

**Oral History Interview of
James Otis Price Jr.**

**Interviewed by: Cosby Morton
July 17, 2013
Lubbock, Texas**

Part of the:
African American Interviews

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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 Lubbock band director James Otis Price. Price discusses his experiences growing up in East Lubbock, attending Texas Tech, and teaching music in Lubbock. Price also talks about the various professional musicians with whom he has played.

Length of Interview: 01:26:35

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Cosby Morton (CM):

Today is July 17, 2013, my name is Cosby Morton. I am representing Texas Tech's Southwest Collections. I have the honor today to talk to Mr. James Otis Price, a former student of Dunbar High, a retired educator, and a person who grew up in that area in East Lubbock. Also, Mr. Price is an avid musician. He identifies with Dunbar from the early years, and he's still playing to this day. Good afternoon, Mr. Price.

James Price (JP):

Hello, how are you doing?

CM:

I'm doing pretty good. First of all, I want to ask you, would you give me your whole name, please.

JP:

James Otis Price Junior. I'm a junior.

CM:

You're a junior. All right, and so am I. Where were you born, Mr. Price?

JP:

Where?

CM:

Where and when?

JP:

Where and when, I was born in Lubbock in 1941.

CM:

Okay, were you born in the house or were you at Chatman Hospital or where were you born?

JP:

Chatman Hospital, I believe.

CM:

All right.

JP:

No, I don't think it was Chatman, it was another hospital.

CM:
Saint Mary's?

JP:
I don't remember.

CM:
And the reason I ask about the hospital because a lot of the generation prior to you were born in the houses.

JP:
I knew it was a hospital, but I don't remember which one. I don't think it was Chatman, though.

CM:
All right, what were your parents' names? James Otis Price Senior.

JP:
My wife—my mother's name is Janna, J-a-n-n-a.

CM:
All right, so your education that you have, you were born in 1941 so you are a Lubbockite, you were born and raised in Lubbock, Texas.

JP:
Yes sir.

CM:
All right, when you started school in East Lubbock, you started at Dunbar High?

JP:
I started at Iles Elementary.

CM:
Oh, it was Iles then, okay.

JP:
Yeah, Iles was a separate schools from Dunbar at the time. Iles was the elementary school right next to the high school.

CM:

Okay, so this is on Date Avenue, so I'm thinking at the south end of the school—

JP:

Is the elementary.

CM:

There was the elementary school, that was Ella Iles. Who was your first grade teacher?

JP:

Miss Struggs.

CM:

Miss Struggs, Miss Lillian Struggs.

JP:

Yes, Miss Lillian Struggs.

CM:

The wife of Mr. E .C. Struggs.

JP:

That's right.

CM:

Okay, what do you remember about Iles?

JP:

Pretty good school, I enjoyed it. Of course, when you're in elementary school, school is always fun. But I learned a lot. Miss Struggs was a great teacher and later on I had Miss Simmons.

CM:

Mae Simmons.

JP:

Yeah, she was one of the better teachers I remember.

CM:

So she was a teacher then?

JP:

At one time, before she became principal.

CM:

All right, you lived—where did you live at?

JP:

On Globe Avenue.

CM:

On Globe Avenue. What hundred block?

JP:

2300.

CM:

2300 block of Globe. In that particular area over there at that time, that's way before—okay, the 2300 block would be down by where the Buntons are living.

JP:

Exactly, across the street from—the ally was separating us from Buntons.

CM:

Wow, I didn't know that. Was it a dirt street over there?

JP:

For a long time, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

All the streets were dirt.

CM:

Now I remember the crossed streets, the numbered streets, East Twentieth, Twenty-First, those being dirt. When I came along, they were basically paved, the main streets. Were the streets actually named Globe or were they East Avenue G?

JP:

No, it was Globe. G is on the other side of Avenue A.

CM:

Okay, now at one time when you go back in history, back in the thirties, those streets were East Avenue A, B,C, and D.

JP:

Oh, I didn't know that.

CM:

Yeah, that's something I've learned from talking to the people. I've been amazed. Now let me ask you, also down at the end of it, on East Twenty-Fourth, East Twenty-Fourth and Fir was a theater. Was that around when you were?

JP:

It was there after a while. I think when I was a youngster, there was a theater and I can't remember the name, Ritz, I believe it was. We went to Saturday morning cartoons and cowboys.

CM:

Okay. Was it a pretty nice theater?

JP:

It was. Somehow it burned down.

CM:

I remember coming up and seeing where Miss Long's house is now, Marie Long. I actually saw the foundation to it. I never saw the theater. Although, the other day I was looking at an aerial shot of Dunbar back in the fifties, and I noticed when you look up I saw the theater. I said, "That's the first time I've ever seen a picture of the theater." It was there. Of course, that little turn right there you also had a washateria or something in there, a store.

JP:

A store, washateria, a barber shop.

CM:

Wow, who ran the barber shop?

JP:

A man named Joe.

CM:

Was it Davenport?

JP:

Davenport, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

Joe Davenport. I couldn't think of name his been so long. He ran the barber shop and Ralph Alexander.

CM:

Alexander was there, wow.

JP:

Yeah, Ralph Alexander and Joe Davenport had a barber shop there. Then there was Ned Edwards, he was around there, too. The three of them were in that barbershop. My aunt had a restaurant on the end of that complex.

CM:

What was your aunt's name?

JP:

Gladys Moore.

CM:

Okay, I didn't know that. So you're kin to the Moores?

JP:

Yeah, first cousins.

CM:

Wow, see that's something. I've known the Moores—Patricia and all them, I've known then for years and it doesn't surprise me because everybody had kin folks here. When I come—I said, "I didn't know y'all were cousins." "Well, yeah, we're first cousins." "Okay, wow." And I have to add them in because when we get to music, singing, that's their forte because the Moores, I remember them, they were girls, as singers.

JP:

My family is the same way today.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

The Price sisters are good singers.

CM:

Wow.

JP:

My aunt, as I said had the restaurant, and my Uncle John Henry Walker had a grocery store right across from the theater.

CM:

Is that the Walkers?

JP:

The Walkers, John Walker.

CM:

Was it Jimmy Walker?

JP:

John Walker.

CM:

John Walker, okay. They had a grocery store there, too?

JP:

They had a grocery store right across from the theater.

CM:

That's what amazes me. I remember, you know, the James Green grocery stores, Mrs. Shuggs, but as I looked at the directories, there were a lot of grocery stores over there.

JP:

There were a lot of them, probably about three or four in two blocks.

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CM:

And they all had business?

JP:

They all had business.

CM:

Wow, that's amazing. See, that's something I didn't know. What was the name of his grocery store?

JP:

Walker's.

CM:

Walker's Grocery Store, and that's right there on the corner of East Twenty-Fourth and Fir?

JP:

Fir, right.

CM:

Right across from the theater?

JP:

On the southeast corner. Well no, his was on the northwest corner, yeah.

CM:

The northeast corner. Do you remember back then, was Mr. Virgil in that area?

JP:

Mr. Virgil had the bicycle shop.

CM:

Yes.

JP:

And you could rent a bike for fifty cents all day long.

CM:

I thought that was interesting because even when I came up, he still had the bicycle shop there. And now you see when you go to vacation different places they rent bicycles. I'm thinking Mr.

Vigil's doing this back in the fifties and sixties. He's renting bicycles; it's amazing when you look at that. Tell me something else about that over there where you were living at. Who lived around you?

JP:

We had about 272 children within in a six or eight block radius, and I knew all the kids. We had the Malones, we had the Days.

CM:

Which Malones?

JP:

William Malone and his sisters.

CM:

Bobby Malone.

JP:

Bobby Malone, the basketball player.

CM:

And the reason I say that was because years later when I was living over by the graveyard. They lived down the street from us on Vander.

JP:

Well, Bobby Malone was in that neighborhood, Melvin Taylor, the Buntons, Billy Scully.

CM:

William Scully, yes, I remember.

JP:

Charles Baker and his family; there were about ten of them. O. W. Wright, if you remember him. He was in—I think there were four or five of them.

CM:

Well, what's interesting to me is when you look at why there were so many kids there.

JP:

Exactly.

