

A TEI Project

Interview of Hadda Brooks

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1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE (APRIL 21, 1994)

ISOARDI

Okay, Hadda, shall we begin with as early as you can remember in your life?

Where you were and--

BROOKS

You mean as to what I was, what I did, how I thought that my little life was coming up?

ISOARDI

Exactly. Your family, where you were born, something maybe about the background of your family, where your family came from.

BROOKS

I was born here in Boyle Heights--not at the address where you are. I was born on the street opposite, just above it. Malabar [Street] is what the street was called. That's where I was born.

ISOARDI

Just one block over from here?

BROOKS

One block over. This street is called Boulder [Street], and the street where I was born-- Even my sister [Kathryn Hopgood Carter] was born over on Malabar. I grew up on that street.

ISOARDI

When were you born? What year was it?

BROOKS

I was born on October 29, 1916. That's the actual date; that's when I was born. I mean, like absolutely. Nineteen sixteen, which would make me seventy-seven now.

ISOARDI

And still going strong. [laughs]

BROOKS

Well, all right. Okay, okay. If you want to say so, yeah, I'm still going strong. I haven't, to a certain extent, had what you might call a down anything, you know, physically or mentally. I mean, no, this is where it is. This is where I am. This is where I have come from seventy-seven years ago. I'm going to actually say I have a very strong voice. I haven't lost any prominence as far as the age is concerned. I love how old I am. I am taking in everything that is coming my way in the age of what I am right now. And I think to a certain extent-- I don't know who else has anything to say about it, but I say I think it is a marvelous thing that I have come this far. Anybody else who wants to bring in my actual age, it's okay with me. I'm very proud of it. I'm very proud of it. There's no possible reason why-- I am not going to say that, "Oh, my goodness--" No, no, no, no, no. I wouldn't do that. I am saying that this is my age, and this is how I am continuing to go on. To me it's a great accomplishment. It's a great accomplishment. I am making it. I am talking about it. I am going with it. I don't know what else I can say. I love it. It's going to be good. It is good. No problem.

ISOARDI

All right. So you were born here in Boyle Heights. It's 1916. And your family lived here? Were you the oldest of the children?

BROOKS

I am the oldest. My mother [Goldie Wright Hopgood] and father [John M. Hopgood] had two children, my sister and me. I am older than my sister. My mother and my father and my grandfather [Samuel A. Hopgood], who were the actual family of me, they have gone. They've demised. They've gone, they've left me. My sister and I are still alive. My granddaddy, he was the biggest thing in our life to a certain extent. He had a lot of pride. He was very tall, he was six foot something--maybe three [inches]--and he was very tall. He walked very proud. My daddy was six [feet] two [inches], and he was tall, and he walked very proud. My mother was a little woman. I don't say a little woman by being

maybe five [feet] four [inches]; maybe she was five [feet] six [inches] or something like that.

ISOARDI

Is this your grandfather on your father's side? Or your mother's?

BROOKS

My grandfather on my father's side. My mother was not related to either one of them--not my grandfather. My father married my mother.

ISOARDI

Where did your grandparents come from?

BROOKS

My grandfather and his sister--they called her Aunt Roxie--they came from Georgia. My mother came from Chattanooga, Tennessee. My grandfather and his sister brought their family out from Atlanta, Georgia.

ISOARDI

When was that? Do you know?

BROOKS

No, I don't know when they came out.

ISOARDI

Do you know why they came out?

BROOKS

The thing that I can remember to a certain extent, my grandfather brought his family out to Los Angeles, California, because I guess they thought they had a better chance of surviving the chances of what you might call-- I can't even think of it because of the fact that-- They had a chance of surviving the chance of being somewhat not being brought into the black race. My grandfather, my grandfather's sister, and all of my grandfather's cousins or brothers and whatnot were absolutely in the color of white. They were the color of white. They weren't black. When I grew up to remember them, I remember all of them being very white. The only one in my family who was brown skinned was my mother. I said brown skinned, not light brown skinned. She was brown skinned. My father was in love with her, and they married. I came out because I was the firstborn, and I was very, very, red, to be complete. My mother didn't even want to show me because she thought I was so ugly. And my sister, which was about two years later, was a brown-skinned little girl, which was almost right within my mother's color. But the idea of the thing that went on with us was they didn't want my mother and father to marry. My mother and father were very much in love. My father was-- Well, he looked like a white man. He had blue eyes. My mother was brown skinned, and his family didn't want them to marry.

ISOARDI

But they did anyway.

BROOKS

They did. They did. As truth will out, if you're in love, you'll get married.

ISOARDI

It doesn't matter.

BROOKS

That's right.

ISOARDI

What did your grandfather do? Do you know how he made a living?

BROOKS

I don't know. I really don't know what my grandfather did, but he had money.
He had money.

ISOARDI

So he came out here, and he made it work.

BROOKS

He came out here, and after my mother and father got married and I was born, then they accepted the whole thing as far as that was concerned. I am now thinking they had to accept it, because I've got news for them, here I am. I've got news for them. I know exactly what was going on from the time that I was a child. My grandfather had the money. My grandfather did not want my father to take care of us, because he wanted to put the money-- If we wanted this, my grandfather got it. If I wanted that, my grandfather got it. After my sister was born, my sister got whatever she wanted. And at twelve years old my sister and I had little mink coats.

ISOARDI

[laughs] He really liked to take care of his granddaughters.

BROOKS

That's right.

ISOARDI

He was proud of you two.

BROOKS

That's right. And my father said, "I don't want you to do that for my children. I want to take care of them." But my grandfather, he bought me a mink coat and he bought my sister a mink coat. I mean, at twelve years old or less than twelve years old, whatever. And as we grew older and older and older and I graduated from junior high school, my grandfather bought me an Elgin watch, and he also bought my sister an Elgin watch so she wouldn't feel bad by me having an Elgin watch. I was the one who was graduating. But he bought her an Elgin watch along with mine. It happened all through the years of the life of my grandfather and my sister and myself. That's how it happened. We were children. We never did become young ladies because of the fact that we were

still children in their minds. They treated us that way. And I don't know exactly whatever happened, but--

ISOARDI

When did you start school? Did you start kindergarten, I guess, right around here?

BROOKS

Oh, yes. I mean, I lived on the street that's called Malabar in this area. We lived right next door to a school. The house was here, the school was there, the fence was there. And my sister and I, we went to grammar school. Everybody knew my mother. Every schoolteacher knew my mother, and they knew my grandfather. They didn't know my father because he was a sheriff and he wasn't home all the time. Whenever anything happened they called my grandfather down to the house. My mother had to go to the hospital because she was sick. "I want my two granddaughters down to see their mother off," and they would come and get us out of our room. The teacher would bring us down. And just about the time they brought us down, my mother was coming down in the hospital, and, of course, naturally, she was sick. But this was the life, the way we had to go. If my mother was sick, my grandfather called the principal and said, "Get my grandchildren down here. Their mother is sick. She's going to the hospital, and I want them to see her." And they did.

ISOARDI

What school were you at?

BROOKS

Malabar [Street Elementary School].

ISOARDI

Oh, that was the name of the school?

BROOKS

That was the name of the school next door. It was on Malabar Street. Malabar. It seems as though we weren't in any trouble. There was no trouble. We had a nice childhood life. We weren't treated in any extra ways as far as our name was concerned, and our name was Hopgood. We weren't overtreated because of that name, but it seemed as though it came out that we were sort of like, we can say, extracurricular children.

ISOARDI

What do you mean?

BROOKS

We were the extra children on the block. Well, I mean, like let's say the Hopgood children were the Hopgood children. We were special.

ISOARDI

Oh, I see. Special kids on the block.

BROOKS

Special kids on the block. But we, my sister and I, didn't know that. Our family knew it, and the teachers in grammar school catered to my mother and father and family and treated them like we were, but we didn't know that. We didn't know that.

ISOARDI

Was that because of your father being a sheriff?

BROOKS

No. No, it wasn't. Because of my mother. My mother would say-- She'd send me with a note to the principal and say, "On Thursday there is going to be a special luncheon"--each of the teachers would pay maybe a dollar or something like that--"for a special occasion at church." And all the teachers would come. All the teachers in that school would come. My mother would fix the luncheon. She would fix the food. All of them would come. They waited for her to do this, so she might do it every two months, and they would come and eat. They loved it. They loved it. They had the best food there was that there wasn't anywhere in their cafeteria. They would come and eat the lunch. My mother would do it every two months. The benefits would go to her church. And they would come. That was the whole thing. That was it.

ISOARDI

Which church was it?

BROOKS

Maybe charge \$1.50 or whatever they wanted. They wanted some chicken, they wanted some-- Let's see. Some chicken, or she wanted some pork chops, or she wanted a steak or something like that--\$1.50 and \$2.50.

ISOARDI

You say that your mother would then take the money and she would donate the money to her church.

BROOKS

She gave it to the church.

ISOARDI

Which church?

BROOKS

The African Methodist Episcopal.

ISOARDI

And is that the church that you went to then?

BROOKS

Every Sunday. African Methodist Episcopal Church.

ISOARDI

Did your father go to church with you, also?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

He was not religious?

BROOKS

No. No. No. My mother prayed every Sunday that my father would come, and he didn't. He didn't, oh, not for a long time. Because on Sunday was a baseball game, and my father was a baseball fan, and he would go to the baseball [game], to-- What's that great big park that's an old park? Wrigley Field. Wrigley Field.

ISOARDI

Oh, down on Fortieth [Street], Forty-second [Street]?

BROOKS

Wrigley Field. He would go to see that baseball game. And one time he came into the church. For some reason or other, I don't know, he decided he would go up and join the church, and he went up and joined the church.

ISOARDI

Just all of a sudden?

BROOKS

All of a sudden.

ISOARDI

You didn't know he was going to do it? He just did it one day?

BROOKS

We didn't know he was going to do it.

ISOARDI

That must have surprised the hell out of your mother.

BROOKS

It surprised the hell out of my mother. After he got up and went down there, she got up and walked right behind him. And I mean, everybody was just sort of absolutely, you know, "hallelujah" and all that sort of stuff. And I mean, I didn't know anything about it, my sister didn't know anything about it, except I knew that my daddy went down and was joining the church. He didn't change his ways. He did everything he wanted to do that he was doing before he joined the church. But when you join the church you're not supposed to jump in and join the church and get religion and all of a sudden say, "I'm holy, and I don't want to do this, and I'm not going to drink anymore, and I'm not going to smoke anymore." No. He joined the church, that's all. That's all he did.

ISOARDI

You said he was a sheriff. Did he work for the L.A. County sheriff's office? Was that his job?

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah. Well, he had a couple of other jobs that-- See, my daddy was in the color of-- I mean, he didn't know whether he was black or white. He was very

white. He had started working in what you might call a soda fountain. He worked and worked and worked, and he was serving this and serving that and serving that and serving the other when he first started. And then he heard somebody say something about "nigger," and he didn't like it. Not that he considered himself "nigger" but that he didn't think that they even knew that he was of some parts of a black race. So he quit. He quit the job and then went into Bullock's [department store] downtown and was driving the elevators. And then he went into being a sheriff. But he first of all didn't like the word "nigger," because, I mean-- They weren't talking about him, but they were refusing to serve somebody black in the soda fountain that he was in, and they called him a nigger, so he left, he quit. That was all there was to it. There was no way in the world that he was going to go back there, and there was no way in the world that he was going to tolerate that. I mean, seemingly he was black race, not that it was anything blacker than your black shoes, but if you were a little darker than him-- And he was very white, he had blue eyes, gray eyes, you know. I mean, you're going to talk about black, and he knew where he came from. He wasn't going to tolerate it. Even if you didn't know he was black, he wasn't going to tolerate it. And he didn't. That's about the only thing that-- You know, he said, "I have one child"--which was me--"I've got one child to take care of. I'm not going to go through this. I'm not going to stay here in order--" He went somewhere. He did this. He got another job. He did this. Then, when he got my sister, then he had a very, very, very good job. He wasn't about to turn around and say, "I can't do this because they said 'nigger.' I've got children and a family to take care of." And he took care of his family until he died all the way. There was no way.

ISOARDI

What was the neighborhood like back then when you were a kid?

BROOKS

This neighborhood was like-- I've got news for you. We could leave our doors open. Nobody would bother you. Nobody would come into you. When I was going to school I went with all the little Jewish kids, Mexican kids, and black kids--one or two of them. We'd all go to school together. We'd meet up at the top of the hill up there, and we'd walk to Belvedere Junior High [School]. We all met there. We never locked our doors, never locked our doors. There was no way in the world we could lock our doors, because nobody was going to come by and hurt us. We didn't know anybody who was going to come by and hurt us. And when anybody came to my mother's back door or a side door, and they would come back-- Like a man would come by and say, "I'm hungry," my mother would give him plenty of food. She'd put it right out there on the steps, and he would eat it. She'd give it to him. Maybe once or twice every two weeks he'd come by and have something. There was a lady who came by and would

sell dresses and socks and underwear and everything, and if my mother needed something she would buy it. She had a great big suitcase, and she had everything in that. My mother would buy from her. My mother would give him, this man, she would give him his food, anything that we had to eat in the house. I was never hungry in my life. We had the best of food. Never hungry in my life. I had never known when my mother had said to us, "You don't have anything to eat," no. We had everything to eat, everything to eat. There was no way in the world my sister and I and my father and grandfather and my mother went hungry. No way. Right now I don't do that. I've got more food back there for me living one year than I can give up to anybody who wants to come by here and ask for food. No way have I ever been hungry. None whatsoever. My mother wouldn't allow it.

