# Oral History Interview of
# James T. Braxton

**Interviewed by: Cosby Morton**
**June 27, 2013**
**Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:**
***African American Interviews***



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# Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

# Transcript Overview:

This interview features James T. Braxton, a former band and orchestra director for the Lubbock schools. Braxton discusses working in East Lubbock in the Manhattan Heights area schools and other schools in the Lubbock community. Braxton discusses the talented students he had during his teaching career and reflects on the benefits of music education.

**Length of Interview**: 01:39:41

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**Keywords**
Jazz, orchestra, marching band, segregation, Lubbock, Texas

**Cosby Morton (CM):**
Today is Thursday, June 27, 2013, and my name is Cosby Morton. I'm with Southwest Collections for Texas Tech, and I have the honor today of talking to Mr. James T. Braxton. Good afternoon, Mr. Braxton.

**James T. Braxton (JB):**
Good afternoon.

CM:
Let me ask a question of you sir, what is your full name?

JB:
James Thomas Braxton.

CM:
And when were you born sir?

JB:
September 18, 1919.

CM:
And where were you born?

JB:
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

CM:
Tulsa, Oklahoma. And if you don't mind, what were your parents' names?

JB:
My dad was the same as my name.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
My mother passed away when I was six years old or somewhere about that.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
So I had a stepmother.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Lillian Braxton.

CM:
All right.

JB:
She was originally from Texas.

CM:
All right.

JB:
And I grew up with her.

CM:
Okay. What did your dad do?

JB:
He was a elementary school principal.

CM:
Oh, okay, all right. Was it a segregated school back then?

JB:
Segregated, I think you'd probably say that.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
All right. Is that where you went to school also?

JB:
Yes, I did.

CM:
All right. So you did all your secondary school and elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma?

JB:
Yes, all the way.

CM:
What was the name of the school?

JB:
Booker T. Washington.

CM:
Booker T. Washington, okay, a favorite name there. What year did you graduate high school?

JB:
1937.

CM:
1937, all right. Now, when you graduated high school, where did you go from there, what were your aspirations?

JB:
Went to—it's funny you can forget those kinds of things.

CM:
Yes sir. Did you want to do music?

JB:
Music?

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Yeah, I played in the band at school.

CM:
What instrument did you play in the band?

JB:
Booker T. Washington, played the band, played in the orchestra.

CM:
Oh really?

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
So you played in both?

JB:
Yeah, my dad said some other people would be playing other instruments, so you can play the saxophone and play the violin.



CM:
Oh, okay. So was your dad, was he a music teacher also?

JB:
Huh?

CM:
Was your father a music teacher also?

JB:
No I mean he was the principal.

CM:
Oh he was the principal?

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Elementary.

CM:
Okay. Where did you go to college at? Did you go to Tuskegee?

JB:
Tuskegee, yeah.

CM:
Okay, and why did you go to Tuskegee?

JB:
In our hometown, I wanted to be a mechanic. I wanted to be a [inaudible, 0:04:32], I wanted a [inaudible, 0:04:33]. And at our home there were two fellows who did the—what is that pipes and all those kinds of things?



CM:
Oh, plumbing.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
They did that kind of thing, and they had told my dad, said, "He's a pretty smart fellow, you should be a plumber."

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
That's a good. Plumber. So I went to Tuskegee—

CM:
Okay.

JB:
—to be a plumber.

CM:
Did you become a plumber?

JB:
For two years.

CM:
For two years, okay.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
All right, at what point did you decide to switch into music as career?

JB:
I was at Tuskegee, and I had a roommate who in the summer would go to Atlantic City and be a waiter.

CM:
All right.

JB:
A lot of college students did that kind of thing. And so my roommate had gone there and done that, and my best friend then said, "Let's us go to Atlantic City, and let us go be waiters, and make that money, and come back to school."

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
So, away I went to Atlantic City. I knew nothing about it, not anything. (laughs) And so that didn't last very long. Meanwhile, I was doing the two years of plumbing.

CM:
Right.

JB:
As you know in Tuskegee, you have two kinds of things, you go to school in a class, and you go to the whatever it is, also.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
In other words, in the morning, you go dressed like this. And then you went to lunch, and then in the afternoon, you went to the thing that you were taking.

CM:
Okay so they taught you a type of skill?

JB:
Yes, so you would—

CM:
Like a technical school also.

JB:
So you'd put on your coveralls.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
We—I was there, kind of history like and George Washington, we built him a building.

CM:
George Washington Carver.

JB:
George Washington Carver.

CM:
Oh, okay, so he was--

JB:
We built the building for him.

CM:
He was teaching there then?

JB:
I don't know exactly what he was doing, I guess he was.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
But it was just work and I don't know exactly what all he did, but he was there.

CM:
All right.

JB:
See my dad went to Tuskegee too.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
And so my dad knew George Washington.

CM:
George Washington Carver, that is amazing.

JB:
Yes. Okay so I went to Atlantic City the second year I'm there. I wasn't much of a waiter, but I was still playing the saxophone.

CM:
All right.

JB:
And I was getting ready to leave Atlantic City and go back to Tuskegee. And I don't know the week, or the area of the time. I don't know whether it was exactly the week that I was supposed to leave Atlantic City and go back to Tuskegee. This is boring.

CM:
No, it's not, go right ahead, it's interesting.

JB:
Up in that part of the country when they have a new club, a nightclub, and the nightclubs there were built in two-parts.

CM:
All right.

JB:
You had where you went in and you were served at the bar. Then you went into another part where there was sitting at a table, and so that kind of thing. And during this time that I was getting ready to come back to Tuskegee and be a plumber again, a new club opened. And so my friend and I, we got our horns, and we were going to go and be part of that. And I went in to the place, and I went in the part where they sat down and start playing with the musicians And a fellow walked up to me and he said, "Are you playing, are you working anywhere?" I said, "No." Now remember, a week from then, I was fixing to leave and go back.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
He said, "Are you playing?" I said, "No." So he said, "Be there Thursday night." So I stayed up in Atlantic City in that area for three years.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
From just--

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Not with that group, but that's what started it.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
So instead of going back to Tuskegee, I started playing with the musicians.

CM:
Oh, okay. So that would have been around, I'm thinking about around 1940, 1941.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay, all right. At what point did you leave Atlantic City?

JB:
I'm not quite sure, but I stayed up that area about three years and came back to Oklahoma. My parents said, "You need to go back to college." Said, "You have two years left, and you're going to do those two years." So I came back to Tulsa. And you might say my life was a kind of, I don't know, a story.

CM:
That's a good story.