CM:

And you hear today where people were talking about, "Oh, well we were poor, we were raised here." But I mean, there were kids everywhere. And the fact about it is, my mother had her bluffing. You know, she would just—because my dad was in the military a long time and it was two parents, but I had one parent. My mother knew everything to do. She knew how to control the house, and there was no—I didn't want for anything, I had food.

JP:

We didn't either. The neighborhood was rich with knowledge and a lot of enterprising people. It was rich, it didn't seem to be because there were no role models to follow for my parents and people in the neighborhood, but all of us had aspirations to do something besides go to school and come home. We all talked about the dreams that we had in the old days.

CM:

And that's the interesting thing, your parents supported that though, right?

JP:

Exactly, they did. My parents said, "Whatever you want to do, just let us know." My dad would say, "Well, I can't afford everything, but we'll find a way."

CM:

That's great. Where did they come from?

JP:

They were from Spur and the Crosbyton area.

CM:

Oh really? Okay.

JP:

They still have property down there. My mother still has property down there.

CM:

That's unusual in that when you look at a lot of African Americans, a lot of them come from East Texas. Now, Mr. Taylor is one of the ones that will tell you up front, "I was born and raised in Floydada, Texas." He said, "I didn't come from down there, my mother did." He'd say, "I was raised out here."

JP:

Well my folks are from that area, but my granddad was kind of a farmer and he worked for the 6666 Ranch out there for a while. So we got to go to the farm all the time. We got to do some country living when I was younger, especially with my granddad and learning to grow up.

CM:

That's fantastic. So the structure, so you had a family structure back then?

JP:

Yeah, and we still have a strong family structure. My mother's in Mayfield right now, but she's one of three living sisters in her family. Everybody looks to my mother and her two sisters for guidance. It's just like before, nothing's changed.

CM:

And that's something interesting because in my family what would have happened is, when my mother passed, when my aunt passed away, that whole generation on my mother's side of the family, except for one, he's an [inaudible] out in California, he's like seventy. You know, he's a young one, but the rest of them were gone. There was a ton of them because they grew up in Paris sharecropping, but there was a lot of cousins. Every cousin's gone, and if you don't talk to them, you don't hear things. You don't know what's going on.

JP:

Yeah, the neighborhood was pretty, back to that, the neighborhood was pretty interesting. We had some fun and as I said, everybody had a dream that I could tell you about. I don't remember what everybody said they wanted to do, but that was one of the conversations that you would hear when we were playing. "I'm going to be a so and so, I'm going to be this and I'm going to be that." The parents were saying, "Okay, if that's what you want to do, you can do it."

CM:

And that is excellent because that's something you can take on in history because if you have a dream, you can achieve that. And by the people that have come, you're one of those that come out of that neighborhood, there are lots of people in all types of industries, you know, entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, lawyers, you name it that have come out of that neighborhood. I like the way you put it that you say it was a thriving neighborhood. It had everything in it.

JP:

Yeah it was, as far as monetary things, it wasn't that way, it wasn't rich in those ways, but the culture was rich, and I can tell people that every day. I said there's such a thing, and you have a rich culture, the rest of you will follow because your mind is conditioned to moving and doing instead of sitting back. Like today's people, I see too many people who sit back and say, "The

government's going to take care of me." No, no, no. We had no government programs, we were it. So we knew we had to do things.

CM:

And tell them about the interaction with the teachers over there. Okay, Miss Claribel Smith, there's a lot of them because the teachers lived in your neighborhoods; they saw your mother at church. Where did your mother go to church at?

JP:

We went to the Wholeness Church on Fir Avenue at the time.

CM:

It was Reverend Haynes' church now.

JP:

It's Haynes's church now and I forget the name of it, too. They've changed it a couple times. But we went to that church and basically—I said basically, that's a bad term—sometimes we'd go to church with our buddies. I went to Bethel, I went to Carter Chapel, I went to the Church of Christ, wherever I had a friend, we would visit.

CM:

Right, and you mentioned the fact that all these churches were in the neighborhood because Carter Chapel was on Twenty-Fifth down there by Jameson across from the school.

JP:

We had several churches in the area, but we had friends in every church. So as we grew older, especially your seventh, eighth week, you go visit with your buddies. So we would go to each church.

CM:

So church played a big part in the neighborhood, too, because what you're saying, and I had the same deal, we had to go to church, and all my friends. You'd see us walking different ways on Sunday morning, but we were heading to a church on Sunday morning.

JP:

Yeah, you went to somebody's church. Of course, your parents expected you to go to your church first. But we had a chance to visit. Like I said, church was important in the neighborhood and it should be today, but it isn't. It was a real important part of the culture, it was a real important part of growing up and to this day, I love church. I grew up playing drums in the church.

CM:

So that's when you got your first inkling for drums?

JP:

No, it actually started in my backyard. That's a long story.

CM:

No, tell me about it.

JP:

We lived three blocks from the school, and I could hear—when I was a kid, we could hear the band marching down the street going to practice down on East Twenty-Fourth Street, Forty-Sixth I guess it is now. I'd hear them playing, so I would get me some sticks and twigs and as they say, beat along with them. One day my dad says, "What are you doing?" I was like four maybe five. So he got an oil drum and put a tube from a truck across this little 5 gallon oil drum. He said, "Okay, now you've got a drum you can hit on." Because I was hitting on everything else. I'd sit out under the trees, and when the band would go out and play—

CM:

Well, that's a priceless story. That is fantastic.

JP:

Well, my dream was to play behind the cartoons on TV. I didn't know they were recorded at the time, but that was my dream. I wanted to be one of the guys that played behind the cartoons because the music was so good and it was always challenging. I said, "I want to do that." But that's how I started playing drums. And in church we always had a drummer somewhere. I'd go up there and ask the guy, "Will you show me what you're doing? Can I do this?" And they said yes, and eventually—in fifth grade, I went to Mr. Roberts, you know we talked about him a little bit ago. Mr. Roberts was at Dunbar and I said, "I want to be in band." He said, "What can you play?" I said, "Well, I can play drums and I want to play a trumpet." He said, "Oh, you want to play trumpet?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Why do you want to play trumpet?" And I said, "Well, because it makes notes." And he said, "What about drums?" I said, "Well, I already know what these guys are doing." That was fifth grade, he said, "Oh really?" So he sent me back to the practice room where the drummers were and he said, "Listen to this kid and see what he's doing." And I got good reports just on that.

CM:

Who were some of the drummers then in the band when you went that you can remember?

JP:

Hardy Meniffee, Matty Rutherford—I'd have to start thinking some more, Betty Wilson, a few people, but they were ahead of me. They were seniors when I did this.

CM:

And where was the band room?

JP:

The band room was at Dunbar. The drumming was in Mr. Lincoln's room in the building. That's where he would put the drums, and Roy would take different horns and put them in a different room and let them practice by themselves and then he would take them back to the band hall and everybody would play together after that.

CM:

So you actually didn't have in the school like it is now where you had the practice rooms?

JP:

No, no. We'd practice in the building. You'd go in the back door, and I think we had like four or five rooms, one for the horns and one for the saxophones and one for the base players and one for the drummers. Then you'd practice an hour or so and then you'd go to the band hall and he would put it all together and say, "Okay, let's see what we got." And the band hall was a separate building from the main building. It was a little portable that sat out on the east side of the building—on the north end of the building—right by the backdoor of the school.

CM:

Okay, I've seen—when I looked at that picture, I was seeing all—because the cafeteria wasn't even there in the picture I saw.

JP:

No, the cafeteria wasn't there either.

CM:

And I saw that and I'm looking and I'm seeing all these little buildings. Okay, something that I learned the other day that I didn't know, I was talking to Mr. Peppers, and when I was there, Mr. Peppers was teaching special ed, the room that was kind of off down by the gym by itself, and he told me that used to be the shop when Dunbar was there.

JP:

Yeah, when Mr. Hill was there.

CM:

That's things you don't know. I guess I didn't even think about it. The separate building looked like a house. Miss Barrow told me that was homemaking. See, when I was in there Miss Wheatley was there as a nurse, but I said, "That makes sense, it looks like a house."

JP:

It was homemaking, yeah, that was homemaking and building.

CM:

Okay, you had a separate room. Where'd y'all march at?

JP:

Down on Twenty-Sixth Street and Date.

CM:

Down by where the field was?

