And they could play. Don Moye was a marvelous percussionist. And I had heard avant-garde before that; the ACM wasn't the first ones. Joe Daly and Hal Russell had stuff going way before that. And it was ok, but they came from the straight-ahead stuff, and that's the kind of avant-garde I like. It was played by people who know how to play straight ahead, because I feel to have freedom, you have to be free from something. You can't just pick up a horn and go "blblblbl" which is what a lot of them are doing.

**Kimery:** One thing else that I noticed, is that - last night was an example - where there is an acceptance of the audience taking pictures? And you made the comment in advance of course, flash, no flash. But there's I guess some embracing the fact that this is here and now, we can't avoid it, so how do we go ahead and embrace it?

**Segal:** Well, Wayne gets mad when I tell them to turn their stuff off, that it's illegal. I'm very adamant about that. Buy their CDs if you want their music, you know.

**Kimery:** Because I saw here maybe half a dozen or less that had their phone out, but they weren't necessarily taking pictures. They were actually capturing some video elements.

**Segal:** Yeah, I know.

**Kimery:** Is there an understanding with them that the act that's coming in... that that's something that might?

**Segal:** Well a lot of them don't say anything. I know in our contract with the - what's their names - that are coming in...

**Kimery:** Yellowjackets?

**Segal:** Yellowjackets. They got it in their contract: Put a sign up, "No recording of any kind." We will stop playing immediately.

**Kimery:** Oh really? Ok.

**Segal:** So that's what we'll do. And I'll announce it. And some people, they don't know.

**Kimery:** Yeah, that's a tough one there. I mean it's tough on acts.

**Segal:** Yeah.

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**Kimery:** It's just today...

**Segal:** Because everything's free, you can get it online. I don't know how the musicians make any money on that.

**Kimery:** Yeah, I don't either. I was just looking at YouTube this morning, just seeing some of the postings on there from the Jazz Showcase, and it goes back to...

**Segal:** Really, we're on YouTube?

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Why? I don't want it on there.

**Kimery:** At the Blackstone I saw the Art Ensemble, 1981, Art Ensemble of Chicago. That's...

**Segal:** Oh, that was released commercially. That was ok, yeah.

**Kimery:** And then there's a lot more that's available from here that I've saw.

**Segal:** From this venue?

**Kimery:** From this venue here, yeah. So it's, you know... and there's anywhere from - it looks like a lot of local musicians, some national acts there, but mostly local musicians.

**Segal:** Well some of them when they come in, they get their own people to take videos and they want to... Ow! Oof.

**Kimery:** You ok?

**Segal:** Phew! Just gotta stretch it a little.

**Kimery:** We're pretty close to wrapping up here, and then we'll kind of jump around.

**Segal:** Ok.

**Kimery:** So, the last thing - two last things - I want to touch on here: One is - which I find to be very refreshing - when I was just sitting there and watching your audience members coming in, they greeted you, and you greeted them. But there was this - it seemed like a family relationship that you've built over many years.

**Segal:** Yeah, yeah. We have a lot of regular people that come in. We used to, when we were at the Blackstone - and on Rush Street - we'd have maybe a hundred or two hundred

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people that would always come in regardless of who was playing. They didn't care, they knew it was good. Except one family from the South Side used to come in just to see Dizzy, and nobody else. So I had to embarrass 'em one night. I said, "you're not jazz fans, you're Dizzy freaks." So they finally came in to see Yusef one weekend. But yeah, there is a family - because you notice a lot of them are older.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Yeah. So they...

**Kimery:** Well there's one gentleman that - I'm embarrassed I can't recall his name right now - but he used to play trumpet. He doesn't play anymore, and he was - we were talking, you came up, and he had some family members, young family members, that were meeting here, and he was helping educate them or bring them into this setting. And I thought, "wow, that's great!" So they've taken on this mission also to make sure the music has an audience and continues to.

**Segal:** Well that's like I said, I don't know if you heard it. I said, "then you won't have to listen to that crap at home."

**Kimery:** Yeah, yeah.

**Segal:** They drive you nuts, drive you out of the house, yeah.

**Kimery:** So it was to me - cause I've been in some of those places - one particular proprietor was... it was not embracing - this was in New York - it's like, time, changing sets, get out. Kind of that, and you know, it for me, that's not what it's about.

**Segal:** Like the Blue Note?

**Kimery:** No, actually...

**Segal:** They don't tell you to get out, but they just charge you again.

**Kimery:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. No I've had one of those, in one of the other historic clubs there. But it was unfortunate because of the fact - it's that you're building a community; you're building a base there.

**Segal:** That's right.

**Kimery:** It's really important that you extend that sense of warmth and greeting and welcoming, and so when you have that it's like, oh, ok.

**Segal:** That's true.

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**Kimery:** It's challenging. The last bit, the last point I'd like to ask you, is that you are a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master. You've been identified as that in a 2015 class there.

**Segal:** Mhmm.

**Kimery:** George Coleman is in the class, so is Charles Lloyd, Carla Bley, and you talked about George earlier, so it must be really exciting. What does that mean to you? The nation's honoring you for something very...

**Segal:** I don't know. It's like a lot of people told me, it's about time and well deserved. I agree with that. The only thing I'm annoyed about is that Down Beat hasn't written anything about us in years and years. They're right here in Chicago, and like they say, in your own backyard, you know.

**Kimery:** Well hopefully, I know Frank Alkyer is the editor.

**Segal:** Yeah.

**Kimery:** Hopefully maybe - maybe this is the...

**Segal:** Maybe this will push it.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Segal:** Ok.

**Kimery:** Yeah, so... Because this is, for me, it's a true honor to be here, to be able to sit with you and have you tell me your story.

**Segal:** Thank you.

**Kimery:** And I will be back many times because this is one of those places to me that really celebrate the music in a big way.

**Segal:** They're supposed to name some part of the street for me, the city is.

**Kimery:** Well let me know when that happens, I'll come out, and I'll have a camera, we'll document that.

**Segal:** Yeah they've been so busy with their hitting on each other about the new election coming up for governor and all that, they haven't paid attention to this, you know. Cause we're just small fry.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

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**Segal:** We don't matter.

**Kimery:** With that, we'll stop this portion of this interview.

**Segal:** Alright.

[Recording fades out]

(Transcribed and edited by Andrew Greene)