JB:
Yeah, I came back to Tulsa, and I was sitting around there, and my brother was at Wiley College.

CM:
Right.

JB:
He had been there. The two years I was in the east, he was there.

CM:
All right.

JB:
See, well—

CM:
And you're speaking of Wiley College that's in Marshall, Texas?

JB:
Marshall, Texas.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
So they asked me what did I want to do. And I said, "Oh, I don't know. I do want to go to college, but I don't know which one I want to go." And I said, "Well there's one up there in Kansas where they have music." And I had changed from the plumbing.

CM:
Oh, okay.



JB:
That was over. And I was going to go—and while I was making up my mind going up to Kansas to get into music, my brother went on back to Wiley for his last two years.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And when he got down there, the band director down there says, "Say, we need another saxophone." And my brother said, "Well my brother is back there, he—" So, I went to Wiley.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
So that's also where I met my wife.

CM:
Oh, okay. And Mrs. Braxton, her maiden name was—

JB:
Bernice Roberts.

CM:
Roberts, okay, all right. And we'll talk about that, because there's a interconnection there that that leads to, too.

JB:
Yeah, all that is the same thing. Yeah, and it happened that her brother, Roy Roberts—

CM:
Mr. Roy Roberts, who was a band director at Dunbar.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
And also principal at Dunbar at one time.



JB:
Yeah.

CM:
High school here in Lubbock.

***Pause in recording***

CM:
Okay, we were talking about—you were at Wiley.

JB:
Wiley?

CM:
Yes sir. And you mentioned that you went over there because your brother was there.

JB:
Yeah. They needed another saxophone player, and my brother happened to be there, and he told the band director, said, "My son is back at home," so to Wiley I went.

CM:
And how long did you stay at Wiley?

JB:
Two years.

CM:
All right, did you receive your degree at Wiley?

JB:
No, the Army kind of got in the way. And I had to go three years of that, and then go back and finish Wiley.

CM:
Okay, so you were drafted?

JB:
Yeah, well, let's see, I thought I was going to go around it in a way. I was at Wiley, and the service said, "You can—"so I went nearby and joined the service.



CM:
Okay.

JB:
See, thinking that they'd let me finish college, but they let me finish that year.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
So I had to come back after my service and finish Wiley.

CM:
All right. Okay, and let's see, so after you finish Wiley, where'd you go to school at? I mean, what did you do after you finished college?

JB:
After I finished college? Well, you see, I came back and went overseas with the army, and came back and [inaudible, 0:16:24], and then I went to Denver.

CM:
All right.

JB:
University of Denver, and finished it, or it finished me. (laughs) Yeah I finished Denver, and then started teaching.

CM:
Okay. Where was your first teaching job?

JB:
Okmulgee

CM:
All right.

JB:
Big metropolis.

CM:
Oh, okay, Okmulgee.

JB:
You know where Okmulgee is?

CM:
Is that south of Tulsa?

JB:
Yeah, just right out the door, thirty miles or more.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yes, right out there. Put in five years there.

CM:
All right.

JB:
Put in four years there.

CM:
Okay, now, Oklahoma has a lot, or had a lot of black cities—Okmulgee's not black—

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Completely black—Oh it is completely black?

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Black.

CM:
All right.

JB:
Yeah, put in four years there, and then one day I guess you'll figure that my life was one of those kind. Then my brother-in-law, Roy—

CM:
Yes.

JB:
You knew him.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Yeah, well Roy came here as band director. I've forgotten exactly what year, but see I was still in Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And he came here. And he went to a meeting.

CM:
All right.

JB:
And at the meeting, some fellow was saying, "Man, if I can get somebody to take my place, I can go back—" He was from—trying to think of the town in—Austin. The fellow was at this teachers' meeting, had graduated Austin, and he wanted to go back to Austin.

CM:
All right.

JB:
But he was a band director at El Paso.



CM:
All right.

JB:
And the principal asked of him if he could get somebody to take his place in El Paso, that he'd let him go to come back to Austin.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And at the meeting, my brother-in-law was there at the meeting, and he heard this fellow say that.

CM:
Mr. Roy Roberts was there, all right.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
See, you're going to get the idea that my life was just one of those weird ones. They were having this meeting, he heard him say, "Man if I could get somebody in my place, I'd—" This fellow was in El Paso, he was from Austin. And he said "If somebody could just [inaudible, 0:19:55]" and my brother-in-law, Roy, heard that, and well I went to El Paso for five years from that. Okay, shall I continue?

CM:
Continue sir, yes.

JB:
Okay, well you're going to think it's even worse. Okay, at doing my five years, the teachers' meeting was meeting in El Paso.

CM:
All right.



JB:
And they were meeting at the school where the school I was working.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
And I had my students performing for the thing, and the principal from here, Mr. Struggs, was attending the meeting. And so he heard—and the next year I was here.

CM:
Oh okay, this would have been 1960?

JB:
1960.

CM:
1960, Mr. Struggs was at the meeting, E. C. Struggs.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Wonderful man.

CM:
All right. So, when you came here what were you teaching at that time?

JB:
What did I teach?

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Band and orchestra.

CM:
Band and orchestra.

JB:
Yes. Well, there were several who did that.

CM:
Oh really, so, I know Mr. Roberts was here, and then you were also were a band an orchestra teacher, too?

JB:
Yeah, no, I mean in the city.

CM:
Oh, in the whole city, okay.

JB:
Some of the teachers taught band, and then they would teach the orchestra, too.

CM:
Okay. What were your schools that you were responsible for when you got here in 1960?

JB:
Well, it's a little complicated.

CM:
Okay

JB:
In that I had band here, and in the afternoon I would go have orchestra.

CM:
All right.

JB:
And when you're in the orchestra, you go from different schools.



CM:
Okay.

JB:
So I guess I went to just about every school in the city.

CM:
Oh.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay, so if I got this right then, even in 1960, you were one of the ones that crossed over, as far as went into integrated—

JB:
Oh yes.

CM:
Okay, so, all right.

JB:
Oh yeah, I taught on the loop.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
I taught just about every school, not every one, I taught many, many schools.

CM:
Okay, so this was prior to the—

JB:
But I taught them for orchestra. But then I was still working in band over here.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
See Roy and I were in charge of band.

CM:
Right.

JB:
In other words, it was a little complicated. He and I had band, then I'd leave in the afternoon, and go to elementary schools for orchestra.

CM:
Ah, okay. Now, I remember, and I would think eleven, I'm trying to count the years here, it had to be 1961, or maybe 1964, I encountered you at Ella Iles.

JB:
Ella Iles, yes.