ISOARDI

So this was very much a racially mixed area. And you went to school, and you had friends--

BROOKS

I had a couple of Mexican friends, I had a couple of Jewish friends. I used to go up on Brooklyn Avenue, which was all Jewish. I used to go to Canter Brothers and get pastrami. They've left here. They've gone. I used to go to all those shops. In the summertime I'd go get my bathing suit, absolute wool, \$1.95. And I used to go up there-- "Oh, no, not \$1.95. Come on. I can go across the street and get \$1.25." And he'd say, "Oh, come on. No, no, no." I said, "Well, I'll go across the street. I'll get it for a \$1.25, the same bathing suit." And he said, "Okay. All right, \$1.25." Then I'd get the bathing suit. I didn't even know the man across the street. We were like little stupid children. Smarts, that's all.

ISOARDI

Where would you go swimming?

BROOKS

Oh, oh, oh, oh. There was a swimming pool over on Evergreen [Avenue] and Fourth Street.

ISOARDI

Oh, just over here where the park is?

BROOKS

That's right, but they've covered it over now. But, I mean, when we were children we used to go there for twenty-five cents for a towel. My mother used to take us over there. I used to bellyflop all over the doggone place. Sure, how did I know how to dive? I'd ka-plook! I mean, I got into it. We had a ball. Every Saturday we'd go over there and go swimming.

ISOARDI

Did you ever go out to the beach?

BROOKS

Every summer my mother would take my sister and myself down to Santa Monica beach into these little-- They were little cabins. We'd stay three weeks. My daddy would send us down there for three weeks.

ISOARDI

You'd rent a cabin in Santa Monica for three weeks?

BROOKS

Yeah. But my daddy didn't want us to go down there because he didn't want us to get brown. He wanted us to stay real white.

ISOARDI

Ah.

BROOKS

But right outside of the cabin was a peach that big all over the place. And they would tell us, "Don't pick the peaches." Every time we went I'd pick the freaking peaches. We'd get a peach. We'd go down, "Well, it was there; it fell on the ground." We'd pick it up. We didn't, you know. We'd get a cabin down there. Every summer my daddy would send us down there. Let me tell you something. My grandfather and my daddy would come down in suits. I'm talking about three-piece suits [laughs]--the vest, the coat, and the pants, the socks and the shoes--and they'd stand up, say, like right there. We were here. We were here on the beach, and this is all sand, and my daddy and granddad would stand up there, and they wouldn't come down on the sand. They'd come down to see how we were, but they wouldn't come down on the sand. They'd come down there and they'd see us. I mean, they wouldn't get the sand in their shoes or anything.

ISOARDI

Never even took their shoes off, probably, right?

BROOKS

What do you mean? They didn't come down to the sand! They didn't come down to the sand! Take their shoes off? What do you mean? [laughs] They were right there, over there, and my sister and I, we'd run up and hug daddy and granddad, and they'd, "Get away, get away, get away!" [laughs] My mother never moved. We'd go down to the beach every summer.

ISOARDI

You must have looked forward to that.

BROOKS

We as children did. Well, it's a big ocean, you know what I mean? We were living down there. We had this cabin. And then my sister and I were having a lot of fun. We met a couple of friends down there. We would run up and down the Ocean Park and run back and have fun, you know what I mean? But my mother didn't care. She was having fun. She was a little heavy, on the heavy side. There was one little rope over there on the other side, and the ocean would

run into her. And one of her friends would come by, her elderly friends would come by, and they'd stand up there by the rope, and the water would run on them, and they would laugh, and they'd knock it down. Oh, Jesus Christ, it was so funny, you know. But they were happy. They were happy. They were having a good time. And when we got ready to come home, my mother was so tired, she'd be ready to go to sleep after she cooked our dinner and we'd eaten. And we'd go to sleep until we met our friends, and then-- I've got news for you, my mother was a beautiful, beautiful woman. She was the kind of woman, if it was nice and if it was good to a certain extent, her children, me and my sister, she would go along with it. I mean, she did not believe that we were going to get in trouble, because she had raised us this way.

ISOARDI

So she trusted you and--

BROOKS

She trusted us.

ISOARDI

How long did you keep going down to the beach?

BROOKS

For about four or five years, until we were going into high school or going into college. It wasn't the idea that we didn't want to go to the beach, it was the idea that it had gone past our idea of what was-- You know, okay, we could go down there with our friends and go to the beach. We didn't have to go down there with mama.

ISOARDI

You're growing up. [laughs]

BROOKS

We're growing up. There you go. You know, we didn't have to go down there with mama to go to the beach. We were going down there with our friends, you know, getting on the beach on Sunday afternoon and coming home. We weren't staying down there three weeks at a time with mama. That was lots of fun. She was beautiful. She was a beautiful woman. Oh, my God, was she a gorgeous woman, I mean, in looks and in her face and her mind. Oh, Jesus Christ. I couldn't touch her, couldn't touch her. She was a gorgeous woman. I couldn't touch her. No way.

ISOARDI

Was she a housewife her whole life?

BROOKS

That's all she was. She never worked. No, she was--what do you call?--a practitioner to a certain extent. You couldn't die in the neighborhood unless my mother was there. You know, that was it. They called on my mother every time they got sick.

ISOARDI

Oh, really? So she knew something about medicine?

BROOKS

She had something to do with medicine. And she had a lot of medicine. She saved a lot of lives. She had a lot to do with medicine.

ISOARDI

Do you know how she got that knowledge?

BROOKS

I don't know. She was from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

ISOARDI

And she'd been through high school?

BROOKS

Don't know. I don't even know that. I don't even know that. But this was the actual knowledge that she had as far as medicine was concerned. Anytime anybody got sick they'd come to my mother.

1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO (APRIL 21, 1994)

ISOARDI

When did music come in? Was your family musical at all? Did your parents play? Or did your grandfather play anything?

BROOKS

No. My father loved music greatly. He loved it. And since I was a firstborn, he wanted to give me music lessons. So he hired a teacher, and she came to the house. She had me put my little finger and the thumb on the piano to make an octave. And I couldn't.

ISOARDI

How old were you?

BROOKS

Four. So she said, "When she can make an octave from this small finger to this thumb, when she can make an octave, I'll take her. I'll work with her." And she told me how to push the thing. I had the bottom of the piano. My father had bought me a baby grand piano, and I had the bottom of the piano, and I was pushing like that, boom, boom, boom. Pushing, pushing, pushing.

ISOARDI

So you were pushing against the base of the keys trying to force--

BROOKS

Pushing, pushing. This one. This is my left hand. She wanted--

ISOARDI

So you were trying to push your fingers apart so you could reach it?

BROOKS

And I did.

ISOARDI

So you really wanted to start playing the piano, then.

BROOKS

No, I was trying to please my father, and I was trying to do what she said. So that's what I did. I pushed my little finger and my thumb up against the keyboard, the bottom of the piano board, until I could do-- Boom, boom. It took me two weeks.

ISOARDI

Only two weeks and you were able to make the octave?

BROOKS

Uh-huh. And when she came back she took me, you know, and she looked at me, and she said, you know, boom, boom, boom, and that was it. And then she gave me a couple of exercises to do. I stayed with her and she stayed with me twenty years.

ISOARDI

Twenty years?

BROOKS

Twenty years.

ISOARDI

Long time!

BROOKS

Well, I think the point of the twenty years was that my mother and father wanted her to complete everything that she knew with me. She was absolutely brilliant. Everything that she knew they wanted her to give me.

ISOARDI

What was her name?

BROOKS

Florence Bruni.

ISOARDI

Did she just teach privately? Or did she teach--?

BROOKS

She taught me privately. I don't know who else she taught.

ISOARDI

Did she teach music in the school?

BROOKS

No, no.

ISOARDI

Did she play professionally?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

Just a teacher. She just taught privately?

BROOKS

She taught me everything I knew. She taught me everything I knew. I don't know who else she had, and I don't know who else-- Oh, she had my sister, but my sister didn't take but five years. I took twenty years. My daddy told us both, he said, "Okay, if you don't want to take lessons anymore, don't let me spend the money. Say no and I'll stop you. I'm not going to be angry with you, and I will not be upset, but if you don't want it, don't do it."

ISOARDI

How old were you then?

BROOKS

How old was I? I was four years old. I was up to my eighteen or nineteen or something like that. I mean, what's twenty years from four?

ISOARDI

No, I mean when your father told you that?

BROOKS

Oh, my father told me that, yeah, and my sister that. I don't know. I was five or six. My sister was five or six, because she was maybe two years younger than me, because I was two years older than her. He told her, "If you don't want it anymore, forget it. Don't worry." And when she didn't want it anymore, she told him, and he stopped it. But I kept going, going, going, going. Mrs. Bruni kept coming to me every Saturday. And I did a graduation solo in junior high, and I did a graduation solo in high school, and I did a graduation solo in my college. And then, after that, I told her, "You can go home."

ISOARDI

[laughs] What was her training like? Was it classical training? Just classical.

BROOKS

Classical. And she was so gentle. See, that's the only way I could learn from her. She was very gentle. She talked to me softly. She talked to me. She showed me where my hands should be, she showed me how I should do this. If she did this, if she did that, get out! I don't go that way. You do not come down on me with any force and have me turn around and produce. She showed me everything that was classical, I've got news for you. She had such gorgeous hands, such gorgeous fingers. Very beautiful. She showed me everything I wanted to know. I did everything she told me. Then, when I went from her to high school, I had a special curricular program to go to from my junior high school to my high school. I wasn't going to Roosevelt [High School]; I was going to a special music curricular at [Los Angeles] Polytechnic High School. I was awarded that, and I went over there. I went with this man who was the biggest and supposedly the best teacher. That's why I was going there, to get

the best teaching there. This man was there. I played with him. What I mean when I say I played with him, I played with him. I'd show up, but up underneath the table I'd hide, and when he would say "Hadda Brooks," I'd say, "Hi. Here I am." Every day I'd do that, and he absolutely accepted it. And when I would come out and he'd call on me to do my show-- I had a four-manual organ that he taught me on. When I'd do my exercise and I would do my program and I would do my song and whatnot, he'd listen. I'd do no wrong. I did the right thing because I loved him. I loved him because he took me right there in his hands. He took me right there in his hands. He pushed me right through. Even though I was up underneath the table hiding from him, he knew where I was.

ISOARDI

Were you just shy? Why were you hiding?

BROOKS

Just to be shitass. But that isn't the word I knew then. I was hiding because I knew that he loved me, I knew that I liked him. He said, "Hadda." I was up underneath the table; he knew where I was. And ten minutes later, I'd say, "Oh, hi." Frank [L.] Anderson was his name, and I called him Uncle Frank. And when I did the solo when I graduated, Caprice Veinoir by Fritz Kreisler, and I got off, I took ahold of his arm, and I pinched the hell out of it. I know he was black and blue. I pinched the hell out of it. I used to play the organ barefooted. I'd take my shoes off. I'd play the organ barefooted. And when I got off on that graduation night, my solo that I did, Caprice Veinoir by Fritz Kreisler, he knew that I'd done it. He dropped his hat, and I went back and I pinched the hell out of him. [laughs] I did. I pinched the hell out of him. I had graduated. That was the night of graduation. I graduated.

ISOARDI

What did you want to do then? Here you were graduating from high school. You'd been studying since you were four--what?--fourteen years?

BROOKS

I didn't know.

ISOARDI

You didn't have any goals or ambitions?

BROOKS

Not one clue.

ISOARDI

Did you know you wanted to be a musician then?

BROOKS

No. It wasn't the idea that I knew I wanted to be a musician. I mean, I had started out as a child of four. And here I am, it's going on and going on and going on, and I'm getting all kinds of beautiful grades for a child. I mean,

sixteen, fourteen, fifteen years old, and I'm in high school, I'm going to a special class, a special thing of musicians, an extracurricular thing that this high school had to offer. I had received that thing. They gave me the idea that I could go. I did not go to the Roosevelt High School over here. I did not go there. They sent me over to Polytechnic High School because of my education as far as music was concerned.

ISOARDI

When you went to Polytechnic then, was it a program where you studied mostly music, then?

BROOKS

Oh, I studied the biggest part of music, yes, the biggest part of music.

ISOARDI

So it's a program in music.

BROOKS

Yes. The biggest part of music. But my other classes were history, American and English literature. I excelled in that, too. And when I graduated, I mean, that was the biggest thing in my life. And Uncle Frank was my biggest teacher. When I went to college I couldn't take it, because I couldn't take the woman who was teaching me. She was German, and I told her to go to hell. She wanted me to do Bach. I said, "No, I'm not doing Bach. Bach is too mathematical. Melodically I am inclined. If you can't give me something melodically I cannot take it." Then I went back to Frank Anderson, Uncle Frank. I said, "She wants to give me Bach. She wants to do this. She wants to do that." Then of course, naturally, he said, "Well, she's a professor. She wants you to do this and she wants you to do that." I said, "Uncle Frank, I can't do that. Uncle Frank, I cannot do that. I can't do Bach, not the way she wants me to do Bach. I can't do it." So he said, "Well, okay. You come back in another couple of weeks." But in another couple of weeks, when I went back, I sat with him for about twenty-five minutes, and he had a brain tumor, and it had gone into cancer, and within the next two weeks he was gone. I told her. I said, "My master is gone. My master has died. My master is not going to give me any more, you know, a form of things that I want to take, so I'm leaving your class." And I left her. I wouldn't take anything from her, and I wouldn't take anything more from her, and I wouldn't do anything-- After he died, I said, "He taught me everything I know. I don't want to know any more. If there is anything else to take, I don't want to know anything more. Uncle Frank, Frank L. Anderson, has taught me everything I want to know. I can sit on a five-case organ right now. I don't need Bach. I know counterpoint. I know the difference in where this hand is going and what this hand is going to do and counterpoint and whatever." This is the best thing that you can do in lesson learning to create something where this hand can go one way, this hand can go another way, and it all comes in the

same vein. I know where it's going. My music told me that. My teaching has told me that. Frank L. Anderson has helped me to develop that. What do I want to know? The idea that I have all of this knowledge as far as the concern of whatever I am doing right now is where I am right as of today. I am absolutely pushing it right now. I'm doing it. It might be in a different vein, because I'm singing and playing and pushing my two hands into what I might think is a combination of a beautiful sound behind my vocal chords. Not that I'm giving you a concert. It's my vocal chords. It's why, it's where, and it's what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't know. "Well, what are you going to do?" "What do you mean, what am I going to do? I'm going to do the best I can. I'm going to do the things that I know how to do, that I should do as far as music is concerned." And you take the rest of this and sort of maybe throw it out somewhere, put this other and every other word as to what I can say as to how important it might be. Not what I said but how important the one word can be to each other word, you know. I don't know. I had no idea, Steve, none whatsoever, when I came out of college as to what I was going to do with my musical education.