JP:

Yeah, the field was on Twenty-Sixth to Twenty-Eight I believe between Date and Elm.

CM:

Okay, so y'all marched down from the school every day?

JP:

We marched down from the school every day— morning, and afternoon, depending on how Mr. Roberts felt, you had to march down there. You didn't walk to the field, you marched down there, so we could get our lines and files together. We always had to be up on top of what you're doing. So we marched to the building and we marched back.

CM:

That serves two purposes, too. Because I remember being—what you said, it inspired you by hearing the music there, but I remember seeing them as a kid marching the neighborhood. You had to march down there and I'm thinking, "Wow." I'm looking and I'm like, "Man, that's fantastic."

JP:

Well, it made it real fantastic when your friends watch you march back. That was even more fun. In about sixth grade, I went to the state contest and everything with the band and got an honorable mention as the youngest percussionist. I was twelve years old.

CM:

Wow, and that's at Prairie View?

JP:

Prairie View, yeah.

CM:

Man, that's impressive.

JP:

That was a long time ago. I remember having to ride on the back seat of the bus because I was one of the little guys sitting on the back. Well, you were small enough to fit in a small hole so they said, "You little guys get in the back seat." I think there were four of us back there.

CM:

Mr. Braxton told me an interesting story about the Tnm & O He said Mr. Roberts wouldn't talk to him, he said, "Look, when we go to these games—" They were riding the yellow dogs, what we call yellow dogs. We can't stop anywhere to eat or to use the bathroom; we need to go on a different type of bus. So he actually go the school system to start putting the band—

JP:

In Tnm & O.

CM:

The story about him getting the new uniforms for the band. So I was impressed, that just impressed me.

JP:

That was when Roy got there in '55 or something like that. That all happened within the first three years I think he was there. I don't know his history, but I know he did a lot of things with the band.

CM:

Well now Ms. Wilson told me he lived somewhere down by that Dunbar field because she said they actually lived where Saint Luke is. And she said she would practice and Mr. Roberts would come by and say, "You don't have to practice that long, go on in the house" because she'd be out there under the tree, you know, blowing the horn or something like that.

JP:

He lived down on the end there somewhere and you could see his car all the time, so you knew that he was in the neighborhood. Roy would park in his driveway and we'd say, "Mr. Roberts is home, I'm going to practice." So you'd practice while you thought he was home because you didn't know when he was going to come down the street. I never knew when he was going to come by my house, so I was always practicing. I had to practice.

CM:

Did he drive by your house?

JP:

He'd drive by anybody's house. I mean, he wasn't checking on you or anything, I think he was just canvassing the neighborhood. Roy cared about the kids, and he wanted everybody to grow up. He gave a lot of life lessons. People say, "Oh, Roy was kind of hard." I said, "No, if you stop and think about it, the man was just trying to put you on the good foot," as James Brown would say. But he was trying to get you where you could see where you could go with what you had. If you had a talent, use it. If you didn't have a talent, develop one. Whatever you were doing he wanted you to be good at it. He said things like, and I did this when I was teaching, "If you want to be a garbage man, be the best garbage man that they've ever had." Whatever you going to do, you got to do your best at it. Kids will look at you and say, "I don't know, Mr. Price," or, "He's old, he doesn't know what he's talking about." You don't get old unless you know what you're talking about. But you have to relay these things to kids and I love teaching for that reason. What else did you need to know about?

CM:

One of the things that you've begun, when I came up, it didn't dawn on me until later that all our teachers—they lived in our neighborhood, I knew that, but they were all from the black colleges. One thing, like you said, Mr. Roberts, they cared about you because I would get in trouble for talking in class, and then the teacher would say, "I need to talk to Justine." She knew my mother's name. She said, "You tell that PTA to be here or something." And she would tell on me and sure enough my mother would say, "I'll take care of that." The dreaded word. You won't have to worry about that. But you're right, they cared about the kids and they watched you, they taught lessons.

JP:

Yeah, we started and got off on side track there about the teachers in the neighborhood. Ms. Smith, you mentioned, mentioned Mr. and Ms. Lincoln, they were around, Miss Barrow was in the neighborhood, Ms. Cosby was in the neighborhood, everybody, Ms. Sheffield lived on Date, she was right in the neighborhood. So yeah, there were a lot of teachers close by, and that kind of got your attention when you saw somebody that you respected watching you when you were

doing something that you knew was a little bit suspect. And it didn't make you mind so much as it was just mindful. That's what I tell kids today. I said, "We had teachers that watched us and if they said something to our parents, you didn't—taken yourself home would have been the last thing that happened. Yeah, the teachers in the neighborhood were great.

CM:

Well take me through to the rest of band. Now, y'all competed in what was called the Prairie View League, I guess. How did y'all do?

JP:

We did real well, we got a lot of sweepstakes.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

In fact, the six years that I went down there, we got sweepstakes I'll bet your four times. We always got honorable mention for something. We were never one of the second tier bands, we were one of the top bands.

CM:

And you were competing against all the black schools in the state?

JP:

Yeah, and it was kind of like UIL today, except that it was restricted to just the black schools. But yeah, Dunbar was well known throughout the state in contests. They knew that if Dunbar came down, they had to really work at it.

CM:

How big was the band when you were in it?

JP:

I think ninety people.

CM:

Yeah, and that school couldn't have been too much bigger than that.

JP:

Almost everybody was in band that didn't play football.

CM:

You know, one of the interesting things I found out, Mr. Priestley said he played football and he still played in the band at the time. So I'm thinking, Man, that was dedication there.

JP:

Yeah, it was. We didn't have too much of that, but we had a lot of people that wanted to be in band. Band was a prideful thing. We talk about Roy Roberts a lot and I just mentioned him a few weeks ago. One of the things that Roy would say to us, "When you put on that uniform, you are somebody else. You're the best that the school can offer. So you got to act that way when you go out in public.." And he would insist that the band uniform is going to be buttoned up. No coats hanging off your shoulders and tied around your waistline, you button up like you're in the army. He said, "The band uniform is our statement to the neighborhood."

CM:

So he's teaching you lessons for the future. No matter what you do, when you go out into the working world, then you got lessons. You know to be neat to do this and always look your best and do your best.

JP:

And do you best, and he did that a lot. As usual, kids don't want to listen to anybody saying, "Oh man, Mr. Roberts is—what's he telling us this for?" But the older, probably by the time I got to be a sophomore or junior, I realized where he was headed because—I'll have to get personal on this thing. When I was in seventh and eighth grade, I had no drum instructors. All the guys were gone and were ahead of me, there's nobody there. Roy said, "You need to learn how to play these things if you really want to play them." At four o'clock in the afternoon when school was over, he would leave me in the band hall. He lived down the street from the band hall and he could see the building. He'd leave me and go home and have a snack or whatever. About five thirty he'd come back and say, "Okay, show me what you did." And I'd play this stuff for him and he said, "Well, that didn't sound right, let's do that again." Then he would take me home if I needed to go home if it was so late, but I'd get home later than anybody because Roy would lock me in that band hall. He locked the door, nobody could come in but the janitor, but I'd be in there practicing by myself. I had three drum lessons my whole life and the guy that I was taking lessons from passed away. I started taking lessons in April and he passed away in July. So I had nobody to teach me. The things that Roy had set up earlier, I did that on my own.

CM:

And then plus your classwork and your chores at the house and all of this. And kids today, they say, "I'm stressed out," the video games, but you had all that going where you had to do all of this and achieved all of it.

JP:

Yeah, because my mom didn't like low grades. You bring a C in there and she wonders about you. So our family has been pushed from the beginning, too, like I said, the parents cared and the neighborhood cared, but mainly it was parents and teachers like Roy and George Scott and E. C. Struggs when he was there. Those people cared about what happened in the neighborhood and they wanted the neighborhood to grow. And they cared about the kids, but it's just such a sad thing that so many kids don't see until it was too late what they could have achieved at that time.

CM:

I think part of that now is the parenting now because I know my folks—there was never any doubt who ran the house because they ran the house. They weren't my buddy and no meant no, and they always supported me in whatever I did. Now, they gave good advice, but they supported you, you know, if you want to do this, then we're going to support you. I always had whatever I needed. Now, I didn't have a lot of stuff, but if I needed it, I had it.