CM:
You taught the sixth graders orchestra at Ella Iles.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Okay. That would have been 19—I'm thinking—I'm adding in my head right now, 1964.

JB:
Yep.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yeah, Mr. Priestly was the principal.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
That—

CM:
All right. So—

JB:
Yeah I went to, oh, it was many elementary schools.

CM:
Oh okay.

JB:
But I did them in the afternoon. But I'd be in the band at Dunbar.

CM:
Okay. So, before you got here in 1960, in particular in the school of Wheatley, Dunbar, and Ella Iles, was there an orchestra program then?

JB:
Where?

CM:
At Ella Iles and Wheatley and Dunbar, before you got here. Was there a string orchestra program here?

JB:
I'd say it was just getting started.

CM:
Oh okay.

JB:
I don't remember too much of what was going on. I remember Mrs.—I can't think of her name now—

CM:
Lincoln?

JB:
Ms. Lincoln.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
She was right down—

CM:
Right.

JB:
—here, well, see, before I came I didn't know much about it, because I was not here.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
So she was having some level of orchestra. But, then when I came, we really, really get it—it turned out we had some good ones.

CM:
What difficulty did you have in getting instruments for orchestra, in particular the cellos, and the string bass?

JB:
What do you mean?

CM:
Did they have string bass and cellos at the school?

JB:
The city provided them.

CM:
Oh, the city provided them, okay.

JB:
Yeah of course you know, at that level the students would not have their own instruments.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
So the city would lend them eventually for the year of the time, and then carry it back at the end of the year.



CM:
Okay, let's talk about where you lived at when you moved here in 1960, you and your wife. Where'd ya'll live at?

JB:
Over on--

CM:
East Twenty-Ninth?

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay, so when you moved in over there, that had to be a rather new neighborhood?

JB:
It was a very new neighborhood—there was nobody else.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
They were building—there was nobody there.

CM:
All right.

JB:
And they built I think four houses, I believe it was four, three or four houses, and I got one of them.

CM:
Oh, okay. So, you got one of the original houses that was built over there?

JB:
Right.

CM:
Okay, so—

JB:
Right. There was nothing else over there.

CM:
Okay. And I remember the Moors that lived on the corner of Teak & East Twenty-Seventh, was one of the first houses over there down by Wheatley. And so there was four houses, okay. So the area over there was—Mr. Taylor said at that time, before they built that neighborhood, it was like a maize field over there.

JB:
There was nothing.

CM:
There was nothing there.

JB:
No, our house—let's see, there were one, two, three—I don't believe there was but three houses, and we were the third one.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And then there was some houses coming back the other—

CM:
Oh, okay, wow.

JB:
But there was nothing.

CM:
Okay. That's amazing. That is amazing. In your association with Dunbar High, you had a lot of excellent musicians. And I'll talk first of all—I'd like you to talk about the orchestra. Some of the people I remember, I think you had Chester Griffin?

JB:
Outstanding.

CM:
Outstanding.

JB:
Outstanding, tremendous.

CM:
He was a string bass player?

JB:
Yeah, one of the best.

CM:
One of the best.

JB:
In fact, when he was here, he was *the* best.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
He was such that when we had contests—and we started having contests where all the city orchestras would meet at a certain place to prepare for them. And I can remember at Lubbock High—not Lubbock High, but the other high school at that time--

CM:
Monterrey.

JB:
Yeah Monterrey. It was almost too funny, when he would walk in, all of the other bass players would move down, that's how he was. Yeah, see the instruments line up [inaudible, 00:29:22]

CM:
Yes.

JB:
And the top one would be on this side, okay, then the door would open, and there he would be with his instrument. And the others would just start moving down. Well, how did he do that? Well, in the summer, his friends would go by, say, "Let's go swimming, let's go swimming." He said "Okay, I've got to practice first." That's how he did it. Yes, yeah, he was very, very good.



CM:
Now, did he go on to become all-state? Was he all-state also?

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Okay, he was all-state.

JB:
Oh, yeah.

CM:
And you had a reputation for a lot of all-staters. I guess he may have been the first one you had?

JB:
I don't know exactly whether he was the first one, but yeah, he was known here, he was the top one. Well, he simply just did it. That bass, it came first. And see later on, Roy had a jazz group. And we played professionally.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And he was the bass player.

CM:
Okay, he was the bass player, and I guess you were saxophone, and Mr. Roberts was the saxophone.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
Who was the drummer?

JB:
The drummer was a fellow from near another town.



CM:
Okay.

JB:
Right down the road a little.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yes, I can't remember his name now.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
He played with us a long time.

CM:
All right. After Chester Griffin, I know from my personal knowledge you had, in the orchestra, other all-staters—Clifton Garrett, Joe Phae, probably Karen Newton.

JB:
Karen was number one.

CM:
Sure, yeah, sure.

JB:
She was one of the top. As you know, she's still great.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Yeah, Karen, Alberta Lincoln.

CM:
Oh Alberta Lincoln. I forgot about Alberta Lincoln.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
So—

JB:
At one time, five of them were in the Lubbock Symphony.

CM:
Is that right?

JB:
Yep.

CM:
What five were they?

JB:
Alberta, and—I can't remember the others right now.

CM:
So that just goes to show that even back then, you introduced them—they were introduced to, I guess you would call it the upper-crust music, symphony music.

JB:
Well, they happened to come along at a time where it was very—if you could look back, I was teaching the band over there, and I was teaching the orchestra. Then some people who were in the band wanted to play in the orchestra, too.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Because see we didn't have an orchestra.

CM:
All right.

JB:
See they wanted to—so, some of them—in fact, a couple of people left the band and went into the orchestra.

CM:
Wow.

JB:
I was trying to think of the brothers that he was in the band, and he wanted to be in the orchestra. So, yeah, as it went, yeah.

CM:
Yeah. Now, in the band, you assisted your brother-in-law in the band. Ya'll had the band there. And I remember at a time before Dunbar—they built us a college—Dunbar had A bands, B bands, C band. You had quite a few people in the band.

JB:
Oh, yeah.

CM:
And what were your responsibilities in the band?

JB:
We worked together. For instance, in a regular band practice, I would warm them up.

CM:
Right.

JB:
And do whatever I wanted to do, or what they needed. He would tell me, "Go ahead and do what you want to do. He would work on his area, and I'd work—then, of course, then we'd work together. When we made trips, band trips—

CM:
Yes.

JB:
We'd always go together.

CM:
Okay.



JB:
And all during this time I was writing. At first we didn't have much, I'd say music that—you know at football games how you'd have numbers?