ISOARDI

Where were you going to college, where was this taking place?

BROOKS

I went so long to UCLA and so long to-- Let me see. Wait. Northwestern [University]. Anyway--

ISOARDI

Is that where you met this German teacher?

BROOKS

No, I met the German teacher in junior college, Chapman College. When I left high school I went to--

ISOARDI

You went to Chapman?

BROOKS

I went to Chapman.

ISOARDI

Why Chapman? Because they had a good music program?

BROOKS

Well, I had thought they did. I had thought they did. And it was still in the city of Los Angeles, see. I thought it was right here, and I couldn't go any further, you know. And there was no way in the world-- And this German teacher was out there in Chapman College. [tape recorder off]

ISOARDI

So you're just sort of taking it a year at a time, and you're studying, and you're learning, and you're practicing, I guess, a great deal on your own, then, at this time, too. Did this take up most of your time, music, then?

BROOKS

No, it didn't, because to a certain extent I did not know where all of this education as far as music was concerned was going to take me. I had no idea that it was going to come into this or whatever it was going to come into. I had no idea. There was no way in the world that I thought it would. No way.

ISOARDI

Were most of your friends, then, also studying music?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

This was just a thing you did and then went out and had--?

BROOKS

Most of my friends were not studying. My girlfriend who lived across the street over there, she-- I don't know about her curriculum and how great it was, but because of me she did get a thing to go over to Polytechnic High School because of the music curriculum, which was a higher grade. Say like you've got a sweater, but you've got a sweater that cost forty-nine dollars, and then you've got a sweater that costs sixty-nine dollars, which is not much difference, but the sixty-nine dollars sweater will engage you into a higher curriculum. Okay. Seemingly, as of right now, I'm going to the point where I think that that's exactly what it was. The only teachers who were absolutely higher than the teachers of the school that I was supposed to go to had a bit of a higher education as far as music was concerned, and they were supposed to help the pupils that had a bit of a higher education as far as music was concerned. If you said from A to A natural, and I could hear it without you even playing it, then I was ready. They wanted me, you see. I had a bit of a higher education than the average student as far as music was concerned. And I was so enamored with this man, Frank Anderson, who took care of me, who brought me out into everything as far as music was concerned. I was so enamored with him. I mean, I played games with him. I know he knew where I was. I know he knew I knew my lesson. I know when he called my name, and if I didn't answer he knew I was up underneath the stage there somewhere. He knew I knew that. And when it came time to graduate he said, "You will play the graduation solo on the organ, Caprice Veinoir by Fritz Kreisler." I played it. When I got off I pinched him so hard he turned black and blue. I knew. I wasn't going to say, "Show me your arm," you know. But that was, to a certain extent, Steve, one of the greatest things--well, to a certain extent, as I keep saying--in my life. This man had so much faith in me. I mean, there was nobody [who was] going to take my

place. There was nobody [who was] going to take my place. And as far as I'm concerned, I loved him. I loved him. I played with him, and he knew what I was doing. I had nerve enough to play with the teacher. I had nerve enough to play with the teacher.

ISOARDI

What was your favorite music then? What did you enjoy playing most?

BROOKS

I played the most melodic things in the world.

ISOARDI

Such as?

BROOKS

Oh, I don't know. Debussy, Chopin, Schubert, all the things that they wrote. Dvorak. All the things that they wrote that were melodic, that could flow, where I could do this with the organ, where I could do this with my feet. I did not do anything that was--huh!--heavens to betsy, rake your head right up, you know. I couldn't do it. He knew that I couldn't do it. [sings grandiose phrase] Forget it! I couldn't do it.

ISOARDI

You probably weren't playing much atonal music, then. [laughs]

BROOKS

I wasn't playing anything that took me way out somewhere in a field that absolutely had bulls running towards me, you know. And all of a sudden here-- I mean, I've got news for you, I had to be very, very careful to jump away from them. And then all of a sudden here comes the soft music with the lambs. No, I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that.

ISOARDI

Outside of school, though, you were a teenager, you were in high school. What kind of music were you listening to outside of school? Did you listen to Chopin recordings outside of school also? Or were you listening to popular music then?

BROOKS

Popular music. I was listening to popular music. The popular music on the side of-- Let's see. Wait a minute. Hold on now. Give me time, because I've got to think. Because I've got news. My daddy, he almost threw me out of the house. "Body and Soul." I was playing-- Oh, I had a lot of popular music, you know. I went and bought popular music, and I would put it in the bench. And every Saturday, when my teacher would come, Miss Bruni, she wouldn't know anything about it. But while I was getting-- I was asleep, and she would come. And when I was getting ready and taking my shower, and she would have breakfast with my mother--like bacon and eggs and whatnot--I would sneak back into the living room while they were having breakfast and put the sheet music in the bench. But there was one tune I had, "Body and Soul," and when

my daddy heard me say, [sings] "I'll gladly surrender myself to you, body and soul"-- "What do you mean by singing that?" "I'm all for yours body and soul." I said, "Daddy, it's a song. It's a song." "You're not going to surrender--"

ISOARDI

You told me he loved music.

BROOKS

He loved music, but he didn't like the lyrics of that song. "I'm going to surrender myself to you body and soul." "What are you talking about?"

ISOARDI

So he didn't want his daughter singing anything like that.

BROOKS

No! "I'm going to surrender myself to you body and--" "What are you talking about? What do you mean? Surrender yourself to who?" So I said, "Okay." So then I turned it away. I've never sung it again.

ISOARDI

"Body and Soul"? You've never done that?

BROOKS

I was nine to ten years old. I have never sung it again, because my father turned me off of it, and I've never sung it again.

ISOARDI

No kidding.

BROOKS

[sings melody] It's a gorgeous tune. [sings again] "I'd gladly surrender myself to you body and--" Oh, Jesus Christmas. I've got news, my daddy darn near had a fit. He almost had a baby, and he wasn't a woman.

ISOARDI

[laughs] What were his tastes in music?

BROOKS

He loved beautiful tunes like-- Oh, my God. You're calling on me now, and I can't even think-- Let me see.

ISOARDI

Did he have records in the house?

BROOKS

Oh, yeah. He had records. He and my grandfather had records of [Amelita] Galli-Curci and [Enrico] Caruso.

ISOARDI

Oh, they were opera fans.

BROOKS

And then they had records of this guy, he's a comedian. Williams. I can't think of this guy's name, but I liked Williams. He had a lot of-- Oh, he was beautiful. He was a comedian, a black comedian. But then--

ISOARDI

Bert Williams?

BROOKS

I think that could be his name. Bert Williams.

ISOARDI

It rings a bell with me. It's what comes to my mind.

BROOKS

Bert Williams. He used to sing, "I'm going to quit Saturday." He had one of those things that he'd talk about. Oh, he had a lot of things, and he was funny. Bert Williams, I think that was his name. Bert Williams. But, my God, they had Galli-Curci and Caruso and-- They had one of those high, great big Victrolas, you know.

ISOARDI

Oh, yeah.

BROOKS

One of the best ones that was ever put out. Not the ones that sit down here. I mean, they had one that was high. But I can think of a few other names as we go on now that they had. As far as Bert Williams was concerned--

ISOARDI

Did they listen much to the big bands back then?

BROOKS

What big bands? What big bands? I don't know about big bands. What big bands?

ISOARDI

Fletcher Henderson's band? Benny Goodman's band? None of those?

BROOKS

No. No. We used to absolutely, when we had a radio on and when-- What's his name? He used to be so loud. He used to be so loud, you know. [sings] "Oh, your feets too big. Oh, your feets too big." What was his name?

ISOARDI

I don't know that one.

BROOKS

Oh, yeah. Fats Waller.

ISOARDI

Oh! [laughs]

BROOKS

Fats Waller. That was his name. Fats Waller. "Your feets too big." And he had other great big songs. He was so loud. And my grandfather and them played the radio, and they heard them, but whenever they wanted to play the specials-- Oh, no. They didn't come on radio. They had the great big records of Galli-Curci and Caruso. They'd put it on the record thing, the great big Victrola.

ISOARDI

Did they take you out to concerts much?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

You never went out and heard people perform?

BROOKS

No. No. No. My teacher, my piano teacher, took me out to concerts. She took me out to Saturday concerts.

ISOARDI

Where?

BROOKS

At the Philharmonic [Hall] downtown and other places, around the Pasadena places, you know. She had a chauffer that would drive her. Semi-concerts that were like that, you know. Nothing very heavy. Nothing very heavy, because she didn't want to hurt my head. She didn't want to put too much on me, you know. She wanted me to listen to this as what she knew that I liked--melodic things, you know. So it was a semi-concert to a certain extent. I went with her, and I enjoyed it because of the fact that I knew that it wasn't too heavy and she wasn't putting it on top of me. And when she came out with it, then she said, "Did you enjoy it?" I said, "Yes." Because I did. I did. It wasn't, you know, [screams], you know. I couldn't take that. She knew I couldn't take that.

ISOARDI

What about when you were a teenager? Did you go to dances or to clubs or anything like that to hear music?

BROOKS

I went to a lot of dances. I went to a lot of clubs.

ISOARDI

What were your favorites?

BROOKS

My favorite what?

ISOARDI

Your favorite clubs.

BROOKS

There were no special clubs that were named. We had clubs as a special group, and we would give dances, but we didn't go to a club. You understand what I'm trying to say? I didn't go to a club like the kids go to clubs now. We didn't go to drink. We didn't have any drinks whatsoever. We went, and the band was there, and we were there to dance, and that's all. But we didn't go to a club where they had beer or liquor. No, no, we didn't go. We didn't know what it was to drink. Jeez, I wish I didn't know now. [laughs] The idea is at that particular time,

Steve, we didn't drink. We didn't go to any clubs that had liquor. We just went to a club as a dance.

ISOARDI

Right. Your father probably watched you pretty carefully, I would think.

BROOKS

Oh, he watched me pretty carefully. Steve, if I said I'd be home at twelve [o'clock] and I didn't get home till ten minutes after twelve, they'd be standing on the porch. I was just ten minutes late, driving up, and they'd be standing on the porch--my mother, my grandfather, and my father--standing on the porch, my front porch, like, "What?" Like the idea is this: I was going to have a baby right now, eh? After nine months or eight months, I was going to give a baby right now? I had stopped somewhere? We're going to have sex? I went through this until I got married.

ISOARDI

No kidding.

BROOKS

I went through this till I got married. They were standing on the steps. I was a very beautiful girl. I was a very beautiful girl. And my grandfather didn't want to be out there, but he had to hold up with his son, who was my father. And my mother trusted me. My father's the one who didn't.

ISOARDI

Well, probably as a sheriff he'd seen a lot of the bad side of things.

BROOKS

Evidently.

ISOARDI

It must have been tough, though, on a boy wanting to go out with you to see both your father and your grandfather-- [laughs]

BROOKS

I'm riding up, and he says, "Well, there they are." My boyfriend would say, "There they are." I'd say, "Yeah." And you know, I'm ten minutes late. Ten minutes. "Where have you been?" "What do you mean, 'Where have I been?' Trying to get the hell home. What are you talking about?"

1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE (APRIL 25, 1994)

ISOARDI

Okay, Hadda, before we get into it, let me ask you some informational things from last time.

BROOKS

Okay.

ISOARDI

First off, what was the name of the German-- Germanic, I should say--teacher you had at Chapman College who wasn't quite your cup of tea? Do you remember her name?

BROOKS

Absolutely. Well, it was a woman, and, of course, I didn't fare very well with women. Her name was Zelman. I'm thinking that her name was Zelman. She was very, very German.

ISOARDI

That was her last name?

BROOKS

Zelman.

ISOARDI

You don't have a first name for her?

BROOKS

No, no, no, no. I didn't have a first name for her. I mean, I didn't even want to call her Zelman. [laughs] But the idea was just that it didn't too much matter to me what her last name, first name, or middle name was. I didn't like her because she was a woman, and she wanted me to go through Bach, you know, Johann Sebastian Bach. I'd already been through that on the piano with my teacher Miss [Florence] Bruni. Mr. Frank [L.] Anderson did not put me through Bach. And when she wanted me to go through Bach, I said, "Listen, I flunked math. I mean, like, Johann Sebastian Bach is nothing but a mathematical thing as far as the music is concerned. Counterpoint." I didn't want to go through it. I had become now, when I got to junior college, very melodic, and I didn't want to go through it. She didn't accept my not wanting to go through it, and I figured that she was going to become very hostile-- The word isn't hostile, the word is strong. Maybe I can say that. Strong for not wanting to do what she wanted me to do. And at that particular point, I wasn't going to let her tell me what she wanted me to do, and I said, "No, I won't do it." So then I told my mother, "I will not take her class anymore." I said, "Don't send your money, because it's a waste. I will not take her class anymore." And even though I did maybe about three months of Bach-- She knew that I could do it. She knew that I had completed the exercises of Bach that she wanted me to do and even play some of the compositions of Bach. She wouldn't let me alone. She just wanted me to keep on continuing with Bach, Bach, Bach, Bach. I said, "I'm not going to." I said, "I've shown you. I'm playing right now. I'm going to play Bach for you, and right now I am going to absolutely let you know what I think about Johann Sebastian Bach, even though he is supposedly one of the greatest musicians in the world before I ever got here. I mean, Bach is great, but I am not in tune to like him, so I won't play him." That didn't set well with her. And I

told my mother, "I will not take her classes anymore." So that was the end of her.