JP:

I could say the same thing about my family. We were, quote, poor, but when we needed it, it was there. The work ethic came about from that same type of thing. My mother, when we were younger said, "Okay, you guys old enough to do some work on the side. If you want those jeans, you've got to work for them."

CM:

So she's teaching lessons.

JP:

Or those tennis shoes, I ended up chopping cotton one summer just because I wanted a pair of tennis shoes. I will never do that again, in fact, she said, "Okay, if you want the tennis shoes, you're going to have to work for them." And the only thing we knew how to do was learn how to chop cotton and we got fired because we chopped the weeds at first and one of the guys says, "No, you don't chop the cotton, you chop the weeds." You know, you're young and you don't know.

CM:

And that is hard work. I went out there, my folks let me go out there because my mother had chopped cotton before because she I wouldn't like it, just to see what it was, I went out without any gloves and the roll balls kept getting on me, you missed a weed and all this. Yeah

JP:

Yeah, we had that same problem, but we learned that if we wanted five or ten dollars and we wanted that for those shoes, we had to keep going out there. So we went out for a week until we got enough to pay for the shoes we wanted. That's a lesson learned.

CM:

And I must say this, because you know the environment that a lot of people, including your family, came out of, I personally know a couple of your sisters and the education that you say was stretched because Linda retired from the Lubbock public school system, and Barbara, I think she was at Tech and then she was at the city of Lubbock. She's been good places also.

JP:

She's now working for the government programs helping kids. I've forgotten what the program is, but she works through Estacado at the Estacado building.

CM:

It's amazing, they didn't give excuses. You didn't have an excuse for anything, not matter what the condition was, you overcame whatever the obstacle was, and you could still achieve.

JP:

I can proudly say that out of all of the kids in my family have all gone to college, we all have. And everybody's a graduate.

CM:

That's fantastic.

JP:

You know, that's something for a family of ten, but I know that it was my mother and dad.

CM:

What'd your dad do for a living?

JP:

My dad was a body worker. He worked on cars, and he would always say, "I don't want you guys to grow up having to work this hard." That was his—he said that more from the time I was a little kid. He says, "When you get older, don't work as hard as your dad does." He said, "This is hard work, but I got to do it because it's all I know, but don't you guys do this." And he told my brother and I the same thing every time we'd come in there and we'd say, "We want to learn this." He said, "Well you can learn it, but don't do it for a living." I mean, this was his thing, "Do something better than this." That was my dad's advice every day, almost every time we would

say something about working, he would say, "Well, you don't want to do what I'm doing, do something better than that, use your head." "Okay, we'll use our head."

CM:

You look back to that, you know, before urban renewal in that area, the skills that that generation had. They all had a lot of skills.

JP:

And they tried to teach it to us. They really did. I mean my dad let us work in the shop.

CM:

Did he have his own shop?

JP:

Yeah, at one time he had his shop two or three times.

CM:

Where was it located at?

JP:

On Texas Avenue, right down the street from the bakery.

CM:

Oh okay, yeah, Rainbow Bakery.

JP:

Rainbow Bakery, it was on that same west side of Texas Avenue, right after you leave the Scoggin Dickey Buick was down there. He was across the street from them. He did their cars a lot.

CM:

Wow, that's amazing.

JP:

And then he had another shop out on north Fourth Street, but that was a small one. He didn't want to be there, so he went back down to Texas.

CM:

Take me through—okay, you graduate, now you're in the bandy, you've achieved a lot. What was your decision on going to which college? How did you make a decision on that?

JP:
Scholarship.

CM:
Music scholarship?

JP:
Mhmm.

CM:
Wow, okay.

JP:
I went to Langston University on scholarship in '61.

CM:
A historically black university in Oklahoma?

JP:
Right, I had a choice of there or Florida A&M. It's too far away, so I went to Oklahoma, yeah. I went to Oklahoma instead. And then after a year at Oklahoma, out of state tuition got to be too much so I came home, and I went to Tech and I applied for and won a three year scholarship, ACEI. So I went to Tech on scholarship.

CM:
Now when you went to Tech, at that time, they were just letting Afro Americans into there.

JP:
I think it was the second year.

CM:
Second year, okay.

JP:
You ask me about the treatment out there, hmm.

CM:
Tell me about that.

JP:

It was pretty rugged at first. Those of us that were in the band, you mentioned Stella Crockett a few minutes ago and Diane Wilson, Maddie Rutherford, Bobby Williams, Robert Crockett.

CM:

Okay, Stella's brother?

JP:

Stella's brother. Stella was playing clarinet and he played drums, but it was rough at Tech at first. We got a lot of derogatory remarks thrown our way. In some classes we would have some people who would move away from our seat.

CM:

And this is '63, '64?

JP:

'63, '64, '65, all of them really from there on. You had people who would pass by and try to spit at you from their automobile because some of us rode the bus, it was easier to go from down here instead of driving a car to Tech, you'd ride the bus, and it was easy and quicker. We would be on the bus stop and we'd have some people come by with remarks and spit. At Tech, the black people started to—there were some other folks, I think there were thirty-one of us the second year. The third year, there were more blacks on campus, but the problem that I found was the blacks started congregating in the same area of the UC.

CM:

And that went on, I came through there through '71 through '77.

JP:

Still doing the same thing?

CM:

And they were doing the same thing, yes.

JP:

I got away from that for the simple reason, it was inviting trouble, and you didn't have to talk back to these people who said things to you, but some people did, and that started a lot of racial problems.

CM:

Okay, so you had the discipline even though they were saying things to not—

JP:

Well, that's part of my church upbringing, you know, people say turn the other cheek, but you're not really turning the other cheek, you're just not turning that cheek back to get slapped again.

CM:

Very good way to put it.

JP:

So what we were doing is several of us, the ones that finally graduated eventually, what did I say, in three and a half years we got out of there, I mean we graduated. There was a corps of us who said, "We're not doing this black corner thing." When these people say something else, we just look off or smile and say, "Good evening to you, sir," or whatever we had to. But because I was in band and because I played pretty well, I was probably one of the first blacks to be chosen to be the leader of the ZIT squad at Tech. I know I was.

CM:

Who was the band director then?

JP:

Dean Killian.

CM:

Dean Killian was there then, okay.

JP:

And he was a real fair-minded man, very fair-minded man. He didn't care if you were green, if you could play your instrument and he wanted you to play. He insisted that you be a good citizen. He was top notch when it came to racial relations, to me. So I enjoyed my stay in the band. I went out there challenged, of course. Now that was one thing I'm going to brag about me on this one. I went out the first day for drum rehearsal, right? I'm looking at what these guys are doing. I don't know them from Adam, and I said, on my way home, "I'm not going to let them beat me." And I didn't. I promise you, I made sure I was at the top of that drumline. From that day forth, everything they tried, I said, "I can do it better." I mean, I wasn't trying to be in competition with them, but I just know that I could see the looks on their faces that he's black, he can't do anything. And I said, "He's black and he can do something." So I just set out to prove that to myself. And Killian saw it, and he made a statement to my ex-wife, I mean my wife here. He said, "He's the fastest drummer I've ever had on campus." And I thought, No, I didn't think I was the fastest guy. There were two guys that I thought were much faster than me, but this was his observation. He told my wife that, he said, "Price was one of the fastest drummers I ever taught. He was the fastest I ever had." I'm thinking, That's good, but he never told me that. I'm

glad he didn't because I wouldn't have been worth a quarter after that. He was telling people—this is after the fact—his wife who's real sick right now was good friends with my wife and teacher. Of course, she was in Tech band, too, but after we graduated and went back to socializing with people, he would tell people things about me and I'm thinking, I never knew that man felt that way. I knew he was always nice to me and he was always inviting me to do things, including me in almost everything. We went to Texas one time and Texas is rough for Texas Tech people anyway, but black Texas Tech, you really catch heck. We were on the bus there and I remember the black kids on the bus, Stella and those girls and two guys, and one guy from El Paso. We got off the bus down at UT and somebody says something, and Killian said to them, without us knowing this, he told some people from Texas Tech, he says, "We're not going to have them treat these people like this. So whatever you do, straighten them out." I found this out years later, you know, but we wondered why all at once everybody was nice. You know, the Texas people were, "Yeah, come on." And things went okay. Maddie and I talked about this the same night, she said, "What happened to those people?" They were out greeting us when we got there, and they were real surly, and then all at once they became, "Yeah, y'all need to do this, we would do that," and say what happened. To this day, when I see her, we talk about that, that first trip to Texas in Austin. But okay, I can tell you a lot of stories about me over the time, years, my first professional job I guess.