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Okay, at first we didn't have much music to play at the football game. Well, so I would write things for the band to play.

CM:
So you had to write all the instrument parts then?

JB:
Well I wouldn't say all.

CM:
But a lot of them.

JB:
Well, yeah. I wrote stacks and stacks of music.

CM:
Now one thing that I don't know if a lot of people know, you wrote the original Dunbar song, or one of the Dunbar songs.

JB:
Yeah, well at first, I don't know who, I hesitate to say, because they were not happy with it.

CM:
Right.

JB:
And they said, "Could you change it? Don't do away with it, but just change it."

CM:
Right.



JB:
So I just redid it.

CM:
Okay. And see I remember that one, "All hail to thee, Dunbar," or something like that, starts out with.

JB:
Oh yeah, yeah, I just—a lot of them that were unhappy with it, so I just turned it around.

CM:
Yeah, and one of the things is, when I went back to a reunion, they played the new Dunbar song, because I guess they changed the song. And we were very unhappy with that, so they brought back the song that we remember that you wrote. Because the new one was like—what is this? It's like the Star Spangled Banner, I mean you're going to change the Star Spangled Banner? And, yes. Now, how long were you a teacher?

JB:
How long did I teach?

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
I don't remember exactly now. I stayed as long as I could, up into the eighties.

CM:
Oh, okay. You've had a very storied life there, Mr. Braxton.

JB:
Oh yeah, yeah.

CM:
I mean the story that you're telling there is one that you see I guess when you watch like the romantic novel.

JB:
Well, just think how I happened to leave teaching. I went to one of the elementary schools making my elementary—see, we'd go to elementary schools a lot of the times, and teach elementary, and then teach it to the high school. So one of the elementary schools—a very nice fellow, he said, "How long you been teaching?" And I said, "Oh, so and so." He said, "You ever wanted to retire?" I said—in fact, I hadn't thought about it at the time, I was enjoying it, I was having fun. Yeah, teaching band and the orchestra. And Roy and I, we had a group. And everything was fine. And he said, "I'm going to write the capital and find out what's—" I don't know why he did it, but he did. So the next time I came back to that school, he says, "Yeah, this says that if you do another year, then you can retire." Said, "What? Wow!" Well, so when my wife retired—and the funny thing about her, she was still teaching. She said, "Oh no, I don't want to retire, I got a few more years." Then a few parts of that year, it seemed that it got a little tough, because I know she said, "I'm getting out too." Yeah, but this principal, I don't know why, he was a very nice fellow, he sent to Austin and found out about me. He said, "All you have to do, if you do one year, you can retire."

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
So I did that year.

CM:
Okay, Dunbar band, I know they received ones in marching, and also contests—do you remember how many times they did that?

JB:
I really don't know.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
I know that that contest thing in the hall, and those kinds of things, it was full from those contests because they got quite a bit of that kind of stuff.

CM:
Well, I think I was a freshman, or maybe a sophomore, as a member of your orchestra that won one in sight reading, and one in contest. And your preparation that you had for the band, where you had to read, especially sight reading. Well tell us about sight reading, what you had to do.



JB:
Sight reading, well, usually the sight reading sometime would change keys. Sometimes, anything they thought would kind of get you. And you had to just be prepared to go whatever direction they wanted to go in.

CM:
How much time did you as the conductor have to look at the music when they gave it to you?

JB:
Well there was prescribed time.

CM:
Right.

JB:
Where you had to just talk to them, and that was—I've forgotten now, but you had a time. Usually, the piece—mostly, it would usually change keys.

CM:
Right.

JB:
And sometimes the time, it may be in the six-six time or three-four time, and of course just about every time they'd change keys.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
You had—I've forgotten how much now—time, to tell them to prepare.

CM:
Right. So as a band and orchestra director, you had to pretty much know something about every instrument that they played.

JB:
Well, they tried to get you. And what you wanted to do was when you went to contests, you wanted to get a rating on what you played. And you also wanted to get a sight reading too. And so what you did was, in your regular practice, you would try to play numbers that were new.



CM:
Oh, okay, all right.

JB:
But I'd have to  not give it to me, but I'd give it to those students.

CM:
All right.

JB:
Those students, many of them were just—Alberta Lincoln, and the bass player—

CM:
Chester Griffin.

JB:
And they were musicians, they was wow.

CM:
How hard of a sell was it for you, to sell orchestra to students of East Lubbock?

JB:
One thing that was good was being new, starting it.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And the students that started wanted to be in it. They were people who were not in the band. Well, no, I had that wrong. See, because when I first started, you had some people who had had a little orchestra at a level of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
At that level. And they were band members. In other words, you had some people that were in the band, and then they would come into orchestra, and play in the orchestra too. But it was at a starting level [inaudible, 0:46:17:0] like that. But we had a changing situation. We actually had two bands, a band and an orchestra, and students who came to orchestra and went to band, too. They were at this level in band, and they were at this level at the orchestra.



CM:
Okay, a high level in band, and a lower level in the orchestra.

JB:
Yeah, so they played in the band, and they played in the orchestra.

CM:
All right.

JB:
But their level at the orchestra was "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

CM:
Okay.

JB:
But finally it changed, and they actually became just tremendous, good players. And I guess they were at that level where they wanted to do it.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Alberta Lincoln.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Boy, people like that—who was it—I remember the first little group that I had over at Ella Iles, a girl that's still teaching now, she was in that group. And that bass player that you were talking about.

CM:
Yeah, Chester Griffin.

JB:
He wanted to play. They wanted to play.

CM:
Well, what's amazing to me is, especially in the orchestra, we talk about this, but we didn't get a lot of exposure to orchestra when I grew up.

JB:
No.

CM:
And I remember you brought that to us. It's a difficult thing when you grow up with people—your friends are saying, "Orchestra?" And they do that, they look at you, "You're in the orchestra?" But I can think of so many people that were in orchestra, and in the band. I mean, there were a lot of people there that probably could have been excellent football players, basketball players. But yet still they were in the orchestra, in the band.

JB:
I'll tell you what, one parent, I can still remember her now, she was at Ella Iles. In the Ella Iles orchestra—that was one of my schools—and this parent was saying, "I don't know if I want my daughter to play one of them screechy things!" She didn't even know what it was. "I don't know if I want my daughter to play one of them screechy things." And that daughter became one of the top—

CM:
Top players?

JB:
And the mother sat up on the front row with her chest stuck out

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Well you did a magnificent job, because I'm thinking now you say these people coming from East Lubbock, which—I grew up in East Lubbock, but long hair, we played long hair music—the Mozarts, the Bachs. And I still have a taste for that now, because I'll see an orchestra or something—wow, man.