ISOARDI

Let me ask you one or two other names to fill in. Of course, last time you referred to your mother, father, grandfather, etc., but you didn't give me some names. What was your grandfather's name?

BROOKS

Hopgood.

ISOARDI

And his first name?

BROOKS

Samuel Alexander.

ISOARDI

What about your father?

BROOKS

My father was named John Marsalis.

ISOARDI

As in Wynton Marsalis?

BROOKS

I don't know. Wherever they got the Marsalis. I don't know wherever they got it, but his name was John. Of course, when I was quite young my father was called Jack. Of course, now, Jack is called John. I don't know about that. But I always knew my father as John M.--Marsalis--Hopgood.

ISOARDI

And your mother's?

BROOKS

My mother's name was Goldie Magdalena Wright. They met somewhere in the South, I mean, before they--

ISOARDI

Oh, so they knew each other before they came out here?

BROOKS

Before they came out here. My daddy w s very, very definitely-- Oh, he was going to marry her. He was going to marry her. But his family, if truth will out, his family--my grandfather and my Aunt Roxie and quite a few of the other relatives--did not want them to marry, only because my mother was, truth will out, brown skinned.

ISOARDI

So they wanted someone lighter.

BROOKS

Well, they didn't say that in particular, but the point of that possibility of things that they didn't want them to do was because of that fact. My father didn't want

me or my sister [Kathryn Hopgood Carter] to go to the beach on the summer vacation my mother wanted to take us on, like for three weeks on vacation down in Santa Monica, because we were going to be at the beach, and we were going to be in the sun. You want the truth? That's it. My father would come down, my grandfather would come down in their three-piece suits, dressed to the nines, but they would not come on the sand, because they had their shoes on and everything else. We would have to come up to them when they were standing on the sidewalk of Ocean Park or Santa Monica. We'd have to come up and say, "Hi, Daddy, hi, Granddad." They would come down because we were gone maybe two weeks, and they'd come down to see how we were doing. We were down on the beach just covered with sand. When you come out of the water you are covered with sand, you know. I mean, you were children. So we would say, "Hi, Granddaddy" and "Hi, Daddy." Oh, no. We couldn't go up to them. They never hugged us because of the fact they had their gorgeous suits on and their shoes on.

ISOARDI

You mentioned last time that your mother's family came from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

BROOKS

Well, my mother did. My mother did. I knew my mother's brothers, two brothers, but I didn't know of any other family that she had. My mother had two brothers. I met them when I was in Detroit. But I didn't know of any other family that my mother had.

ISOARDI

So you don't know the background in Tennessee or anything?

BROOKS

I don't know of anything. I don't know of her mother or her father or anything. No.

ISOARDI

The final thing I wanted to ask you about on some of the things we talked about last time was you were studying music, I guess, at Poly--

BROOKS

[Los Angeles] Polytechnic [High School].

ISOARDI

That was your specialty. Were there many other girls studying music then?

BROOKS

I don't know about that. But my musical curriculum from the junior high school, I can say only that it was to the extent that it was in a category of being maybe exceptional. I didn't think of it at that time because nobody told me about it at that time. But when-- Oh, yeah. Let's see now. Because Roosevelt [High School] was the high school that I should have gone to.

ISOARDI

That's just over here a few blocks away.

BROOKS

Over here. This is in my area, in my district. I did not go to that high school because of my-- What you would call it? Let's see.

ISOARDI

Did you win a scholarship to Polytechnic?

BROOKS

No, I didn't win a scholarship. My education in music was far ahead of high school. I was in almost college as far as my musical education. I was in the college thing when I didn't even understand at that time. I was way above Roosevelt. They didn't have the musical [program]. They didn't have that.

ISOARDI

So how did you go to Poly, then? Was it your junior high schoolteachers?

BROOKS

Because my mother had asked for special permission on special musical education for me to go to Polytechnic. Polytechnic had the educational thing.

ISOARDI

So was Polytechnic then sort of looked upon as where the better students went to school?

BROOKS

The better students in educational music things. As far as I was concerned it was musical. Right. I was accepted there because of that.

ISOARDI

I see.

BROOKS

I was accepted there because of that. I can remember my mother taking me to Polytechnic. It was the first time after she took me to grammar school that she took me on the bus, and we got over to Polytechnic. I had four or five friends who were going to Polytechnic. And when my mother brought me over there and walked me up to the bunch of my friends, everybody just threw their arms out to me, "Welcome," you know. They just said, "We're happy you're here." And when my mother found out that I was going to be well taken care of because of some of my friends, then my mother went back and took the streetcar back home.

ISOARDI

Did you make friends at Polytechnic who turned out to be life-long friends?

BROOKS

Quite a few.

ISOARDI

Were they also musicians?

BROOKS

Yes.

ISOARDI

Really?

BROOKS

Yes. I have one friend that's called John Winslow. He was a heavy foot on the organ. He was a great musician. I see him now. I see him maybe once every two or three years. He has an organ in his home. It is not a Hammond organ, it is a regular three-manual, what you call a pipe organ. It's a regular organ. And he's a beautiful musician. The idea about John Winslow, I liked him very much, and he liked me very much as far as my musical ability was concerned, but he never did make it to play the graduation solo at high school. But he is a very technical, I would call technical--not melodic--organ player. He's a technical musician. He's a good musician. Technically we would call him an extremely good musician still.

ISOARDI

So you could put anything in front of him and he could play it?

BROOKS

Absolutely. Absolutely. And the idea was this: What I liked about John Winslow, when he wasn't selected to play the graduation solo there was no animosity. It was just one of those things where he had thought like, "Hadda Brooks, she deserved it." And he said, "I'm okay." This man Frank L. Anderson taught him everything he knew and taught me everything I knew, and he was very happy with that.

ISOARDI

Did he go on to have a career in music?

BROOKS

No career in music, no. No career in music. He still plays. I am not sure as to-- He didn't do any show business, no. As of right now, I mean, if you're not doing jazz organ you're not doing anything at all, so he probably more than likely--which I'm not sure of--played for church with the great big sound of the organ. But he didn't do any solos, and he didn't do any concerts as far as I knew. I don't know that.

ISOARDI

Maybe you can talk a little bit about what the music program was like at Polytechnic. What were you studying musically? Was it harmony every year? Were there bands that people would also play in? Or orchestras, classical orchestras, that they would have students play in?

BROOKS

Well, yes, as everybody else. But what I'm going to say to you is this: Supposedly they told them about me, I don't know. They treated me like a special student.

ISOARDI

At Polytechnic?

BROOKS

At Polytechnic. Everything that happened there, I had to be, or they were picking me as, or they selected me as, part of it. I don't care what show they did. I don't care what program they had, there was a solo I had to do.

ISOARDI

Really? From almost as soon as you got there?

BROOKS

Almost as soon as I got there. When I came into the point of-- Now, look, I'll correct you. Not as soon as I got there. But until I came into the point of knowing just exactly how to manipulate a four-manual organ with pipes. I have never played a Hammond organ, because I don't think it's-- It's not beautiful enough for me. If you want to play a Hammond organ, you're going to go jazz. Well, I never played jazz organ. But when I got there, every time that they had a show Uncle Frank just sort of put me right in to the point where, "You've got to have her on it. You've got to do her on it. She's going to play on it. She's going to make it on it. You're going to put Hadda Brooks on it." I used to hide from him up underneath the stage. And he'd say, "Hadda Brooks--" And he didn't see me sitting out there with the rest of the class. He'd say, "Hadda Brooks," and I'd be underneath the stage. "Yeah, I'm here." He'd say, "Okay." Because he knew where I was.

ISOARDI

Did he ever talk to you about what you should do with your music? Did he ever say, "Hadda, you should really point towards this" or anything like that?

BROOKS

No. No. He was a person who was-- The reason I got so much from him is because he would talk to me very gently. That's the only way I can learn. That's how come I put my teacher down, the German teacher down in Chapman College. She demanded that I do. And I've got news for you, don't demand that I do anything. You don't demand that I do anything. You don't tell me and point your finger. I will go on my own. I will upset you. And I upset her. But Frank L. Anderson would just talk to me. He didn't tell me what I should do. He didn't tell me where I should go, here or there or the other. He trained me to do exactly what I did: learn that four-manual organ to perfection and then tell the principal and everybody in that school that I'm going to play a graduation solo. "I have her, she is capable, and that's what's going to be happening. Put her down on the program." That's all he did. You see, what I'm trying to say is that

he knew my nature. He knew where my head was coming from. He knew what I was going to do. He didn't tell me what to do. He taught me and expected me to go through his teachings. And when I made a mistake, he didn't say anything. He knew I knew I made a mistake. He didn't say, "You're wrong. You made a mistake. Do it again." He didn't say that. He knew I knew I made a mistake.

ISOARDI

Great teacher.

BROOKS

Beautiful teacher.

ISOARDI

He put you in touch with yourself.

BROOKS

Beautiful teacher. I have never and will never forget him, because he was absolutely the point of me being almost to a certain extent where I am right now. He gave me my confidence. He gave me my security. He gave me the thought that I knew what I could do. And when I was wrong he gave me the thought that I knew. He didn't have to tell me when I was wrong. I knew when I was wrong. And I would change, correct, and follow through. And the next day he would say, when I came back to class, "You just hit." And I knew he understood that I had corrected it. The night of the graduation, when I played the solo Caprice Veinoir, when I got through--because I always played with my left foot barefoot, I took my shoe off, I played barefoot--I got off, and I went down, because he was sitting behind me, maybe over here like, and when I got through I knew I did it. I knew what I did. I knew he was happy. I knew he was very proud. I know he had followed me clear through the whole thing that he taught me. And I pinched him so he was black and blue on his arm. Bam! I pinched him so hard. I mean, if he hadn't been a gentlemen he would have taken off his coat and shirt and showed me the black and blue mark that-- I pinched him so hard, because I knew, I knew, I knew, I knew he knew what I did. I knew, I knew that he was happy. I knew that he was satisfied. I pinched the heck out of him. And he never flinched. He never flinched. He didn't do this, he didn't do that. I mean, I got on this side, on this left arm. I pinched the hell out of him and walked back up in my cap and gown back on the stage and sat down in my seat. [laughs] I knew he was happy. I knew he was happy. I miss him very much. I miss him. I miss him very much.

ISOARDI

I can tell. Well, after Poly you went through Chapman, but you didn't last long in Chapman thanks to this Germanic teacher. Then what did you do after you left Chapman?

BROOKS

Well, I didn't leave Chapman so much on account of her. Chapman was a college that-- I mean, like even moving away from Frank L. Anderson and going to a junior college, I mean-- You know how you leave friends. You just sort of seem not sad, but you sort of seem like you don't even know them. They're new. I mean, you're going with four years of all your students and your friends in high school, then you go to a college and you don't know anybody. And here's your other organ teacher who is so-- I mean, you don't like her. But I mean, its not the point that you don't want the education. The point is that to a certain extent you're lonesome. You don't have your friends, your other friends who might have gone. Maybe they couldn't afford college. Maybe they went somewhere else.

ISOARDI

So no one you knew was going to Chapman, then?

BROOKS

No, no one that I knew. And there was one time that there was a big dance. And everybody knew I played the piano. There was supposed to be a piano player and a bass player who played so that everybody could dance. It was a big dance, you know. And they didn't show up. And here I am with my little boyfriend, and they know that I can play the piano, and they're asking me to play the piano for them to dance, the whole school. I was very upset. I was very upset. "What do you mean? It's the first time I--" Well, okay, I'm performing now. I'm performing now for the whole college. I'm playing the piano by myself, and everybody's dancing. Everybody knows that I'm quite upset. Everybody knows that I don't like it. Well, I did. I did. I played for maybe three hours, four hours.

ISOARDI

You played the whole night?

BROOKS

I played the whole night. Where I got the tunes from, I don't know, but I--

ISOARDI

That's the other thing. I was going to ask you what you played for three hours.

BROOKS

I played everything that I thought I had heard on radio. And they danced and they danced and they danced and they danced. And I sat down there. My boyfriend was standing there; he wasn't dancing with anybody. He didn't know anybody. He came with me.

ISOARDI

He sat there for three hours?

BROOKS

That's right. And they didn't like my attitude. No, they didn't like my attitude. They didn't like it because I didn't like it. So I met with them the next day. We

had a girls conference or whatever the club was called. I can't remember. And I said, "I'm very sorry that you didn't like my attitude." I said, "But if I hadn't been able to produce music for you, what would you have done? Why are you angry with me because I was upset?" I said, "I came with my boyfriend to have fun, you came with your boyfriends to have fun, and all of a sudden when you saw that my attitude was a bit upsetting, why are you being angry with me?" I said, "If it hadn't been for me, you wouldn't have danced." And they danced. I mean, every time I played [sings] they danced. There's no way in the world. So I said, "I am very sorry about your attitude, I am very sorry about how you feel, but the next time you have a dance don't invite me, because I will not play for you just in case your orchestra doesn't show up." Every musical thing they had-- I even did the background of "The Raven," the poem "The Raven." Everything that went on-- I mean, I don't think there was anybody else there who played the piano. I never thought about it at the time. I'm just now coming to the point where I don't think anybody played the piano.

ISOARDI

This was junior college? There must have been a lot of music students.

BROOKS

I don't know. I was the only one who played this, played that, played-- Every time they had an auditorium assembly I was the one who played the piano.

ISOARDI

They must have thought you were just far and away the best.

BROOKS

I don't know. I never thought of it that way myself. You said it, I didn't.