CM:

Yeah, I want to talk about that because you've obviously played with a lot of people. Tell me about your first professional job.

JP:

B. B. King, and he's 14.

CM:

Wow.

JP:

He came to town, he's a friend of Roy's, his drummer was in an accident somewhere in Kansas or someplace. I don't remember the details. But I get home from school and there's cars parked in front of my house, and I'm wondering, Wait a minute, there's Roy's car and there's my dad's car. I don't know these people. So I went across the street to my buddy's house and we sat there and talked for a while until my mother comes and says, "He's over there, send him home."

CM:

"What did I do?"

JP:

Whatever it was, I was going to wait till they cooled off, but I walk in, and there's B. B. King and Roy, and they're sitting around talking to my mother in the living room, and Roy says, "Mr. King, here, wants to know if you want to play with him." "What do you mean play with you?" He said, "Well tonight." Because they needed somebody, it's five o'clock in the afternoon.

CM:

And Mr. King was at your house?

JP:

He was there, yeah, he was talking to my dad and mom. It's five thirty in the afternoon, they needed somebody at eight o'clock. There was nobody to be had. They played at the Cotton Club.

CM:

On Slaton Highway?

JP:

On Slaton Highway. My mother says, "Well, he'd be around all that smoking and drinking." I said, "Mamma, if I do it, you'll never hear about that." And she hasn't to this day. She hasn't heard about me smoking and drinking nowhere because I don't.

CM:

That's good, respect.

JP:

So I went out with B. B. King that night, and you talk about one guy that's afraid that everything was going to fall apart. I was nervous, I didn't know what he wanted and he told me what he wanted me to do. We rehearsed a few things for a few minutes. He said, "Okay Youngblood." To this day when he comes to town I try to call him. He still calls me Youngblood. Last year he was here, and I called him, he says, "Are you still in this town, Youngblood?" I said, "Yes sir, I am." But anyway, frightened like crazy, but when we finished, they said I did a great job. I said, "Y'all would have told anybody that." Today I would have said that, but I was thank you, thank you, and thank you.

CM:

And you were fourteen years old?

JP:

I was fourteen years old, but when we'd take a break, they would go to the bar and I would go out back and I had a guy stay with me, well two guys. They switched off. One of them would

take a break and another one would come out and stay with me and we'd sit and talk until it's time to go back in. And there was a little room in the back there that we could sit in. I had to stay back there or go outside, I wanted to go outside because I was so sweaty and scared, but I wanted to step outside, so the guys stood out with me and talked to me. And then later on James Brown came to town, and I knew Alfred Ellis was on that band, he's from Dunbar, too. Well I called Roy and I said, "Alfred, Pee Wee is in town." And Roy knows Pee Wee, right, because he taught him. He's one of Roy's protégé's because he played alto at the time when he was at Dunbar. He's playing tenor now. But I go out there to see the James Brown show and to talk to Pee Wee and they said, "Oh, a drummer." And somebody else said that. They called me backstage, we went to municipal auditorium thing, the round thing out there, ABC thing. He called me back into the dressing room to play some music, he said, "Can you play that?" I said, "Well, yeah." So I wrote it down and he said, "Oh good, you're on the show." I said, "What?" He said, "We need a drummer tonight." Clyde Stubblefield that was playing with James Brown at the time came up and shook my hand and says, "Young man, I'll help you out." I was like twenty-one then, but he said, "Here's what you got to do." So I go home and I get dressed and I put on what I thought was my good suit. It was green checkered. I had that and my black pants. When I get there they said, "The coat's got to go." So they gave me a red one to where and it was too big, but I ended up playing with James Brown with Clyde Stubblefield and those guys. Later on, met Jabo and those guys.

CM:

Oh man, Jabo.

JP:

And Bootsy.

CM:

Bootsy was there? Bootsy Collins?

JP:

Bootsy came along later, yeah.

CM:

Oh man.

JP:

Yeah, I got to play with all those guys over the years, and I'd just do summer tours. I played with people like Wayne Newton, Tennessee Ernie Ford.

CM:

Tennessee, I was just watching him. They were singing *A Little Talk with Jesus*. I was watching that on YouTube with Tennessee, he did the bass part.

JP:

He was a drinker for most of his life, he became a Christian and it turned him around. He's one of the only people I work with that invited everybody in the orchestra to come by and see him during the week he'd be working. He says, You've got to come see me for about thirty to forty minutes. I was in there over an hour. He wanted to know who I was, where'd I come from, how long I'd been playing, and how did I like this, and do you like Jesus? You know just different questions. He called everybody pea picker, he did that. Bill Cosby was another one I worked with. I worked with. I worked with Glen Ash from *Mayberry RFD*, and worked with Anita Bryant.

CM:

Wow.

JP:

Bob Hope, Gloria Loring. I mean, I could give you a list of seventy-five, at least, but I don't try to—

CM:

See, I've never heard that. I knew that you worked with a lot of people, but I've never had heard that because, you know, you're humble, I have to give you that.

JP:

Well as I say, that was then, and this is now. But I worked with—believe it or not the West Texas Opry out here, played two and a half years with the West Texas Opry, playing country. I worked with—I got to play with Ronnie Milsap. I've done a ton of different kinds of things and I've just been blessed to be in the right place at the wrong time, or the wrong time at the right place or something like that because people have asked me to come up and do stuff. I made one movie with Steve Martin and Debra Winger, the one that people say was made in Plainview. It was not, part of it was, but I'm in that movie, I did the soundtrack with Meatloaf, worked with George Duke. He was one that wrote some of it. Oh gosh.

CM:

I knew your music career was good, but man, I didn't realize—

JP:

It's been extensive, I even sang on a cruise ship to Alaska two years ago with band from Mexico called the Baba Leo [?] Band. And I worked with, at my wedding I sang with the White House Quartet.

CM:

So we're looking at, what your dad did—when you four years old has really taken you a long ways.

JP:

Yeah, I can say that because I remember what he said, "Don't work like Daddy does." That was his theme. You guys don't need to work hard like your Daddy does. He says, "There's hard work, but I had to do it." My mother always said two things, "Don't bring any Cs in this house, and—" (phone rings) Excuse me, I'm going to have to get this.

Pause in Recording

JP:

—I've been a busy person.

CM:

You have. Talk some more about your music.

JP:

Traveling? I was on the road for a couple years with a group called Daddy's Money and Johnny Harrah from Las Vegas.

CM:

Now did you do this during the summertime? Were you still teaching then?

JP:

No, I quit teaching and went on the road with these guys. It was fun for a while. It got to be old. I found out I didn't want to be a traveling musician because you end up one part of the country one day and another part of the country the next day. A lot of bad things go out on the road, so I imagine, I said, "No, I don't want to be part of this." And you can't change people because they have their agenda and if you've got a belief or you got something you've got to uphold. Like in my case, what I promised my mom when I was fourteen years old, I think about that, I told her that I can't go back on that. I mean, it's not me, I don't want to hurt my mom. So I decided the road was not what I wanted to do. I enjoyed it when I was out there.

CM:

You mentioned something then and I think one of the things from our generation that I didn't want to do, the last thing I wanted to do was embarrass my parents. You know, I didn't want to embarrass them by doing something that would have embarrassed them.

JP:

That's exactly right.

CM:

I didn't want to do that and have them suffer with something I did.

JP:

Yeah, how many times did your parents say, "Don't make me look bad?"

CM:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JP:

I heard that and I didn't hear that from my mother that much, but you know, I heard it through the years and sometimes, Now, you're going to make yourself look bad. And my mother said, "Don't make me look bad because you want to look bad." And so I'm thinking, No, Mom, it's not a want to thing, it's sometimes we get into situations where we think we should be able to do our own deal and then you find out, "That wasn't quite the choice I should have made."

CM:

I think at one time, didn't you plan an ensemble or jazz quartet with Mr. Braxton and Mr. Roberts?