JB:
Yeah, I was just thinking about how those students, five of them were in the Lubbock Symphony.

CM:
That's commendable.

JB:
Yeah. I have to say those, Alberta Lincoln, and the bass player that we were talking about.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
They were just outstanding students. I was trying to think of that other one. Oh, shoot, and this one is still teaching orchestra down south there. Trying to think of her name.

CM:
That's not Cheryl Pillars is it?

JB:
No—I'll think of her name after a while. The one that's teaching, unless she's retired, she taught for years down there, down south.

CM:
Yeah. I will say this, in the orchestra that I was in in '71, Dwight Gibson was in the orchestra. Dwight Gibson actually went to MIT from Dunbar, and he played in the MIT orchestra. Yeah, he took what you taught him, he took it up to MIT, and played in the MIT orchestra. Yeah, not noted for music in MIT I'm sure, but the fact that he took it to that level and played up there.

JB:
Yeah, they did it.

CM:
Well, Mr. Braxton, I really appreciate everything you've said today because you're an integral part of this community, and what you did—well one of the things on music, it brought discipline, it brought appreciation, it brought a lot of stuff, because you had to have discipline. And I remember summertime, you would start orchestra a week or two weeks earlier. Just like football camp, they have football training, fall, spring training or whatever—well you would have us there in the orchestra.



JB:
Yeah, well shhh, shhh!

CM:
Oh, sorry, excuse—I'm sorry, I can't say it! Yeah, I understand what you're saying.

JB:
And every year, bands started a month early, first of August.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
You know you're going to have band.

CM:
Right.

JB:
Well, all over the city, orchestras didn't start.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
We started. Well, we had to do it, we didn't have an orchestra.

CM:
Right.

JB:
So when band started, we had to start an orchestra. And I remember the director, the one downtown, the man that was older? He came out to school one day, and he said, "What's going on?" See, because orchestra started a month later. And he had me having orchestra, and he said "What's this?" I said, "Oh, they wanted to—some of them wanted to." We were having orchestra. We would have band for an hour, and a band for orchestra for a month.



CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Well we had to do, because just think, at first we didn't have one.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
And those were a different kind of student. You would just have to see that lady down in—never can remember that town down south. She has orchestra. I think she's retired now, but she hadn't stopped teaching. And she's still in it. She's supposedly retired, but she—oh, they were just different.

CM:
Well I can think of that, because all your friends were at the swimming pool, or they're doing something, and you're in band, or orchestra. And we knew that orchestra came at that particular time, on a hot day like today, we were practicing.

JB:
Yeah, we'd go in the summer, go down to school there, and have band practice. Then when they left, orchestra.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
But I can still remember that supervisor when we was doing music, would come in there and then find the orchestra. He'd look around and, "What's going on?" Orchestra wasn't scheduled to go for a month later. He said, "What is this?" I said "Oh, they just wanted to do it."

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
But you know it's just a wonderful, wonderful thing to teach a student that wants to learn.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
You don't mind, you will stay there all day, because they want it. And for the football games, at first, we didn't have anything to play behind the football team.

CM:
Right.

JB:
For the band.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
So I started writing, and they—just think, here's this band of people, most of them never played a jazz—some of them maybe—Roy had a jazz band of about six or seven of us, but the people in the band hadn't been in and played the jazz or anything, so I started writing stuff for them. They loved that. The football games were at another place, you remember that?

CM:
Yes sir, it was Chapman Field on Avenue X.

JB:
Yeah, Chapman, there. And so we'd learn some of those numbers, and the youngsters would be next to where the band was sitting so they could dance.

CM:
Yes sir, yes sir. Now, something I remembered, and it's before you got here, when Dunbar was still in Ella Iles, the band actually used to march through the neighborhood.

JB:
Is that right?

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
I never heard that version.



CM:
But now, I do remember the band coming down—you had your practice field down there at Dunbar, where it's located at now at in East Twenty-Sixth Street, and you came off of that parking lot, that little field over there to the east, and you'd walk down that street. We'd hear you in the morning, the band would come down, or in the evening time.

JB:
Well, the wonderful thing that was just handed to me—see, this school started when I came.

CM:
Yes sir, opened in 1959.

JB:
So I never had the experience—

CM:
Of going to—

JB:
The other.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
So I walked over into a new band room and all this, so it was handed to me, it was very nice. Oh, it was very good. Oh, and another thing too, the band, for contests, they used to have to go to whatever that college is, that black college.

CM:
Oh, Prairie View?

JB:
Yeah, that's where they had to go.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Well, that year I guess you'd say I have an angel. That year, they started having the contest where our band, the black band, could take part. Before that we had to go to Prairie View.

CM:
So the year that you came, they started having it to where you were integrated. Before that you went to the Prairie View league and Prairie View A&M College down by Houston.

JB:
The year I came, Roy told us that, "Come by the school, we got to go to a meeting." And so we got to going, and the principal was with us, and we all went to wherever the meeting was. And they had said the bands would be—and so, we were together. I never went to Prairie View. The year I came, I came here.

CM:
And they started competing against everybody right here. Ah, okay, 1960?

JB:
Yep, right around there.

CM:
And that's amazing.

JB:
Yeah. All right, then another thing—used to be that we had transportation.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Remember those buses?

CM:
Yeah, now I know later on you had the TMO buses, the Greyhound buses.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
But before that what was your transport?

JB:
Right, well, the buses changed the year I came.

CM:
Oh, so you never experienced the—we would call them yellow dogs, be the old school buses.

JB:
No, I did not—that.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Well see Roy asked for that.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
He said, "We're not integrated, and where do these children—how do they go to the toilet? Where do they eat, what do they do?" So they turned around, let us use the buses. So I never went the other way.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
I never went to Prairie View.

CM:
And I heard that Mr. Roberts also was instrumental in getting uniforms for the band.

JB:
Oh yeah, he went downtown, the man said, "We can't go out there wearing that stuff." He spoke up. Yeah, he did a lot of things.

CM:
I never thought about the buses though, that would make a difference, especially if you're going distances to games and stuff.

JB:
Yeah, where you going to go to the toilet?

CM:
Yes, that's true.

JB:
Yeah, where you going to eat, yeah.

CM:
Yeah, because back then you still had, even in the early sixties, you had a bit of a segregated environment.

JB:
Oh yes.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
Oh yeah.

CM:
That would make a difference.

JB:
Oh yeah.

CM:
That would make a big difference.

JB:
But you can say Roy Roberts put the Dunbar band on the map.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Like the parades downtown. The other bands did not want to be in the part where the Dunbar band was.