ISOARDI

Well, it must have been. I mean, there had to have been other piano players.

BROOKS

I don't know. There were other musicians there taking musical curricula and things.

ISOARDI

Well, that must have been it.

BROOKS

Had to be. Anyway-- [tape recorder off]

ISOARDI

Yeah, everyone wanted you to play at Chapman College. We were talking about the reasons why you left Chapman, too.

BROOKS

Well, the reasons I left Chapman--

ISOARDI

I mean, aside from your teacher there.

BROOKS

--is because that-- Yeah. Is because that unbeknownst to me, I think that I wanted a little bit more than just going under tutorings as far as teachers were concerned. And English and history, which I adored-- I loved history. I was great in history. I mean, I knew all the--what do you call it?--the 1899s and 1922s and all the dates as far as I was going to-- I loved it. English literature, I had a great deal in there. I loved every moment of it. The only thing that I couldn't get was from that woman, you know. So I think that's why I left.

ISOARDI

How long were you there? Was it a year?

BROOKS

I left there-- I was there for a year and a half.

ISOARDI

A year and a half.

BROOKS

And my mother wanted me to stay and keep on going through college. And then I went through to Northwestern [University] and maybe a few other things.

ISOARDI

Where was Northwestern?

BROOKS

Northwestern is in New York, isn't it?

ISOARDI

Northwestern University in Illinois?

BROOKS

Uh-huh.

ISOARDI

Illinois?

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

Oh, you went to the Midwest then?

BROOKS

Yeah, I went over there. I went over there, and I stayed there for about maybe a year, and I left.

ISOARDI

Studying music there, I guess?

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah. And then I came out. And then, of course, naturally I was being inducted, if you want to say, inducted. I told my manager, I said, "Oh, I'm inducted into the hall of fame." He said, "No, you're inducted into the hall of fame." [laughs] I came out of there and went into show business.

ISOARDI

Out of Northwestern?

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

Is that why you left? You decided you just wanted to--?

BROOKS

No, no, no. I didn't leave there. I just said, "What am I doing? What am I going through? I mean, I've gone through this." I mean, Frank L. Anderson had given me everything I wanted to know.

ISOARDI

So you just felt you weren't getting much out of it?

BROOKS

He was long dead. He was gone. I went to see him maybe about two weeks before he died. I went to his house to see him. And this was like five or six years later. I said, "I can't get anything more from him. He's gone. He's given me everything I want. What am I going to do?" And here these people were saying, you know-- Like I came back home to Los Angeles, and these people were saying, "Do boogies. Do this, do that, do the other." I mean, like, "your music ability." So I did.

ISOARDI

So you came back from Northwestern. We're talking now about the late 1930s?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

The mid-1930s?

BROOKS

When I came back from Chapman College it was '37, '38. In '39, '40, and '41 I was back in--

ISOARDI

Northwestern, okay. So you came back here then. It was about 1941, then?

BROOKS

'Forty-one and '42. And '46 is when I actually started in show business.

ISOARDI

So what did you do, then, between '42 and '46?

BROOKS

Nothing. Nothing.

ISOARDI

Were you working at all?

BROOKS

I was playing for a dance director.

ISOARDI

Oh, really?

BROOKS

Willie Covan. He was one of the most beautiful dance directors I've ever played for. He taught-- What's his name? I was reading about him today. He even taught a couple of beautiful routines for the guy who danced with Ginger Rogers.

ISOARDI

Fred Astaire? Really?

BROOKS

He taught Ginger Rogers. He taught Shirley Temple. Now, well, I'm trying to say she-- We had to wake her up. She just slept. She was a little, slow kid, but she was a little, beautiful kid, because he taught her, you know. And she picked up on everything and whatnot and what was going on and all of that. But in between that time, when I came back from Northwestern and when I got into show business, that's what I was doing. I was the accompanist for the great Mr. Willie Covan.

ISOARDI

Now, how did that happen? How did you get that job?

BROOKS

At the particular time, my husband-- I had married. I left home. I married one of the Harlem Globetrotters.

ISOARDI

No kidding. Which one?

BROOKS

[Earl] "Shug" Morrison.

ISOARDI

No kidding.

BROOKS

Yeah. I married him. I ran off, because my mother and father and grandfather used to stand on the porch every time I went out. If I didn't get there at twelve o'clock, oh, Jesus Christ, you thought I was going to jail. [laughs] And I said, "Well, I've got news for them. I'm not going home anymore." So we got married. We were in love, and he was a beautiful man.

ISOARDI

Where did you meet him?

BROOKS

I met him on a Sunday afternoon or a Sunday evening at the-- Wait a minute. On Sunday afternoon-- There was an auditorium on Central Avenue, but I can't think of the name of it. It's very well known.

ISOARDI

Was it a dance place?

BROOKS

Yeah, you could dance there.

ISOARDI

The Elks auditorium.

BROOKS

There you go. There you go. And the Harlem Globetrotters used to play the Broadway Clowns every Sunday afternoon. Then, when they'd get through with their show, they would come over to the guy that I worked with, Willie Covan, and his wife [Florence Covan] and the other guys and their wives--not the Harlem Globetrotters but the other guys and their wives. They would take them over to Willie Covan's house, and the women would get in there and make great big waffles, cake waffles, with strawberries and ice cream, and we'd just eat. That's where I met my husband. We weren't together very long. I mean, we were together about a year, and then we got married, and maybe four months later he had developed pulmonary pneumonia, and he died. So then we weren't married but about a year, maybe four months, you know. And I never married again. This was like 1941. I never married again.

ISOARDI

You didn't want to? Or it just didn't happen?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, I never found anybody I wanted. I mean, a lot of people came, blah, blah, blah, because I had now gone into making a career for myself. I mean, there were a lot of people wanting me, but I couldn't see them. I'd have in Chicago five millionaires sitting at a table, and I couldn't do anything but take a drink from them. I wouldn't go up to the hotel room; I wouldn't go into the bed with them. I wouldn't do anything. It wasn't my idea. So to a certain extent it still hasn't been. This was one of the phases of my life with Abe Saperstein, who absolutely adored my husband. And when he died-- He died here at the-- what do you call it?--the--

ISOARDI

The medical center here?

BROOKS

Yeah, the hospital over there, yeah. And then, when I brought him back to Chicago, Abe Saperstein and a few of the basketball players, Meadowlark [Lemon] and Goose Tatum--at the time they played with him--they all met us there at the train station when they brought his body off. And then Abe Saperstein had a great big what-do-you-call-it car to take him to the funeral home.

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BROOKS

So they met him and took him to the funeral home. And then it was just two days later we had the funeral, and they were all there. I was very young. I was very young. I mean, that was the only man I loved. That was the only man that was-- I mean, we weren't together that much, because, I mean, he was on the road playing with the Harlem Globetrotters, and I wasn't traveling with him. I wasn't even in show business. And, I mean, the idea was this: I wasn't traveling with him. When he died, I had a real heartrending thing. I mean, I just couldn't get over it. But then, after that, I decided that I was going to do something. I was going to go into something. I was going to do something. And then, as I went around a while and started playing for Willie Covan, I met quite a few people in show business. I was trying to do a boogie on the-- I can't think of the name of the piece now, but I will tell you. I got the rhythm. I got Latin things, and I got waltzes, and I got two-steps, and I got every bit of rhythm out of that piece. Poet and Peasant [by Franz von Suppé] is the name of the piece. I wanted to get-- [tape recorder off] I wanted to get boogie on all of those things that I had gotten out of Poet and Peasant for Willie Covan, who was doing everything. He was the most marvelous-- I'm doing my arms, which is not noticeable.

ISOARDI

You're doing very graceful gestures. [laughs]

BROOKS

But he was the most marvelous show dancer. I mean, he did everything to a song that everybody-- Like [Ernest] Belcher, all of the dance directors. When he did a show, and when he did a teaching, and when he did a school--which they had, a dancing teachers school--when Willie Covan was there they were there to see him do that routine that he taught them. His movements were the most melodic. His movements were most beautiful. Every step. It wasn't like a step like you do [sings brisk dance melody], you know, like the Hines Brothers, who were great, but they weren't like that. Every step was a picture. It was a picture. And I thought, "Oh, my God. This is the greatest thing." I mean, I loved playing for him because of the fact that I created and he created. That's the way it was. It was gorgeous. And that's before I went into show business.

ISOARDI

Now, did he have his own studio? Or was he working for--?

BROOKS

Oh, yes. No, no. Yes, he did. He had his own studio.

ISOARDI

So people would come to him for training?

BROOKS

Oh, yes. Some of the biggest stars in the country would come to him.

ISOARDI

Where was his studio at?

BROOKS

His studio was on Forty-first [Street] and Jefferson Boulevard, right across the street from Jefferson High School. Right across the street. And the biggest thing was that he didn't have Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. His school was Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and I worked Friday and Saturday for the biggest students that he had. And he would have a show every year. Bless his heart. He's gone. I have never seen anybody who could make a dance routine into something that you could follow as the most beautiful thing in the country. I've never seen-- This wasn't hard tap. This was tap, but tapestry. That's the way it was. I loved it. I loved it. I took a lesson from him. Yeah, I did. [laughs] I took a lesson from him.

ISOARDI

So how did you hook up with him in the first place?

BROOKS

Well, let me see. Let me think. Oh. It was one of those things where, I mean, he needed a pianist.

ISOARDI

Did he advertise?

BROOKS

No. Oh. Through the Harlem Globetrotters.

ISOARDI

Oh, okay. So you had met your husband by then.

BROOKS

Yes. Yes. Because when I used to go to the Elks auditorium to see my husband play-- I was married to him even then, but I would go and see them play. Then I'd go over to Willie Covan's and his wife's house, and other people would be there, and blah, blah, blah, and so and so and so, and the word came up that I played this and that and the other. I went down, and he called me down to see if I wanted to work in his studio. That's how I got there. Otherwise, I hadn't met Willie, his wife-- And there were other wives there who were familiar with the Harlem Globetrotters. And they called me. They said, "Well, she plays the piano." "Do you want to play the piano for me? Can I get you to come down to my studio?" I said, "Of course."

ISOARDI

So you weren't working at this time.

BROOKS

I wasn't working. I had just come out of college. I wasn't working. My father almost-- What do you say? My father-- What do you do when you disinherit

somebody? [laughs] Oh, golly. Oh, dear. He gave me all that education to do what, play for a dance director?

ISOARDI

What did he want you to do?

BROOKS

He didn't want me to do anything other than just maybe stay home and let him take care of me. I'd just gotten out of college. He didn't want me to do anything but let him take care of me. And when I finally told him, "I'm making ten dollars a week--" I thought it was money. I thought it was like a hundred dollars, you know. I said, "I'm making ten dollars a week, and I'm playing for Willie Covan, the dance director." He thought I was going into the den of iniquity. [laughs] He really absolutely couldn't take that for any reason whatsoever that it was good. No. Then, after he found out I wasn't doing anything but going down on Forty-first Street across from Jefferson High School and on Friday and Saturday playing for the dance man, I mean, then that was okay. It was okay.

ISOARDI

Well, he probably thought you were going to be hanging out in the clubs at Forty-first and Central [Avenue] all night.

BROOKS

Well, I mean, he did eventually almost disinherit me then, too, when I became Hadda Brooks and was playing boogies and my records were playing on the jukebox. He thought I was going into prostitution.

ISOARDI

No kidding.

BROOKS

"You're really going down, aren't you, kid." I said, "What?" But after he found out, then it was all right. And after he found out-- Whether he ever came to the point that it was okay, he had come to this much of a point outside of five or four points that when my records were playing on the jukebox I wasn't going into a bad scene. I was raised that way. I was raised that way. When I had become someone giving myself to the public, then he didn't understand it. And when I sang one song-- and I've never sung it since--"I'll give myself to you body and soul--"

ISOARDI

"Body and Soul."

BROOKS

Oh, my God, he almost killed me. "What do you mean? What do you mean?"

ISOARDI

How did he react to your getting married to someone like a Harlem Globetrotter?

BROOKS

Well, I've got news for you, he darn near-- He almost divorced my mother because he didn't think she raised me right, because a Harlem Globetrotter wasn't the idea of the man that I was supposed to be with. They cried when I came home. I told my husband Shug, I said, "You stay here. I'll go. I'm going to go pick up my clothes." I went and picked up my clothes, and they cried. They cried, they cried, they cried.

ISOARDI

Was your grandfather still alive?

BROOKS

Yeah. He cried. But then my grandfather, when my husband died maybe almost a year later, my grandfather buried him. He put him on the train and sent him back to his father with me as an accompaniment, you know. I had to accompany him. So my grandfather was the one who had the money. It isn't that my father wouldn't have done it, but my grandfather thought that fast. I mean, "He has to go back to his family. He has to be buried back in Chicago." That's where he was from. "And we're sending our daughter back with him." See, my father had been sitting around scratching his head for ten years, you know. I mean, like, my grandfather was thinking that fast. "The man's gone, he's passed. We have to do the right thing." And that's exactly what they did.

ISOARDI

But for the brief time you were married, they never came to accept that?

BROOKS

It's not the idea that they accepted it, because I never threw it in their face. We ran off and we got our apartment, yeah. My father and my grandfather never accepted. My mother brought us food, loads of food every week. Mama, mama. We weren't waiting on her, but we knew she was coming. "My daughter is not going to go hungry." So she brought food every week. We got so sick and tired of lamb. [laughter] Lamb roast every-- "What are you going to eat, babe?" "We're going to have lamb? Okay, let's have some lamb. You ain't got nothing else, have you?" [laughs] You know what I mean. So I've got news for you: Mama brought the lamb, she brought the potatoes and carrots and a lot of other things and whatnot, you know, bacon and eggs and stuff. No problem.

ISOARDI

Where was your apartment? Where were you living?