JP:

Yeah, in fact when I was in high school I played with the Dunbar Combo and Mr. Braxton came into the picture I guess my last few years. I played with him since then, but I just go back to where I was. We played in a combo; I played in the combo for six years because I started in sixth grade. Roy was the leader, and we always used kids, I mean, he used students, and I think I got some recordings of that stuff somewhere on vinyl. But Braxton came along with his assistant before I graduated. And so two years I played with Mr. Braxton on the same band. Since then, I worked with Mr. Braxton, last year, believe it or not. Ninety-one years old and he went with us several times to Amarillo and Midland, and we just use him, you know, every once in a while. I like the way he plays and he's been a mentor to me. So if he thinks he can play, we'll take him. He has to sit out all night, but that's okay. I mean, if I'm ninety three I want to sit down, too. But yeah, I did play with Roy. We all remember Roy Roberts because he stomped his foot.

CM:

Well I could see him, sometimes he'd be in—well I'd play in orchestra, but sometimes I could remember—

JP:

I'm surprised you were in orchestra.

CM:

Yes, I was.

JP:

You know, I played in orchestra for a year and a half, but I never had enough time to finish everything. I tried to play bass. In fact, I bought an upright bass after a while. I had it, got divorced, and I couldn't keep the bass because I didn't have any room to keep it in my apartment so I sold it. But, yeah, I tried to play base for a while, still do.

CM:

So now percussion, you probably play most of the percussion?

JP:

I try to play every percussion that you can think of. I found out when I went on the Wayne Newton Show that I thought I was going to play drums. I get there and they said, "No sir, you're not on drums, you're the utility man." That meant bells and chimes and all this other stuff. I'm thinking, Oh boy. So I took the music home, and I read over it quickly before the shows and things, and then when I got ready to play—I mean I say home, I took it to my hotel room. Sometimes when I teach percussion, I teach keyboards with the percussion because kids needed to learn how to play more than just—

CM:

When did you pick up the keyboards?

JP:

When I was working at Dunbar.

CM:

Oh, okay.

JP:

That's when I picked up most of it because here you are a band director—I also own a trumpet. I'm trying to teach kids how to play something, and I couldn't play it well. That made me come

home and do things like that. To this day, I'm still doing that because I want to be at least correct, maybe not the best, but I want to be correct in what I want to do. And if I say, you got to play first and second [inaudible] whatever you've got to do. I want to be able to tell them what's true and do it myself, even though I wouldn't dare play my horn in public anymore.

CM:

How many years were you teaching at Dunbar? Weren't you the activity director there?

JP:

I was activities director, but while I was doing activities I was still helping with the music. The guy that was band director, we're good friends.

CM:

Who was it?

JP:

Mike Cantwell.

CM:

Oh okay.

JP:

And then Mary Jo came along, but I still help her, too from time to time. I just talked to her the other day and we're getting ready to do something. She's invited me to come to a meeting that has to do with Dunbar.

CM:

Oh yeah, with that grant they got and so forth.

JP:

Right.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

I'll come over and I'll listen to it. But I still work with kids.

CM:

Oh great.

JP:

I teach back there in the back room and try to tell kids to be the best that you can be. And you can say that all day long, but they don't know what you mean. I try to show them my example. One of my kids last year got a full scholarship to South Plains in music, that's how good he was.

CM:

Well let me ask you this, music has been a big part of your life. Why would you recommend music to young kids today?

JP:

First thing is discipline and one of the things that I'm going to say, not first, but discipline it'll help you with your goal setting, too. Because when you start music, you're going to find that—I've been playing fifty-seven years or more, and I'm still learning. But it's kind of like everything else, once you start a project, and when you get out there you realize that there's so much more about this that I don't know, and it gives you some goals to seek. But it disciplines you to the fact that—well like Roy started me on that, I'll have to give him credit for that—when he locked me up in the band hall in the afternoons, I had to be disciplined enough to go through what I'm supposed to be doing.

CM:

And not wanting to go out and play with your friends or hang around with your buddies.

JP:

Exactly right. You know, I didn't learn to dance by dancing. I learned to dance by watching people.

CM:

Wow.

JP:

Because I never got a chance to dance. But yeah, the discipline is there and then you have your goal setting that you have to do. Like I said, you find out, "Is there something else I need to know?" You don't have to ask that question, you'll always see that. And then besides the goal setting and your discipline, it's character builder because I think if you can get your body—if I can get kids to concentrate and do certain things a certain way, quote, the right way, what is the right way, but you know what I'm saying, if you get them in the right direction, they can take that and do something else in another area. It may help them develop, Well I got this—well, I can do that, I can do this, so more development of who you are and what you're doing. I tell some kids that, I said, "It's not a matter of what you know, it's who you know, but you've got to

know yourself first.” You know, who you need to know is you, then you can realize, what am I going to do with me?

CM:

At Dunbar there have been tremendous amounts of musicians. You’re one of them. I talked to Mr. Braxton, I asked him about one of his, Chester Griffin. In the band that you played in at Dunbar, you named a few other people like Robert Crockett, Stella Crockett, and Maddie Rutherford. Who else, you know, was pretty good in music?

JP:

Well, one of the guys that came after me was Buddy Smith. He’s dead now. Buddy, he’d come back and I said, “Where’d you learn that?” He said, “You taught me that.” I said, “Sure I did. Oh yeah I did, right.” Buddy Smith, Colletas Lange, you remember him?

CM:

Yes.

JP:

Mary Jo Wilson, Earl Day.

CM:

Yes, Mr. Day is Ms. Newton’s brother, yes.

JP:

Yeah, he’s one of the best musicians I have ever known in my life. There was Jerry Williams.

CM:

Jerry Williams is kin to Manny Williams?

JP:

Tall, skinny, alto saxophone player, yeah. Kilpatrick, Sylvester Kilpatrick, a tenor saxophone player.

CM:

I knew the younger Kilpatricks, yeah.

JP:

The older one, he’s a great tenor man. He’s one of the best musicians. We talked about Elbert Malone, okay, we said Bally a while ago, his brother, his brother was one of the best tenor saxes I’ve ever have seen in my life. I talked to a fellow the other day. He’s eighty something years old

now, but Wilber Cotton, he's the first classical guitar player that Dunbar ever had, Wilber Cotton. He called me from California looking for Thelma Robinson's number and I have it and now I've got to call him and tell him what it is. Wilber Cotton, he was the first guitar player at the new Dunbar. I didn't know him, I was behind him, but I knew who he was. He's doing classical guitar with somebody big, some symphonies and stuff, but he was one of the other musicians that I named. I said Bobby Williams, I said Homer Pitts.

CM:

Oh yes, I knew Mr. Homer Pitts.

JP:

Homer was one. E. J. Charlton, Clove Kerr, O. W. Wright; all these guys were trumpet players. All the last four people I just named were trumpet players and they were all good. In fact, when E. J. and Clovis and O.W., they were seniors ahead of me, but man, those guys could play the John Susa, John Philip Susa stuff.

CM:

Yes.

JP:

Just like it was written.

CM:

"The Stars and Stripes" and so forth.

JP:

Yeah, boy they did all of it, and Roy liked to play hard music. That's one thing that, Roy was challenging, and that's what I liked about it. He challenged you to play something that you couldn't play. He said, "You think you can't play that, huh? Okay, let's see what you're going to do with it tomorrow." "Tomorrow?" Then you'd go back in and you'd play. Yeah, but other than those, I can name a whole lot of musicians, but like Earl said, Earl was probably one of the best ones.

CM:

Those are names that I am familiar with that I've heard of all of those through the history there. You mentioned earlier that—well I guess I mentioned this, Ms. Lincoln had a big part in the band early.

JP:

I didn't know her.

CM:

Okay, well Ms. Wilson has told me that before Mr. Roberts got here, Ms. Wilson said that Ms. Lincoln had whatever—there was somebody here before Mr. Roberts, a guy, but she said Ms. Lincoln had a little bit to do with that, also, Rose Lincoln.