CM:
Oh is that true, I didn't know that.

JB:
That's true. Would you want the Dunbar band blowing you off the street? That's what they would do, yeah, they were going along blowing them off the street. And I can remember the first time I was in a parade, Roy would walk on one side of the street, where they'd drop a drumstick, and pick up this music, and so forth. And later on, we'd get on the bus and ride down where they were going, and the band carried itself.

CM:
Ah, okay.

JB:
Yeah, we made a change.

CM:
Well, and I'm amazed when I look in the old annuals too, before they built Estacado, the amount—you had an A band, a B band, a C band. You had a lot of people in the band.

JB:
Oh yes.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Yes.

CM:
I mean it was a—

JB:
Yeah, you had three bands.

CM:
Did you have to try out to be in different bands?

JB:
Yes, but in that day, the students were coming up—you'd get to see them coming.

CM:
Okay, so you had the whole hands-on?

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Now, your son and your daughter—your daughter Ruby, and your son Tom. Is he the third?

JB:
Beg your pardon?

CM:
Is your son named after you? He's not James T.

JB:
No, no.

CM:
Okay, yeah, but when did you introduce them to music?

JB:
I didn't want to get carried away. So I let them in and build sand things, and play with the dogs and let them do that as long as they did. In fact, I had a pile of sand brought and piled up in the backyard. And then we had a house that we had a stove, and they'd let this dog running into the stove—we'd let them have a chow thing.

CM:
And what amazed me, because I'm quite a bit older than Tom, and I would think, I'd say, Man, he was raised in Mr. Braxton's house, music, music, music. But Tom was an excellent athlete, he was an academic person.



JB:
Yeah.

CM:
He was all around.

JB:
Right.

CM:
And I'm thinking, Well, man, I would have thought he would have been just—I said, he runs track, he's academically, he's this, and he has—

JB:
I can remember that football game that he won, where—yeah, and different things he did. He played football at Struggs.

CM:
I did not know that. Anyway, and we're talking right now about Mr. Braxton's son Tom Braxton,

who was a jazz musician, and he in his own right he has accomplished a lot of things also, but we're talking about his high school, and his upbringing. Go right ahead sir.

JB:
Well, speaking of the music part of it, sometimes I look at my life and I wonder now, what in the world, what was this? Now, you'd think that getting to him—in a class of mine at Struggs, I mean at Tech, I'd take a course every summer.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
I started doing it, and I'd take something—flute, learned the clarinet, [inaudible, 1:07:09.0] every summer. And so, my daughter said, "You need to take music history." Well you see in music you have to take music history, and so I'd already had it. She said, "You need to take this teacher." I've forgotten what they called him, his name. "You going to go to school in the summer, and so take his class." And so I decided to take his class, "Songs Lit" they called it.



CM:
Okay.

JB:
Okay, and sitting next to me was this piano player, the fellow that ended up the piano player with Tom's group.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
Did you ever know of him?

CM:
No, I did not.

JB:
Yeah, well he happened to be in that class.

CM:
All right.

JB:
He was in that class, and he said, "I'm going to start a group." Well at that time, Tom was not all saxophone, he was mostly an athlete and other things. And this fellow that was sitting next to me in the class there said, "I want him to be in the group" So he talked Tom into—Tom played in the band of course, but he said, "I want to start a group, and I want your son to be in the group." And so that started that group.

CM:
Was that No Compromise?

JB:
Did you ever hear of that group?

CM:
Was it No Compromise?

JB:
No Compromise.



CM:
Yes sir, I did hear No Compromise.

JB:
Well, that's how it started. He was sitting there next to me, telling me, "I'm going to start a group, and I want your son to be in it." I said, "Yeah, well what—" And so I spent that summer next to him, and he was telling me all he wanted to do. And then next thing I know—

CM:
Your son was in it.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
And we don't talk a lot about your daughter Ruby, but I understand, and Mr. and Mrs. Priestley told me that she's a good piano player.

JB:
She was one of the best.

CM:
Wow.

JB:
She was one of the best. We have just a little sadness, that is her turned away from it, but we realize that it's up to the student to decide what they want. She decided she wanted to be in finance.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And so she went back to school and took the whole course, finance, and then went to work as a financier, and has been ever since.

CM:
All right.

JB:
Well, but, at the time she did that, she was a top level pianist.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
When they would have these children's programs over there on whatever that street is at Main, where they had the music over there—

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Everybody would turn over to hear Ruby.

CM:
Now, both your kids came through, I would guess Wheatley?

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Struggs, Dunbar, probably. Oh, well Slaton also.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
So they had a education here. Now, when you tell me about your daughter Ruby, the other person I think of that comes to mind today, is Condoleezza Rice.

JB:
Who?

CM:
Condoleezza Rice, because she is a piano player, the secretary of state? And she was a piano player also.

JB:
True.

CM:
Yeah, she's still a concert pianist. You know, that's something. I was amazed, and one of my friends asked me one time, and I'm kind of ashamed to say, he said, "You used to could read music didn't you? " I said, "Yeah, I could read music." That's one thing you taught me, was to read music. But I let it go. But I could actually read music. I could look at something, oh.

JB:
You never forget it once you learn it, no.

CM:
Ms. Wilson said that, Mrs. Mary Jo Wilson—?

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
—she said about music, she said you never forget it once you learn it.

JB:
Oh no, you don't, it's a part of you. I think everybody should have a taste.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
I don't think everybody should just—but, well I grew up in a school in Tulsa there, where everybody was exposed to it.

CM:
To music.

JB:
Yeah, yeah, they exposed it to us. See, down in the fifth grade, we'd be exposed to it, and then they would decide whether you wanted to continue.

CM:
Wow.

JB:
But you'd have your taste.



CM:
That is amazing. And I have a connection to Mr. Roberts—my uncle and my cousin actually went to school with him at Samuel Huston. My uncle was Roswell Embry, J. T. Embry, and then Charles Perry, and they actually played in the band with him at Samuel Huston in Austin. And my uncle for a long time was a band director at Wilmer-Hutchins in the Dallas area.

JB:
My brother, my wife's brother, I guess you'd say he bordered on some kind of genius, I guess you'd say, in that he grew up in a town of three thousand people--

CM:
Wow.

JB:
In Oklahoma, and he got saxophone lessons from a fellow for fifty cents.

CM:
Wow. Now he grew up in Taft or Bowie?

JB:
No, Eufaula.

CM:
Oh, okay, was that another black town?

JB:
Are you acquainted with the town—do you know where Muskogee is?

CM:
Yes I do.