BROOKS

Over on the west side, over off of-- Oh, Jesus Christmas, I don't know. I can't think of the name of the street. Anyway, it was what we actually then called the west side--not Westwood, the west side. I'll think of it. I'll think of the name of the street in a few moments. It doesn't come to me now, but here we were. He was tall; he was six foot three. He was light enough to have freckles-- not

many. [laughs] But he was a good-looking guy. My mother hid the picture that they had put in the paper when he died because I was grieving so.

ISOARDI

So he was very light skinned, but your father and your grandfather were still upset?

BROOKS

No, they weren't upset because of his color. They were upset because of his--

ISOARDI

Because he played basketball?

BROOKS

Yeah, because he didn't have a job, supposedly. As far as they were concerned he didn't have a job. In other words, he didn't go to work and punch a clock and take care of me as far as that's concerned. And, I mean, I couldn't have cared less, and they knew that.

ISOARDI

So to them, if you were in show business at all you didn't have very good moral character, then.

BROOKS

Well, after that, when I went into show business, I've got news for you, my father almost disinherited me, because he thought I was going down on Central and working on Central Avenue. This is what I'm talking about. My father almost had a freaking fit. But only my records were playing in all the jukeboxes on Central Avenue, not me. Until he found out they were my records-- "What is that?" Early, actually, I didn't even go out of my way to tell him that I wasn't appearing down there. There were a lot of my father's friends-- My father had a beautiful barber down there. He used to go and have his hair cut. And the barber told him, "What are you talking about? She's not down here. She's not working down here." He said, "There's a jukebox. I'll play her record." And I was doing boogie, nothing but boogie. I wasn't singing. He put, I think it was, ten cents or a nickel in there, and he played my record. And my daddy heard it. He said, "This was playing all over Central Avenue just in the jukeboxes. She's not appearing down here." My daddy just sort of calmed down and said, "Well, I thought she was down here." But he said, "No, jackass!" [laughs] "She's not appearing down here. Her records are being played. Listen to it. This is what you taught her." Yeah, he calmed down. He came to accept what was going on, just like a curtain coming down. He came to accept what was going on.

ISOARDI

Did he like it?

BROOKS

Yeah, he liked it. Yeah, he liked it. He liked that his little girl wasn't down there--

ISOARDI

Yeah, walking the streets. [laughs]

BROOKS

Or, you know, stripping. She wasn't stripping to all that music down on Central Avenue. When I got started, I was going down on Central Avenue with Frank Bull, who was a deejay on KFWB, and Al Benson, who was--well, I can say--his partner. When I started in boogie, Frank Bull loved my boogies so much he was playing them every night. He was pushing them out on his radio show. Okay. I'll give you the name of his sponsor. I can't think of it now. He was playing my boogies every night. Frank Bull was the one who put me in front with boogies. He was the one who caused me to be the name of "cream of the boogie."

ISOARDI

Did he start calling you that?

BROOKS

He did. But Frank Bull didn't like my singing. He didn't want me to sing. I'm the one who wanted to sing. And every time we would have a show or Frank Bull would have a show, I'd do two or three boogies. Then I started singing, and Frank Bull would just get busy off somewhere else. [laughs] He didn't like it whatsoever. So he would play my boogies. I went down there one night and sat in the lobby.

ISOARDI

Is this at the radio station?

BROOKS

Uh-huh. And somebody went up and told Frank Bull that Hadda Brooks was down in the lobby waiting on him to say hello. He came down, and, oh, my God, Jesus Christ, you would have thought that Queen Elizabeth was there. This was the way he received me. I mean, this is the way [gasps], "Oh, my God." This is the way he went on. And from then on-- I've got news for you-- Frank Bull would say, "Well, why don't we go down to Central Avenue. Let's go down to the--"

ISOARDI

A particular club?

BROOKS

Yeah, a particular club.

ISOARDI

Do you remember where it was at?

BROOKS

Yeah, I remember where it was, but I can't think of the name. Let me see.

ISOARDI

What street was it near?

BROOKS

On Central.

ISOARDI

I mean the cross street.

BROOKS

I don't know. Forty-second [Street], this side, before you got to the [Club] Alabam.

ISOARDI

The Downbeat [Club]? The Last Word?

BROOKS

There you go. The Downbeat. The Downbeat. That's where Frank Bull wanted to go, and that's where he took me. Two or three times he took me down there. And it was absolutely, maybe-- It wasn't ridiculous, but it was very funny, because Frank Bull had his girlfriend, and we had our hand on the table. She had her hand on the table, and Frank Bull had his hand on the table over here between mine and hers. And they used to say when they wrote us up whenever we were down there, "Hadda Brooks and Frank Bull," and then they would show our picture, show us in the foreground--they showed Frank Bull and they showed Hadda--and then they would have Frank Bull's girlfriend, they'd show her hand.

ISOARDI

That's it?

BROOKS

Yeah. So they would say, "Frank Bull, Hadda Brooks," and they'd show her hand, "and party."

ISOARDI

[laughs] She probably didn't like that.

BROOKS

"And party." This was her hand. So anyway, we went down there two or three times and whatnot. And I loved him. I wrote a boogie for him called "Bully Woolly." His name was Frank Bull, and I wrote "Bully Woolly." I've got a big sign in there that says "originator of 'Bully Woolly Boogie,' Hadda Brooks." The last time I saw Frank Bull was about four years ago. It could be three. I would think it would be four. I was at a place in Palm Springs, and I can't think of the name of it. I don't think I'm going to think of the name of it. But Frank Sinatra used to come in there, and a lot of other people used to come in there and order racks of lamb. And somebody came over to me. They sent a waitress over to my room, because I was living at the place at the time, and they said, "Somebody is waiting for you in the club." I said, "Who?" They said, "They don't want you to know." I said, "Oh, really? Okay." "So would you please hurry up, because they've got to go home." I said, "I'm going to get there just as

soon as I can." So I got myself together real fast, and I walked over there, and I walked into the club, and here comes Frank Bull walking towards me.

ISOARDI

How long had it been since you'd seen him?

BROOKS

About five, six, seven years. He was living in Palm Springs.

ISOARDI

And you hadn't seen him for a long time?

BROOKS

I hadn't seen him for that many years. He walked over to me with his arms out, and I looked at him. And his wife was standing about as far as there, as far as the kitchen is concerned. She was standing back there just to let us be with each other. I said, "Frank, we should have gotten married." He said, "I know, I know, I know." Then I put my hand out to her, and we all three hugged each other. Then we all sat down at the piano. Well, now, he didn't want to hear me sing.

ISOARDI

[laughs] Still? [laughs]

BROOKS

He wanted me to play boogie woogie, boogie woogie. I played a couple of boogies, and I've got news for you, then I started singing, and he said [motions to indicate movement up and out the door], and he left. [laughs] And the next week-- See, because I used to go down there for two or three days, then I would come back to Los Angeles. And when I came back to Palm Springs, I had decided to call him. And when I called him, his wife answered the phone. I said, "I want to speak to Frank. Hi, baby." You know, I was talking to her, too. And she said, "Oh, Hadda. I thought you were calling me because I thought you knew." He had died just within the week.

ISOARDI

Within a week after you saw him?

BROOKS

He came to see me, and then he died. I said, "No, I did not know. I'm not calling because I'm going to extend you sympathy, but I am extending you sympathy and condolences. But, I mean, I thought I was going to say hello to Frank." She says, "No." He died maybe a couple of days ago, you know. I said, "Oh, goddammit," you know. Anyway--

ISOARDI

Well, it's nice that you got to see him then when you did.

BROOKS

He came in there especially. That's the only way I can put it. That's the only way I can put it. He came in there to see me. He came in there to go home. I

don't know whether he knew he was going to die or not. Some-times you do. But I have always thought that "Without anybody knowing it but you yourself that I'm in love with you-- I'm not going to do anything about it, but I'm in love with you. And for ten to twelve years you're in love with me, but you have nothing to do with me. You don't even know where I am until finally you find out that I am in Palm Springs, and you're going to say, 'I'm going to see my love just one more time.' And like tonight, you came to see me, and two days later you're dead. That's what you wanted. That's exactly what you wanted, and that's exactly what you did." When I called the next week, when I came back into Palm Springs, "I thought you knew." I said, "No. I did not know." His wife told me. She said, "He's always loved you." I said, "Well, I didn't know that." She said, "Oh, yes, you did." She told me, "Oh, yes, you did." I said, "He has admired me, yes, admired me for my renditions of boogie and the 'Bully Woolly Boogie.'" She said, "Yeah, but Frank Bull was in love with you. I thought you knew he was gone." I said, "No." She said, "He came to see you the last time, and that was it." A great tragedy that was, because of the fact that, I mean, like I just thought he walked out when I started singing just because I knew he didn't-- No. He liked my singing, but he did not prefer to sit and listen to it. He wanted boogies. I didn't know when I came back and called that he was gone. Now what can we go to?

ISOARDI

Let me ask you, when you came back from Northwestern, you'd been away for a little bit, what was Los Angeles like when you come back? We're talking now-- what?--about 1941, '42? What was Los Angeles like then?

BROOKS

We're talking about, yeah, something like that. Every time I came back Los Angeles was different--had a new building going up, had a new thing going here and there. I mean, I didn't know the city. I was gone into the very first-- I didn't call it a foreign country because we don't now that it's a state. I was going into Honolulu. I was there for eight years. And every time I came back to the mainland there was another building going up. I was in Honolulu for eight years--I mean working, absolutely living, absolutely having a beautiful, gorgeous time on a beautiful island. It was gorgeous. I wasn't so crazy about the chameleon lizards, but I guess they weren't any bigger than my thumb, from the tip of my thumb to the end of my second joint. But I had the most gorgeous Christmas tree, and there was about four of them on the-- What do you call it? The thing or the root of the Christmas tree? And my guy at the time said, "Well, what are you doing?" He said, "I see them every day over there in the tree." I had everything on that tree that was possible, you know. And there was no way in the world when I was living in Honolulu-- And then I was living up in Kawela, in Mahala, way up in the hills. I would go from here like I'm going

up that hill, and by the time I got to the-- If I was going from here, it was raining. By the time I got to the middle of the hill it had stopped raining. And when I left the middle of the hill it was dry as a potato chip.

ISOARDI

[laughs] That's different.

BROOKS

Quite.

ISOARDI

Yeah, very much so.

BROOKS

I did quite a bit of looking around to see if I was on the right street.

ISOARDI

So L.A. changed dramatically, then? Every time you came back it had a new look to you?

BROOKS

Here on the mainland. Yeah, on the mainland. It was another high-rise that went up, another high-rise that went up here, another high-rise that went up there. I couldn't fathom the point of everything that was going up. The city was absolutely growing that much. Because then I turned around and I said, "If they put another building on Oahu," which is the island where I stayed--this is Waikiki--"you're going to sink the island." We had a mall over there where Sears Roebuck was taller than eight to ten stories high, and other buildings that were there, I mean, fifteen buildings that were there and all sorts of things. I said, "You're going to put another building on this island?" I lived there eight years. But, I mean, it came to the point where they were building, building, building, building.

ISOARDI

Yeah, it's pretty overbuilt.

BROOKS

You go down Wilshire Boulevard, it's no different than Oahu now. You're right here in the United States. I mean, of course, naturally Oahu and the islands of Hawaii-- What is it? The fiftieth state? I mean, they are part of the United States.

ISOARDI

Was your family still living here [in Boyle Heights]?

BROOKS

Where?

ISOARDI

Here in this house?

BROOKS

Not in this house. This house has always been my grandfather's house. He rented it out. I can take you over one day to the next street where I was actually born.

ISOARDI

Oh, on Malabar [Street].

BROOKS

On Malabar. That's where I lived. That's where I really lived. This is the house that my grandfather built when I was in high school. The house in the back is my sister's and her husband [Charles B. Carter]'s. She and her husband built that, because from here to all the way back is almost a block, so they had plenty of room to build. But yes, I was born and raised in this neighborhood. There's no way in the world-- I mean, I went everywhere, but I was born and raised in this neighborhood. No problem.

1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE (MAY 2, 1994)

ISOARDI

Okay, Hadda, before we get into your career, I wonder if we could backtrack just a bit and have you tell us a little about Willie Covan, whose name hasn't come up yet--who he was, what you know about his background.

BROOKS

Well, Willie Covan was a very marvelous dancer. I mean, he did tap, but he did beautiful show steps. I mean, it was a beautiful movement. It wasn't a stand up, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap from one end of the stage to the other. He flowed just like a picture. That's what everybody liked about him. He came from Chicago, he and his wife [Florence Covan]. And they were first known as the Four Dancing Covans. I think it was his brother and his brother's wife and he and his wife, the Four Dancing Covans. And when they came out to Los Angeles they opened up a dance studio.

ISOARDI

Do you know when that was when they came out?

BROOKS

No, I don't know the exact time that it was when they came out. But when I found out that they were advertising for a pianist for the studio, then I applied. But, I mean, he hadn't been out here that long, because I hadn't ever heard of him before I went to work for him. But then he was a beautiful dancer. Everybody in the dancing profession wanted to take lessons from him.

ISOARDI

So he came out here with kind of a reputation?

BROOKS

He came out here with a reputation, and he furthered his reputation by doing a lot of things, even coaching Fred Astaire. And he coached little Shirley Temple and quite a few others out at MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer]. They called him all the time. And then, when they had their big dance convention, everybody who was a teacher, everybody who danced, Ernest Belcher, all the dancers came out from all over the country to take-- They had different things where each director and each dance teacher would have their day to teach a routine. And then would come Willie Covan's time. And everybody was there with eyes glued right to his feet. And they'd get up, and he'd teach them the steps and whatnot. It was a marvelous thing to see how much admired he was, you know. I admired him because I played for him, and I would play almost everything that was written for him to dance to. It wasn't just a stop rhythm where you had to hit every tap. His taps had a special thing that they would say. You could hear it. You didn't have to break your ears to find out where he was, because every step was a picture. Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful to me.