JP:

Oh yeah, well I knew who she was, but I wasn't old enough to be there when she was there. Now Mary Joe and Colletas Lange, I did mention him, he was a trumpet player. He was at Langston when I got there. He was a TA up there. He was a great trumpet player and he came from Dunbar. He had a brother named David Lange who's a drummer that's really good, he's in California right now. There was David Wilson from Dunbar, he was a great drummer from Dunbar. David Wilson, he's a preacher now, but that doesn't have anything to do with—I'm sure he's still playing if he's got his hands. I don't miss a whole lot of people. Some of the best females ever to come through there were like Wynona Williams, I mean Wynona —she's going to kill me. She married Kelly.

CM:

Which Kelly?

JP:

The golfer, Kelly, Willy Kelly.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

Wynona Kelly, she's one of the best flute players I have ever met. She was in Dunbar. Wynona Kelly and, oh, Frankie Jackson, a tenor sax player lady. She played in the combo with us, Frankie Jackson. You're asking me to go back into the—

CM:

Well, that's interesting, too, because Ms. Wilson brought that up. In an area that is predominantly male until now, you had a lot of women in the combo.

JP:

Iola Rivets, her name is Broussard now, but Iola Rivets, she was a keyboard player and she belonged to the Moore Sisters.

CM:

Oh really?

JP:

Yeah, she sang and played piano and one of the best piano players I ever played with in my life. I mean, we grew up from first grade to twelfth grade together at Dunbar. But Diana Wilson played base in the combo. She was good. Ethel Hibler.

CM:

Walter Hibler's older sibling?

JM:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, she was a drum major, but she played in the band. She played baritone horn in the band and she played base in the combo.

CM:

So it sounds like to me Mr. Roberts didn't have a problem with women. If you could play, you could play.

JM:

That's right.

CM:

He didn't have a problem with, "This is all male structure or this is all men."

JM:

No, you could play. He would put you to work. There was Diane Wilson, I said I mentioned her, but there's another one, Doris Chaney and Ruthie Chaney. Those are two girls that played and both of them played in the combo and band. Like I said, you've got me thinking, and now I've got to come up with a whole lot of names.

CM:

Oh that's okay, but I knew there were a lot of them. See, a lot of these people I didn't realize that they played music. You know, some of them I did, I didn't, but I knew how Dunbar—because I remember when Dunbar was a big school, seventh through twelfth when they were at the new location. You had A band, B band, C band. You know, you had quite a big—it's a lot to deal..

JP:

A lot of them come from the elementary schools, too. I did. Bobby Williams was behind me, he did the same thing I did in fifth grade. He came and talked to Roy. He got in band about last of his sixth grade year. He went from seventh grade on, but he was good. Kelly, she's married to Coach Kelly, Doris Heinz.

CM:

Okay yes.

JP:

She was a good musician, too. Yeah, all these girls.

CM:

She was Williams back then, right?

JP:

Mm-hmm, Doris Williams. She's Heinz now.

CM:

Okay.

JP:

Yeah, those are several ladies that I mentioned. What, eight or are ten of them now? They were all good musicians. I'm sorry; my house is hot for some reason. It feels like it to me. Maybe it's just my blood pressure. There were plenty of females playing, I just mentioned Ethel Hibler. She used to sing, played baritone and played bass. Diane Wilson played base, she didn't sing, but she played base in the combo. She played clarinet in the band. But there are a lot of women, a lot of gals that were good. I mentioned—we've talked about Stella and Maddie Rutehrford, they were just clarinet players in the band, but I remember them mostly because we were all at Tech together. We had a little—we were the group on the Tech campus and we had to really stay together and we would talk about what our professors said to us and what somebody else said and who moved and who didn't and who came to be friendly.

CM:

Did you have trouble with the professors out there?

JP:

Yes, I did, a couple of them. One English professor, I had a D at midterm, this is my first year. I went to him and I said, "All my papers have As and Bs on them. Why do I have a D for a midterm grade?" And he said, "Mr. Price, I could have given you an F."

CM:

Wow, so what was his reasoning?

JP:

He didn't give me a reason. He just said, "I could have given you an F" and he turned away from me and wouldn't say anything else. So I walked out of his office and went to the dean's office. We had a little investigation and the dean says, "Well, from what we know Mr. Murphey is not grading the papers. He has another person to grade the papers, and so probably that D is justified." So I dropped his class and took the course the next semester. That was the only D I had ever made in my life.

CM:

Yeah, you had no appeal or anything. You couldn't appeal to anyone.

JP:

Nope, the dean—and some of the other teachers were, they were kind of sneaky. They would put names on the chairs, and that didn't happen except when you were in elementary school, but they would put names on the chairs and they would say, "Well, Mr. so and so has to sit here because—" And they would give you the reason Mr. so and so has to have this chair. I always liked sitting on the front row. I could hear, I could see, and I'm not distracted by somebody else. But I ended up on the second row or something like that.

CM:

Just little games there, little mind games.

JP:

I had a few of those, at least one class the guy put the names on the front row because he wanted certain people to sit up there. The rest of us had to take whatever's offered. Those two examples are two of the ones that I remember the most. The English grade, and I took it over and I made a B+ in the second time I took it. I had to keep a scholarship. As long as I had a B average, then my scholarship was good. So when he said D at midterm, I said, "Something's wrong." So I went to see him, he said, "Mr. Price, I could have given you an F." I said, "How's that?" "Mr. Price, I could have given you an F." That's all he ever said. So I turned around and walked out. I said, "There's no arguing with this little old guy."

CM:

But you overcame that and you graduated from Tech.

JP:

I graduated from Tech with a 3.63 or something like that.

CM:

What is your degree in?

JP:

I've got a degree in music, applied music. I have a management certificate, a management degree in education.

CM:

Okay, so it was a music degree, okay.

JP:

Well it was applied music, that's just an associate thing. It's not a degree degree. But yeah, I've got three different titles on my resume, three different diplomas. I'm nine hours from a dissertation and a thesis.

CM:

Well, that is great.

JP:

Well, they're telling me at Tech that—the first thing I let five years go by so I'm going to have to start over again, but I've got to go to Texas or someplace like that. I've got to go to another school. It just doesn't look right, you've got three degrees from Tech, you get all your degrees from one school. I said, "I don't have time to take off to write a dissertation." Well, not now.

CM:

So you're still—education, you're still looking at education. You can never learn enough.

JP:

That's the same thing that I said about music. I'd get out of here, and I'd go listen to some musicians somewhere. I just came from Jamaica a couple of weeks ago, and I was listening to musicians over there thinking, "Gosh, I need to learn that." I mean, I know how to play it from what I hear, but I saw it reeled and I said, "Okay I can do this," because I can see what these guys are doing. But I listen to all kinds of music and I'm always learning. I practice all the time. In fact, I had to move my practice pad out of here, my wife was upset.

CM:

Do you have a rubber pad?

JP:

It's a plastic one, but that's my hospital bed. I still have to use that from time to time when this leg swells up. I have to elevate it. So we didn't have any place else to put it. She says, "This is a living room, let's live in it." So that's fine.

CM:

I had a friend, Rodney Sneed that was in the band, the first band I remember in Struggs, he had a rubber one, practice pad.

JP:

Oh yeah, Rodney Sneed?

CM:

Yeah, and he'd beat on that, and we'd be in the cafeteria.

JP:

I taught him.

CM:

Oh did you?

JP:

When y'all were in school, I'd come over, like I said, with Mary Jo and everybody, I'd been going to that school since I was old enough to go to that school I think. And I still go over there and help people. I help the band directors, Mary Jo, especially. She's one of my friends. So I'll go over and help her with drums, and we'd played a funeral last week and she said, "Price, I need you to come look at this program." And I said, "What's it all about?" And she said, "Well, there's things I want to develop and you and somebody like that with the ideas, you can help develop the program." I said, "I'll come to the meeting." It's next week, in fact next Tuesday.

CM:

So you're still invested in the community over there, which is good.

JP:

If I can help. I've been asked by some of the smaller churches to set up a percussion school for the drummers that play in the church. Mac Culver, I can't think of the name of his church, he's trying to get some things with some area church people, black churches. He said, "These kids don't know how to play drums." He said, "I'd like you to teach them how to play drums," not to just get up there and flail away at whatever they think they can get away with. So that's one thing that's in the works. And then Mary Jo wants me to do this.