JB:
Yeah well Muskogee and—well, let's see, Muskogee's about thirty miles from Eufaula

CM:
Okay.

JB:
It's that run of highways around through there into Tulsa.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yeah, he took lessons. His dad—that was a wonderful, wonderful fellow—he saw that his son wanted to be one of the players, so he would pay fifty cents for him to take lessons.

CM:
Saxophone lessons.

JB:
Now that sounds funny—

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
But can you imagine how much that costs?

CM:
Yes sir, in those times, yes sir.

JB:
Yeah, fifty cents for them to—he moved his son back to Muskogee, which is thirty miles away, and allowed him to go to school there.

CM:
Oh, so Mr. Roberts's dad moved there, to allow his son—oh, okay.

JB:
Yes, moved her too, my wife.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
They moved. Well, see their school was not, whatever that is, the level



CM:
Oh okay, they—

JB:
And their own--

CM:
Yeah they didn't go to a level where they—twelfth grade I guess.

JB:
No, they didn't--

CM:
Okay.

JB:
So he moved them to Muskogee. And so Roy got a chance to play in the band there.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And that's where he got his start there. And then from then on, he just went up, up, up, from that fifty cents.

CM:
Oh, that's a good fifty cents. That's worth the money. I see you have a picture of Mr. Roberts and his sisters.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
Yeah, very, very wonderful fellow.

CM:
What was his father's name?



JB:
Huh?

CM:
What was Mr. Roberts's father's name?

JB:
Leroy.

CM:
Okay, Leroy.

JB:
Strange I just have to say that my life was just a weird situation—I don't know about weird, but her dad—father-in-laws are not—

CM:
Right.

JB:
Known to be—

CM:
True.

JB:
He was a—I say a golden person.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
I'd say. He's just wonderful. He went training I guess after sixth grade, one of those. And it looks like he's—wanting to do was to look out for his family. His father was one of those kind of fellows.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
And he worked all kinds of hard work, and so forth, and so forth to provide for them.

CM:
Oh, okay.

JB:
Leroy.

CM:
Leroy.

JB:
Leroy Roberts.

CM:
Leroy Roberts.

JB:
And his mother—you don't love mother-in-laws, but I loved her, just wonderful.

CM:
Wonderful.

JB:
Just a wonderful person, just a saint almost. So, they raised in an unusual situation, you follow? Now all the people, and you follow weren't like that, but they were that way. They were just wonderful people and so forth. And when I met them, they were just wonderful. And I like to go fishing. But for his children, he made sure they were provided with everything. And he couldn't afford it, but he did it anyway, he provided for them.

CM:
Well Mr. Braxton, we have covered a lot today, and as I said the date of today is the twenty-seventh of June, this is the second part of the interview that we started before. But I really appreciate what you've done. One last thing—are you still playing in a band?

JB:
No, I'm not playing in an band. What I have been doing these last two years is I'd go to school and play with the jazz band over there.



CM:
Okay, all right.

JB:
Probably two or three times a week, something like that.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
And usually I would just go one hour a day. There again—see you're going to think that I have—yeah, that's the way I feel. I don't know whether it's luck, or blessing.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
Number one was the—I can't recall her name right now—Mary Jo, yeah Mary Jo. Mary Jo was teaching the orchestra.

CM:
Mary Jo Wilson?

JB:
Yeah, she was teaching the orchestra over there, and I don't know who got the idea of having me to work with her, just violin. Okay, and the school was over at the other elementary. Okay, and finally she retired, and they stopped having the—

(phone rings)

CM:
Oh, calls like that—yes sir.

JB:
I don't know where they get the idea of having me to work with her—do orchestra. And then they stopped having the orchestra over at the elementary. And so then they put me in the band, with Anderson.



CM:
Okay. Oh, David Anderson, yes sir.

JB:
Very, very—I don't know how I meet these wonderful people. And he is a wonderful person. So they put me with him, and so I played with the jazz group.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
Yeah, we had fun. Whenever they would go downtown or go someplace, I'd go along, I would be the oldest.

CM:
Ah, okay.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
All right.

JB:
Okay, that went on for a year, and I just assumed that after that it's over. No, he got me again, so I was with them last year. So I don't know, maybe he'll grab me for another year. But he's a wonderful fellow too. How do I meet all these wonderful people? How long have you been doing what it is you're doing?

CM:
I started doing this in April, because they needed somebody to talk to people that were instrumental. They didn't have anybody to come across, and since I grew up in the neighborhood, I know a lot of people here.

JB:
True.

CM:
But I'm learning a lot of stuff that I didn't know, even though I grew up here. There's just hidden treasures here.



JB:
Right.

CM:
Yeah, hidden treasures.

JB:
It's just interesting what you've said. I look at the history of this area, and the people that I've seen, and oh you just run across so many wonderful people.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
Just right in this street.

CM:
And talking about this street, you live on Manhattan Drive now, but—

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
You've got Mrs. Vivian Cook that lived here.

JB:
Right.

CM:
Mrs. Graves, that had the—

JB:
That work that she did.

CM:
Yeah she had the private school here. You've got Mrs. Rose Lincoln and Mr. Albert Lincoln, Mr. Damon Hill, Mr. D. C. Fair, Mr. Joe Phae.

JB:
Right.



CM:
Mr. Theodore Phae.

JB:
Right.

CM:
It's a rich neighborhood here, this particular street in East Lubbock is rich with history.

JB:
Yeah, and just think, I taught Joe Phae.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
Yeah, when he came first to Dunbar to study the bass, the bass fiddle.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
And I think about—

CM:
Whoops, sorry.

JB:
I gave him his start, and he went on, and he's been on it ever since.

CM:
Yes sir, yes sir.

JB:
Yes. And it's funny for me—not lately, but for several times, I played with his group. And I said, I was his teacher, now I'm playing with him.

CM:
Right, and I'm thinking on this street right here, you got three people that used to live here that were very instrumental in the music portion of Dunbar High: yourself, Mr. Roy Roberts your brother-in-law, and Mrs. Rose Lincoln.



JB:
Ms. Lincoln, yes.

CM:
Yeah

JB:
Ms. Lincoln was the first—well, I say she was doing it before I came, yes.

CM:
Before Mr. Roberts came, there was another band director, and Mrs. Lincoln did some of the music.

JB:
Right, yes, I didn't know about that.

CM:
So, seems to me this street could be changed to music land.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
Because you're so instrumental to a lot of people. And not only just to the music, but music teaches you other aspects because I remember being in the orchestra, or in the band, you had the discipline, you had the responsibility, you had the accountability. So, there are a lot of lessons to be learned from music.