ISOARDI

When you knew him, was he mainly a teacher? Was he still performing professionally?

BROOKS

No, he wasn't performing professionally. He had come out here and opened up a dance studio on the east side, we called it, on Jefferson Boulevard across the street from Jefferson High School. There was like stores, seemingly four or five stores, and he opened up all of those stores, and in each one of those rooms in that store, even in the back room, he had hired two or three other teachers to teach beginners. He took mostly professionals himself. His wife took some. Most of the people his wife took were apt. They had learned. They would learn pretty fast. Little children, of course, naturally she had a couple of teachers to take the little children. And their little legs would get tired. Then she would know when to stop with them. I would know when to play for them. I would know when they were tired. I would know when they would skip a step, because I jumped with them to keep them from becoming overly excited by even absolutely coming to the fact or coming to the knowledge that they had skipped a step. I had skipped with them so that it wasn't an embarrassing thing. They trusted me. The little kids trusted me when I played for them, to know where they were. I mean, if there was eight steps in each routine, and by the time the kid got to the sixth step he'd skip the seventh and go to the eighth and finish up the routine, and I'd finish with him. It was the cutest thing. The little legs were so cute. Darryl Hickman, who had become a movie star and I think is now a director, and Dwayne Hickman, they were absolutely beautiful pupils with Covan.

ISOARDI

The Hickmans who went on to star on TV and--

BROOKS

They were starring on TV. I mean, Dobie Gillis was Dwayne's thing. And Grapes of Wrath, I mean, Darryl Hickman did that, going into movies, and he did quite a few other things. I'm not sure where they are now, but I think that Darryl might be a director. But I don't hear very much of him, either he or Dobie.

ISOARDI

So they were down there as kids?

BROOKS

They were down there as kids.

ISOARDI

So if you wanted to study dance, the place to go was Willie Covan's studio.

BROOKS

Covan's studio for dancing. And, I mean, they were hard steps, but he made them look like you walked through like it was just a beautiful picture. It was very exciting, and it was very beautiful. I mean, I just knew what he was going to do. He even gave me a routine, which, I mean, I could call on now if I could get my legs to move. [laughs]

ISOARDI

Too bad we don't have video. [laughs]

BROOKS

Yeah, I'm sorry. [laughs] But I'm really glad that you don't have video. [laughs] But, I mean, his control and his work was just really downright beautiful.

ISOARDI

How long was he there?

BROOKS

How long was Willie there?

ISOARDI

Yeah, at the studio teaching.

BROOKS

I was with him-- Let me see. I could say almost six or seven or eight years. And after I left him, when I had started into show business and I left him, Willie was still there for a while, quite a bit, quite a bit longer.

ISOARDI

Did he ever perform himself? Was he ever in any films or anything like that?

BROOKS

He did with Lena Horne-- Not Stormy Weather. One of her first-- Cabin in the Sky with Rochester and--

ISOARDI

Eddie Anderson?

BROOKS

Eddie Anderson, yeah, with Lena Horne, and I think it was Ethel Waters.

ISOARDI

He danced in that?

BROOKS

He danced in that, because they had a big cabaret scene. And of course, naturally Lena sang and Willie danced. It was Lena Horne and Ethel Waters, quite a few sepia entertainers at the time, you know, who did the first picture with Lena Horne called Cabin in the Sky.

ISOARDI

Did he choreograph much for people?

BROOKS

Oh, he did a lot of choreographing. Yes, he did a lot of choreographing. Some of the biggest people in show business he choreographed for. We had to wait on little Shirley Temple for about an hour because she wouldn't get up. She was sleepy, you know. [laughs] Yeah, it was okay. It was Shirley Temple but okay. And then we did a thing that Willie Covan choreographed for Fred Astaire. Fred Astaire would go off into a picture of what he thought he wanted to do, and Covan would give him the movements to make it look a lot better. You know, it's just not one of those running up and down the seat things, and pushing over the chair and coming down, acrobatic, no. He did a lot of that, you know. He did like running upside the wall dancing on ceiling. But, I mean, Covan did a lot for pushing him completely into a melodic movement.

ISOARDI

Really?

BROOKS

I don't know whether he admitted it or not, but, I mean, I was there. I played for them. But he was one of the biggest dancers who was already established on the screen that Covan worked with. And he seemed to appreciate it, and he seemed to like it, and he seemed to put it to work, and it came out beautifully, and they filmed. They did it.

ISOARDI

What was the pay like?

BROOKS

The pay for me?

ISOARDI

Yeah.

BROOKS

Well, I mean, when I was working for Willie the biggest thing I got was about twelve dollars a week, and I thought that was like a hundred dollars for a day, you know, because I had never worked in my life.

ISOARDI

That's right. This is your first gig.

BROOKS

Yeah. I never worked in my life. My father [John M. Hopgood] almost-- Well, here again, he pulled one of those "I'll disinherit you" things, you know, because here he thought that I was really going to become a tainted woman by working for a dance director or working for a dance teacher or even working down on Jefferson across the street from Jefferson High School. And twelve dollars a week he couldn't understand. But, I mean, my mother [Goldie Wright Hopgood] talked to him, and she told him, "What did you educate her for as far as that's concerned, playing the piano? What did you educate her for? You paid for her lessons. Now, if this is the way she's going to use it in order to climb another ladder, you've got to start somewhere. What do you want her to do? Sit down and do nothing with all of this education in music and the piano?" And I don't think he came to realize that that's the way it was, but then he had two women against him, so he never had-- He didn't fight. [laughs] My dad was a pushover. He only had a lot of strictness towards me. My sister [Kathryn Hopgood Carter] could get away with murder. But they watched me very closely. I was his favorite, I would say. But then he really didn't want me to get too far out of line and not know exactly what I was doing, which he didn't know at all, you know, as far as what I was doing, except, as my mother told him, "She's using the education you gave her." That was just about the way he took it, too. He couldn't do any different.

ISOARDI

Did you see much of the nightlife on Central Avenue then?

BROOKS

Not then. I did very, very little, because Willie Covan and his wife used to take me. After I got married to [Earl] "Shug" [Morrison], they used to take me while Shug was out on the road playing basketball with the Harlem Globetrotters. They used to take me to a couple of clubs to listen to other people. I went there to listen to Charles Brown. And I went into the Club Alabam and saw the different people who were there, quite a few people.

ISOARDI

So you saw some of the shows there at the Alabam?

BROOKS

Quite a few of the shows at the Alabam. I mean, show business was then beginning to sort of look me in the eye. I mean, I loved it. I loved to see people entertain. And I was not thinking so much of my getting on that stage. It was one of those things that I guess maybe deep down I was hoping that I could make it. But when I left Willie Covan, this man [Jules Bihari] got me into boogies, and that started show business.

ISOARDI

The first time you thought about that maybe was when you were going into the Club Alabam and seeing the shows?

BROOKS

Yes. Yes. I mean, I saw the people on the stage, and I saw them dressed beautifully, and I saw them performing greatly, even though they weren't doing anything as far as the piano was concerned. Some of them were comedians. I still love comedians. I mean, I can get a good laugh out of somebody who's actually funny. And I saw this man and girl dancing beautifully, this girl who was singing "Every Little Doggy Has His Day," and I said, "Well, maybe I'll have mine." I can't think of her name at the moment. [Mabel Scott] But there were a lot of people there.

ISOARDI

Anyone stick out in your mind whom you saw perform at the Alabam?

BROOKS

Not really, not at that particular time. I was just entranced with everybody who was up on the stage and putting out a lot of energy and what you would call aggressiveness, if you want to call it that, and doing things that a lot of people, they wouldn't even walk in the door without feeling very intimidated, you know. But, I mean, I've never been intimidated. The idea is this, that these people I appreciated because, I would say right now, they had the nerve to go up there and do this. They had the nerve to show their talent. They had the nerve to want to please and the nerve to get applause and to go on and to do it every night. I liked it. I hadn't a clue. I didn't have a clue I was going to do anything like that.

ISOARDI

Had you ever been to a place like that before?

BROOKS

No. No, I'd never been to a place like that before. But, you see, Central Avenue at the time that I was going down there, and Forty-second Street, was a brilliant street of talent, color, clubs. You could go to almost four or five different clubs and see a different artist and absolutely have lots of fun enjoying them. And Forty-second Street was a big street. If you were on Forty-second Street it was like you were on Broadway in New York here in Los Angeles. I have heard a lot of people say that--I didn't know that at the time--the entertainers that came here, they couldn't get into the hotels downtown because of their color. But then the Forty-second Street Dunbar Hotel was erected right there on the corner of Forty-second Street, and then they could come into Central Avenue and go into a hotel.

ISOARDI

So it was all right there.

BROOKS

Right there, be accepted.

ISOARDI

Do you remember any other clubs in particular?

BROOKS

Well, there was the Downbeat [Club], and there was the-- Not at the moment. There were about four or five other clubs that, I mean, I could recall. I thought I had them in my mind, but maybe I can come back to it.

ISOARDI

Well, this must have been a whole different kind of world for you, then.

BROOKS

It was. I just came out of college.

ISOARDI

You never went down there when you were in high school or anything like that?

BROOKS

No, no, not in high school. Not even in college. [laughs] I never went down there. When I went out with my boyfriend, we went out to-- Well, I mean, like we went up on Brooklyn [Avenue] to Canter Brothers and got a pastrami sandwich, and I thought that was great. [laughs] On Central Avenue? I joined a club in high school, all girls, and we called ourselves the Kohinoors. Kohinoor, that's the biggest diamond in the world. So we called ourselves the Kohinoors. One afternoon, one Sunday afternoon at the Dunbar, we had a tea dance in the afternoon from two to six [o'clock], something like that. And then there was a place that was a home. No one lived there permanently, but they did use that home for affairs. We had a couple of little affairs there, a tea dance. I met Joe Louis there before he ever became Joe Louis.

ISOARDI

No kidding?

BROOKS

Yeah, at this little dance. Of course, as quiet as it's kept and not quiet as it's kept, I mean, Joe Louis always wanted to be around a lot of girls. But he came to the dance very, very baby-faced, you know. I think he was about to have his first fight out here--I mean, whether it was his first, fifth, or sixth--but, I mean, he was just coming into being known as Joe Louis.

ISOARDI

Now, what building was this? Who ran it?

BROOKS

I don't know.

ISOARDI

It was near Central?

BROOKS

Yes. It was on Adams [Boulevard], I think. It was just like a beautiful home that was turned into an entertaining place.

ISOARDI

I see.

BROOKS

We had a lot of tea dances there, and the kids would come out. All of our high school kids would come out. There was so much that they'd charge. And, I mean, of course, that's how we put the money in our little--

ISOARDI

Your club treasury?

BROOKS

Yeah. [laughs] They would never make me president, because, I mean, I don't think I was serious enough, but they made me sergeant at arms. [laughs] I shot them up and, I mean, they wouldn't even pay any attention to me then. [laughs] It was funny. No, no, no, "Brooksy" wasn't going to be president, not even vice president. And I've got news for you, for a secretary, I mean, like, no. Treasurer, no. Sergeant at arms? "Yeah, let's make her sergeant at arms." [laughs] "If anybody can shut you up, she can." [laughs]

ISOARDI

You were the one with attitude.

BROOKS

I was the one with the attitude. [laughs] It didn't work so many times, but, I mean, we really didn't get too much out of order, so I never did call for the point of order. Not too many times. But that was my official appointment. And nobody voted for it. They just said, "She's going to be sergeant of arms." That's all. [laughs]

ISOARDI

So when did your professional life begin? When did you leave Willie?

BROOKS

Well, my professional life began when I left, not too much before I left Willie, but because of the fact that I was trying. I was doing the Poet and Peasant-- that's a classical [piece by Franz von Suppé]--and Willie wanted to get every kind of rhythm that he could get out of the Poet and Peasant. We went into the rumba, we went into the waltz, we went into the rhythm, we went into country, went into "now we want to do boogie." And I was trying to get some boogie out of that Poet and Peasant. And I was, I was getting it. This man was standing behind me. I don't know how he got down to the Southern California Music Company, because that's where I was.

ISOARDI

This was Willie's place?

BROOKS

No, in the Southern California Music Company.

ISOARDI

Where was that?

BROOKS

On Eighth [Street] and Broadway.

ISOARDI

And you were practicing there?

BROOKS

I was in one of their rooms trying to get a boogie out of the Poet and Peasant, in one of their little studio rooms, but I had the door open. And he scared me, because he asked me could I play a boogie. And I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Well, I'll give you a week to work one up." And I asked him who he was, and he told me who he was. And he said, "I have \$800. If something comes of it, we'll be in business. If nothing comes of it, I will have lost \$800."

ISOARDI

Who was this person?

BROOKS

Jules Bihari.

ISOARDI

Jules Bihari. What did you think when he walked in and told you that?

BROOKS

I didn't think anything. He said he wanted a boogie, and he asked me if I could work up one, and I told him I would try, and I did.

ISOARDI

But he didn't say anything about recording? He just said he wanted a boogie.

BROOKS

No, he said he was going to record it.

ISOARDI

If you could work it up.

BROOKS

If I could work up the boogie he would record it. If anything came of it we were in business. If nothing came of it, I mean, to a certain extent, if the records didn't sell, then he'd lost \$800.

ISOARDI

What did you think, this guy coming in, stranger walking in on you practicing, and telling you this?

BROOKS

I didn't think anything at the particular time. I had a lot of confidence in myself. I mean, it must have been something like-- I never did think that I was going to

be discovered. That didn't cross my mind. I just told him that I would work up a boogie, and within a week's time I'd come back and record it for him.

ISOARDI

Now, who was this guy?

BROOKS

Who was he?

ISOARDI

Did you know him? Did he tell you anything?