CM:

Well I'm a firm believer that if your exposed to something early, you know, because I remember I was talking to Joe Phee one day and his mother was still living and I said, "Yeah, I remember my cousins laugh at me because my mother put me in tap dancing." And then Joe was laughing. I

said, "Why are you laughing? You were there." He said, "Yeah, I'm trying to forget about it." See, we had no choice. We were put in that, and if I had known that was Gregory Hines, you know, I would have been like, "Hey!" But you expose people and you get them interested in something, you know, and I think that's great. I think one of the biggest problems that we have now is TV because we didn't have TV. You had to be interested in something. You couldn't watch TV all day.

JP:

I read a lot.

CM:

Exactly, exactly. And see people don't do that anymore.

JP:

No, in fact you can't even buy books, there's something there. The one thing I can say when I was growing up, we had a set of encyclopedias and all that business. I think I read those things three or four times because I loved to read. I tell kids today, I say, "You need to read." When I was teaching school, kids hated homework. I said, "Why?" "My daddy won't let me do homework because he's got to watch his show." I said, "Well you've got to do his homework before he gets home to watch his show." Well, that's a whole other teaching thing. Yeah, you're right, you had some type of exposure.

CM:

Yes. That way you know about it by Mr. Roberts having y'all play the hard stuff, the classics, the jazz, even the country and western. You get exposed to other things and you might like it.

JP:

Yeah, and you don't know when you're going to use it or might have to. You're in the news business now, so you're using your skills to do what you do and I've not been a public speaker. I've been a teacher, but I never know when I'll have to use something I've learned.

CM:

And I go back to my—you know who did that, Mr. Gibson, Curtis Gibson, learned to cut hair and he just retired two years ago from doing that. He went through a career like you did, teaching school and everything. And then he still cut hair till two years ago. He finally just, "Okay."

JP:

I'm in the insurance business right now so I do that, but it's because I went out and got the business thing, and I said I've got this, I might as well use it.

CM:

You don't feel old?

JP:

Oh no, not yet. If it hadn't been for this stress, my doctors tell me, "Man, you stress." I've had three jobs all my life. I've taught school, I've always played music, and I've always done something else on the side just to be doing something. And he says, "You just worked yourself to almost dead." And I said, "Well it won't happen again." And that's true; right now I can't do anything too much.

CM:

One last thing I want to talk about that we didn't talk about, and I mentioned this, I think, when we wasn't on the recorder. You actually, for ten years, ran Mae Simmons swimming pool.

JP:

Right.

CM:

And the reason I wanted to bring that up is because some of my introduction to the Motown sound, when I was a kid, came from the music that you had over there. Tell us about that.

JP:

Well, we thought that if people were going to enjoy their swim, we had to play something that they liked. Because on the radio, we're picking up things like—I like Buddy Holly, I met him one time, but Buddy Holly doesn't go on at Mae Simmons Pool. So we would play things that—actually, the lifeguards were the ones that picked the songs. They'd say, "I've got a song so we can play that." I said, "Okay, let's play that." And we didn't have a radio station that was playing anything except maybe on Sunday night, maybe they'd play like an hour or so when Floyd Price and that bunch had—but that was all the radio we had.

CM:

Soul Patrol.

JP:

Yeah. So when we got over to the pool, we would have a lot of trouble sometimes because the little flare would mess up or something like that.

CM:

And you were playing records.

JP:

Yeah, we were playing records. And we'd have a stack of records and somebody would drop some in the water or something or get dirty, but that was the reason for the music because we felt like if people were having a good time and relaxed and singing, there would be no room for this disgruntlement and people having a fight over something. About ten years and I never had a fight at that pool. I never had a disagreement that I can recall. I'm sure there was one or two that happened in the stands, but it never happened in the pool.

CM:

I don't remember one ever happening over there. Your lifeguards that I remember over there at the time, Buster Tucker and Avads Franklin, okay.

JP:

Yeah, those guys were good people, too. But like I said, one of the things we'd do is we'd bring the 45s, and my daughter, she's a young five or six year old, she'd pick the ones that she thought we needed to play.

CM:

She had good taste.

JP:

Because Fred or Buster would say, "No Tim, you've got to do this one, then do this one next and then do this one next." See her job was, when I wouldn't let her swim in the heat of the day, she'd sit up there and put the records on.

CM:

That's great; that's fantastic.

JP:

Yeah, so when one would play out, she would put the other one on. That's why we kept music going all day. Then when she would leave, somebody else would come up and do it.

CM:

I can remember standing on the diving board there and hear the good songs on, especially Sunday evening.

JP:

That was the day you had to play the best ones because that's when we had a full house.

CM:

That actually fueled my thirst for Motown because I don't guess—I was into James Brown, but the Temptations, you started—you heard all kinds of Temptations. "I Wish It Would Rain" and "Get Ready."

JP:

And then old standard "My Girl".

CM:

Oh yes.

JP:

You can play that anywhere nowadays and it's kind of like people want to stand up and salute. "My Girl" is famous no matter. And I played it a long time. We do "My Girl" today and everybody in the place sings it, black, white, green, or yellow. But it doesn't matter which kind of crowd you play for, you play "My Girl" or Temptations and they know it because people live on those.

CM:

Yeah, that's fantastic. Mr. Price, I really appreciate you taking the time out to tell us about East Lubbock and your association with it because you have a big impact over there and you are standard, and also I'll say this, if everybody lived a life that you lived, you know, and looked at it, we'd go on, the history of East Lubbock would go on because it's been fantastic. I learned a bunch of stuff today, especially I didn't know that you worked with some of these—some of the people you worked with, but also, about your family. I had no clue that you had kin to the Moores, but I should have known because everybody's kin to people.

JP:

Well, I've enjoyed telling you these things. And I could tell you about ten years' worth of things about East Lubbock that we didn't have time to cover today.

CM:

I'll tell you what, this is just the first, I'll wait about a month or so and I'll come back and we'll talk about some more.

JP:

Well I'll think of somethings we missed today, like some of the names that I didn't recall. I know they're there because as I said, the mind never forgets everything.

CM:

Well, we'll build on this and whatever you can tell us because we waited kind of late to do this because there's not a lot of people that are still around that were associated with it, but I remember a lot of stuff, but I just didn't know there was other stuff because the stores—I mean I could see James Green's store, I knew Gampbell's Barbeque Pit because I was right there, but then you told me about Johnny Walker, John Walker store. I didn't know that.

JP:

And they're Reid's down on Twenty-Fifth Street, too, Twenty-Sixth Street.

CM:

Yeah, right there that became Fir Avenue, yes. Okay, I didn't know it was named Reid's before.

JP:

It was Reid's Store.

CM:

Right across from [inaudible]. And I'll tell you something else I learned in talking to people, I didn't realize the hamburger stand that was across from it was owned by Reverend Davis. See, when I came it was owned by somebody else. We called it Garcia's or something, but Reverend Davis sold hamburgers there.

JP:

Yeah, he started that.

CM:

And of course the places that you know, you had the Hilltop Café in the neighborhood over there around the corner.

JP:

There was Neil's Barbeque down on—

CM:

Neil's, and I keep talking about Gampbell's Barbeque because everybody does that. And of course we had James Green's Store. They'd actually be playing checkers in there.

JP:

Day and night, you hear those checkers going down.

CM:

You know, just like out of a movie or something, out of hee-haw or something, there'd actually be old guys—Maybury—would be playing checkers in the place when you walked in.

JP:

Reminds me of *Barber Shop*, that movie.

CM:

Yeah, and the barber shop, I told a joke with that because that's where I got all the information. You know, you go to the barber shop, "Did you know?" "Huh? What?" And then you see everybody at the barber shop.

JP:

That's right. Even if you didn't go to that barber shop, the news somehow got around.

CM:

Yes.

JP:

I tell my wife these things today. I said, "Two places in East Lubbock that you can go find out anything you want to, the barber shop and the beauty shop."

CM:

Yeah, that's true.

JP:

And it doesn't matter which one you go to, the news is getting around there at the barber shop and beauty shop.

CM:

At my mother's beauty shop, there's always something going on in there because I know if I go back there and she said, "Go play, get lost." Uh oh, they're fixing to talk something in here and I've got to get out. But thank you very much, sir, for the interview, I appreciate it and good luck on your health.

JP:

Well thank you, I'm working on it. I'm doing exactly what they told me to do, relaxing. So I'm going to do that for a while.

End of interview



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