JB:
Well you know, times in a way have changed, when you all came along in the musical group, you wanted to be in it.

CM:
That's true, yes.

JB:
And you looked up to the group. Now, you got a student that they going to teach the teacher.



CM:
That's true, that's true.

JB:
Yeah, and I think that's what kills the level of the musical ability, when the student starts giving lessons to the teacher. Not being a boss's situation, it is that the teacher has so much to give to the student, but they can't give it to them. I look at it every day—here comes a teacher just loaded with all this music, and tries to give it to the student, and the student, "Oh, I don't want to do that, I—you know" In other words, it's like having a bunch of gold, or money, or something you want to give to somebody and, "I don't want that."

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
And it's rather interesting---I remember the first year, three years ago, I had a student I was supposed to teach the violin, and I'd say let's do this. "Oh, I don't want to do that." I said, "Well now wait a minute, do you realize how long I have been teaching this?" "Yeah, well I don't want to do that, I want to play—" And so I said, Well what I'll do is I'll use psychology on him. I won't get my violin out, I'll just let him get his and then I said what do you want to play? Anything you want to play, I'll listen to you.

CM:
Okay.

JB:
But see actually there was wasted time.

CM:
Yeah.

JB:
The thing can turn over to another situation. Schools have become, I don't know, just they've changed. I remember when outside the band room, on the city sidewalk there, when the band would be practicing, Roy would be working with the band. It would just be a little group, just right there outside the door. Those were coming musicians.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
See, they would sit there, listen, listen, listen. Then the next year, when the time was that they could take it, they were ready. But now, you have a student come along, "I don't want to play that."

CM:
It's a little different in that the music has changed, because there's a lot of sampling there. There are very few what I think of pure musicians, because a lot of people, they sample, they take music from other people, that kind of deal.

JB:
Right.

CM:
And one other thing that we had—I think it goes back into the houses. There was never a misunderstanding about who ran the house.

JB:
There you go.

CM:
I was not a friend. I was not a buddy. I did not make decisions. There was no democracy.

JB:
No.

CM:
Because they ran the house, and adults were adults, and you listened to what an adult says.

JB:
Right.

CM:
You don't have an opinion. I might listen to your opinion, but we still run this.

JB:
Yeah, well how could the student see what's coming?

CM:
Yeah, right.

JB:
Because he's never seen it.

CM:
Right.

JB:
How could he see it? Then maybe somebody who has seen it can say, "This is it". But "No, I don't want—" Every day I pick up the paper, and some youngster's done—like that one that killed himself going around—

CM:
Yeah, yes.

JB:
That kind of thing, "Well, I want to do this—" Well, he hasn't had a chance to taste it, and feel it, and so forth. There's so much I can think of, or that I know is real fine piano player. He played at our church for a while and so forth. And he was a fine piano player, fine saxophone player. Well, he taught at this junior college over there, whatever the one is, and all the time he was there, they were teaching him. And so finally he walked into the person over there and said, "I'm gone". Now he was a fine musician, and you think of what he could teach them was just like a pile of gold. But, they going to teach him.

CM:
Right yes, and I think, I kind of laugh at it, because my daughter, when she was sixteen and seventeen—well, they're stressed out, and you've never been in their position. And I guess we were born at this age, we never went through the trials and all this kind of stuff. And she had made an interesting statement to me one time, she said, "Well, I wish I was raised by Grandmother and Grandfather." And I said well, you really don't want to do that, because you're not tough enough.

JB:
Right, right.

CM:
But there's no appreciation anymore, because I appreciate what you and Mr. Roberts did for us and the community because we were introduced to something that we didn't see.

JB:
Yeah, yeah, how you going to have the chance to try something, and go through it, and decide whether you want it or not.



CM:
Yes.

JB:
And here you are, "Oh, I know all that."

CM:
Yeah, that's true, that's true. They don't give any room for learning. Well Mr. Braxton, I really appreciate you allowing me to talk to you today, and share with you some some of the things—you're involvement with the Lubbock community in your life, and I may talk to you some more about this, but thank you very much sir, it's been a pleasure.

JB:
Well, what I enjoy is listening to you, knowing that you lived that day.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
See, you went through it.

CM:
Yes, yes I did. I'm proud of the fact that I was associated with East Lubbock, and I came through this community, because there was so many good people. And so many adults that had interests in us as kids, that spent time with us. Even now, when you say you going to the school and spending time, helping out the orchestra and the band. We had to have guidance and mentorship.

JB:
What you're saying has made me think about the fact that in those villages that some parts of the world are, you have fellows there—some old Indian, or some old so-and-so who has experienced everything—

CM:
Yes.

JB:
—there, and he can bring the youngsters and tell them what he's going to do and so forth, before they have to go. But we have to get our head knocked against the wall and so forth, instead of finding out. That part has been left out.



CM:
Yes it has.

JB:
I can see my dad now trying to tell me something one time, "Son, such and such is bad." "Yeah, but Dad, but, but, but, but Dad." And he said, "But hell!" Yeah, see here is life, laid out here to him.

CM:
Yeah, yes.

JB:
He sees it all, he's done it through, and here I am talking about—I know.

CM:
The joke now is that when they're a teenager they know everything.

JB:
Yeah, they have to go like the boy that killed himself.

CM:
Yes.

JB:
Yeah, they have to do it first. Now that's a shame, if somebody had told him, Don't do this.

CM:
That's true. That's true, and one of the things that my parents did, no meant no. They didn't give an essay, or an explanation on anything. Simple question, yes or no is the answer.

JB:
Yeah.

CM:
If I asked to do something, they said no, no meant no. They didn't explain why they said no.

JB:
They didn't because they had been through it, and they know the results of it.



CM:
Yeah, yeah.

JB:
Why go through it again.

CM:
And there was no need in asking, because no, simple no.

JB:
Yeah, why go and bang, bang into it again.

CM:
If they're not in a courtroom, they don't have to defend their self. But Mr. Braxton, I appreciate it sir, and it has been a moving and a fantastic interview today.

JB:
Well, you have amassed, what sounds like, quite a bit of knowledge yourself.

CM:
Yes sir.

JB:
And much of it you've gotten it from watching others.

CM:
That's true. I experienced a lot of stuff, but I've learned quite a bit—even though I was around, I didn't see some of the hidden stories.

JB:
That's true.

CM:
I didn't know this was going on. I had no clue.

JB:
That's true.

CM:
Yeah, and it's fantastic. Well thank you sir.

JB:
Yeah, well, the knowledge is there, all we have to do is—

***End of interview***