BROOKS

No, I didn't know him. He used to repair jukeboxes up and down Central. He had a lot of jukeboxes, and he had a restaurant, a very small restaurant, in San Pedro.

ISOARDI

Do you know what it was called?

BROOKS

I don't know the name of the restaurant. It was a restaurant. If you wanted to eat whatever they had in there, you didn't say, "I'm going down to George Jones." I mean, you'd just walk off the street. A lot of the business was just from walking off the street. When I recorded the boogie--

ISOARDI

So you came back to him a week later and said, "I've got it"?

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

And then he said--

BROOKS

"I'm going to record it." My sister took it up to Sherman and Clay, up to San Francisco, which had nothing but classical music in their whole repertoire, what you would call their whole thing of music shelves and whatnot. They had no boogie whatsoever.

ISOARDI

This is sheet music?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

Records?

BROOKS

Records. I don't even remember whether they had records or not, but they could have. They had records of the singers, I mean classical singers, big, big, big, big, big classical singers. They didn't have any jazz on their shelves at all. My sister was going to San Francisco, and she took a box of twenty-five of my

records. The first record that I put out, I can't remember the name of it. It was "Swinging the Boogie." Sherman and Clay took it. They bought the whole box from my sister. They bought the whole box. They played it. And then the distributors got in touch with Jules and told him that Sherman and Clay had bought a whole box of this new entertainer or artist's records of boogie, and Jules told them what my name was, and then we went up to San Francisco and talked to them a while, and they became the distributors up there. They distributed it all over the country, mostly in the South.

ISOARDI

No kidding. So right off the bat, then, you not only had a local success, your first record was going nationwide.

BROOKS

Uh-huh. And Jules kept his \$800. [laughs]

ISOARDI

And then some.

BROOKS

But then, after that, he had created this music company, this recording company for me. He created it.

ISOARDI

Was that Modern Records?

BROOKS

Modern Records, yes.

ISOARDI

How soon did that happen?

BROOKS

Right away.

ISOARDI

He set it up right away? As soon as he saw this record he was going to make a go?

BROOKS

Right away. Right away.

ISOARDI

Now, when he first took you into the studio to record, where did you--? Did he have his own studio set-up?

BROOKS

No, no, no.

ISOARDI

He rented some studio time?

BROOKS

Some studio, I think it was on Orange Drive. He did a lot of recording there. I can't think of the name of the studio. [Radio Recorders]

ISOARDI

So did you guys have a kind of deal or any kind of contract?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

What understanding did you have when you went into record?

BROOKS

We didn't have any understanding. I mean, he recorded me and put me on the market, and I trusted him. I mean, to tell you the truth, there wasn't too much of what you might call royalties. He was giving me so much money a week, and I guess that's what he called royalties.

ISOARDI

So for that first recording, from then on you were getting a certain amount of money every week from what presumably would be royalties from the sales of that record?

BROOKS

I suppose that's what he meant them to be. Not being of the business mind, I didn't know what royalties were.

ISOARDI

Well, you probably didn't know, then, how many records were being sold, did you?

BROOKS

I didn't. I didn't.

ISOARDI

You just knew it was popular.

BROOKS

Until I had become very popular. And I only knew that because of the records that were being sold and the popularity of them in the southern part of the country. They were big, and I was becoming bigger and bigger. My name was becoming spread pretty wide.

ISOARDI

Where did "Hadda Brooks" come from?

BROOKS

Well, Brooks is my stage name, and Hadda is what Jules called me all the time. I think he wanted to call me Hatta, H-A-T-T-A, and I put d's with it. I mean, I thought he was saying Hadda, you know. And, I mean, it was Hadda, but he was not pronouncing the d's. And Brooks was a stage name.

ISOARDI

Where did that come from?

BROOKS

I just thought, "How are you going to use Hopgood," which is my maiden name, "on a marquee?" It wasn't that I was ashamed of it. It was that I didn't think Hopgood was going to sound right on the marquee. It might have been tricky.

ISOARDI

How did you come up with the name Brooks?

BROOKS

Just out of the blue.

ISOARDI

Really?

BROOKS

Yeah. I mean, I just thought about one of those songs, you know, "It Had to be You," and I just said, "Hadda be Brooks." [laughs] That's the only way I could come up with it. And it stuck. It stuck.

ISOARDI

So what happens, then, on the first flush of this success? Almost instantaneously, a week or two, you're a success?

BROOKS

I would say within a month or two. I mean, the records were just going like fire, you know. I wouldn't go South. That's where they were selling greatly, and I wouldn't go South.

ISOARDI

Was Jules then sort of acting as your manager as well?

BROOKS

Well, what he knew about management, which wasn't too much. I mean, he just knew to a certain extent that he had some parts of a winner. And at this particular time, when I got started and my ball was rolling, then he was really accumulating a couple of other artists. I mean, Jules loved the blues. He loved the blues so greatly. I mean, it was just one of those things where if you did the blues for him, I just think he'd just go off in a corner and cry. But he knew I couldn't do the blues. I hadn't even sung yet. I didn't even know that there was any possibility of my putting out a tune on record that I'm vocalizing on, you know. My boogies were getting to be very popular, as I said. And I was backstage at the Million Dollar Theatre, which is down on Third [Street] and Broadway. I was backstage as they would call a groupie. I mean, I didn't think of that name, because the name hadn't come out then. But there were about three or four girls and a couple of fellows backstage visiting Lionel Hampton. I was backstage and looking very, very, very, very beautiful. I had a gorgeous suit. So when Lionel Hampton went out on the stage, I was standing in the wings. I was standing in the wings listening to him, because, as I said, I admired the people who wanted to get out there and do things, you know. And

show business now had become part of me, because my records were going very well. I was becoming very well known on boogie. And the next thing I knew, Lionel Hampton came to the front of the stage and got to the microphone and was introducing me. He didn't tell me. He didn't tell me. I didn't stand back and have him pull me on like somebody who really didn't want to go on, you know what I mean? I walked out and went to the piano on the stage and sat with the band, and I played a boogie. And in the next two weeks I was booked to work at the Million Dollar Theatre with Charlie Barnet. And that really, absolutely started the whole thing.

ISOARDI

Jeez, from Lionel Hampton and Charlie Barnet. You couldn't get much bigger then.

BROOKS

Yeah, from Lionel Hampton and Charlie Barnet. But I didn't know Hampton was going to introduce me. I was just there. You know, I'm looking around the stage and around the curtain, and he did. He just introduced me.

ISOARDI

Well, how much experience had you had on stage before?

BROOKS

None.

ISOARDI

This was your first appearance?

BROOKS

None. That's right.

ISOARDI

What a beginning!

BROOKS

I hadn't been on there. But I had performed in high school. I performed in college. I hadn't performed in a theater. I hadn't performed on stage.

ISOARDI

Since your record came out, no--

BROOKS

No performance. I hadn't even hit a club. I should have been scared to death, you know. I should have been scared to death, but I really took it behind to do like I had seen a lot of people that I knew do in show business, you know, at the Club Alabam and the Downbeat and other clubs on Central Avenue. I mean, I just took the nerve and went out.

ISOARDI

Wow. What a beginning.

BROOKS

And I played in the band. The band just fell right in behind me.

ISOARDI

Well, it was a great band he had.

BROOKS

Oh, yeah. But they had never heard me play, and they didn't know who in the heck I was. Maybe they did, I don't know. But they had never heard me play. See, Lionel Hampton wasn't a boogie king. I just came out and busted into a boogie. [laughs]

ISOARDI

Now, how long had your records been out before this happened?

BROOKS

Oh, they had been out almost six months. Let's see. I started in '46, and this was like-- Wait a minute now. Not six months. Not six months. I mean, 1946 is when I started, and 1948 is when I hit the stage, when Lionel Hampton called on me.

ISOARDI

About a year, a year and a half?

BROOKS

About a year and a half later.

ISOARDI

And you hadn't really performed then? You were just recording?

BROOKS

Not performed. I was just recording. I was recording three boogies every month practically.

ISOARDI

Jeez. But there must have been some demand for you to perform.

BROOKS

Well, I mean, I guess they were waiting for me to become fully established. And this particular thing, as I can say, thanks to Lionel Hampton, he established me. He established me. And when I went to work with Charlie Barnet, during rehearsal Charlie Barnet asked me, "Well, what are you going to do for an encore when you're going to do your three boogies?" I said, "I guess I'll come out and do another boogie." And he said, "Well, why don't you sing?" I said, "I can't." And he said, "Well, fake it."

ISOARDI

Now, you hadn't sung before that?

BROOKS

No, only at school. He said, "Fake it." And I was on the stage. I mean, we had already done an early show, the first show in the morning.

ISOARDI

Where was this at? Million Dollar Theatre?

BROOKS

At the Million Dollar down on Third and Broadway. And I went back between shows to the studio where Jules was on First [Street] and San Pedro, and there was a trio recording in there. Two of them were part of the trio of [Nat] King Cole, but I think they had broken up. I'm not sure. But then they were recording a tune that I liked very much, and I learned it. And when I came back that next show, which was the second show of the day, after I played three boogies and the audience applauded and brought me back on the stage, I started singing, and that was it.

ISOARDI

What was the song?

BROOKS

"You Won't Let Me Go." The audience was absolutely-- They went wild. They'd never heard me sing, and they didn't think I was going to sing. They were waiting for another boogie.

ISOARDI

And you had never sung before.

BROOKS

No, not professionally. Not with the Charlie Barnet band behind me and getting paid for it too? No. I'd never sung before. And I did. I did. And I never played another boogie since. It's not professionally great to do a whole show of boogie, not that great anymore. Like I just kept on learning songs, and I kept on singing. And maybe I had, oh, I don't know how many bars of boogie just to continue on to have you think that I was still into the boogie vein, to let you know I was still doing it.

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ISOARDI

Quite a beginning.

BROOKS

Well, it was quite surprising to me when the audience responded as they did when I first sang. I mean, like, wow. I mean, I was very much taken aback, and so was Charlie Barnet.

ISOARDI

Beause he had never heard you, right?

BROOKS

He had never heard me sing.

ISOARDI

He just thought you ought to.

BROOKS

He just thought I should do something else for an encore instead of another boogie.

ISOARDI

Boy, did he call it right.

BROOKS

Did he call it right.

ISOARDI

What did you think about this? All of a sudden you thought there may be something in this?

BROOKS

Oh, I knew I liked to sing. I knew that possibly I could, but-- I had a style. I brought on my own style. I sang the song like I wanted to sing it. I sang the song like I thought I should interpret it. And that's the way it came out. It was very well liked. But, I mean, there was no reason why I thought that I was going to have a career singing. I couldn't picture that. But then, after I sang and the audience then completely--what would you call it?--I would say went berserk-- [laughs] You never saw the standing ovation and applause in the theater.

ISOARDI

That must have been a thrill.

BROOKS

It was. It was. And Charlie Barnet just kept smiling and smiling. [laughs] He was very funny. He was so funny. He kept smiling and smiling and smiling and whatnot. And I said, "Well, now, wait. I can't follow that with another song, because I don't know another song." So I just came out and took three or four bows and just walked off. [laughs] I didn't know any other song at that particular time. He said, "Sing a song," and I did. That's all there was to that.

ISOARDI

What was it like with those bands behind you, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Barnet?

BROOKS

Oh, it was beautiful. It was beautiful. You know, I didn't have any music. I didn't have time to have somebody give me--what do you call it?--an arrangement for the horns and for the violins or for the trumpets and everything else. To tell you the truth, the only time I've had arrangements is when I went to Australia. I never had any music.

ISOARDI

Really? So the bands, they just set some riffs behind you?

BROOKS

They just sat behind me and went with it.

ISOARDI

Wonderful.

BROOKS

They just went with it.

ISOARDI

Great bands.

BROOKS

After we had rehearsals, then Charlie Barnet and the whole show, we went to Washington, D.C., then we went to Baltimore, then we went to the Apollo Theatre in New York.

ISOARDI

Charlie Barnet took you?

BROOKS

Oh, we all traveled. We traveled that circuit, because I was part of the show, and that's where we were going, from L.A. to Washington.

ISOARDI

So L.A. was the beginning of the show. This was going to be your first tour?

BROOKS

My first tour.

ISOARDI

Oh, he wanted to see what else he could get out of you, then.

BROOKS

I guess.

ISOARDI

He wanted to see if you could sing and--

BROOKS

I guess. And then I learned a couple of other tunes. When I got to New York I learned Johnson's "You Made Me Leave My Happy Home." I mean, I sang that.

ISOARDI

Yeah, a great song.

BROOKS

Yeah. Then I had to keep on adding to the repertoire, you know.

ISOARDI

After that first night, he must have said, "You've got to learn a lot of songs fast." [laughs]

BROOKS

In fact, I guess he said, "I think she'll do it." I don't know. "I think she'll do it."

ISOARDI

Did he have a singer then with his band?

BROOKS

No. He had a-- I'm not quite sure. It wasn't a woman. I think it was a fellow who sang maybe a couple of tunes, you know. It wasn't a woman, no.

ISOARDI

Well, before you took off across-- This was your first trip, then, outside of L.A.?

BROOKS

Yeah, leaving home.

ISOARDI

Okay. You've been cranking out boogies, records selling like hot cakes, doing boogies three a month now for a year or so.

BROOKS

Yeah, for about a year or so.

ISOARDI

And Modern Records is taking off then, it's getting established.

BROOKS

Oh, Modern Records is established now. In other words, I mean, like their little brother [Joseph Bihari] said they had to take us out of the restaurant business and put us on the map as a record company. There was no problem with that. They had become known, Modern Records of Hollywood.

ISOARDI

Did they have their own facilities then? Did they set up their own studios?

BROOKS

On San Pedro [Street]. The very first studio they had they pressed records in was down there on First [Street] and San Pedro.

ISOARDI

So they'd record and press everything there?

BROOKS

No, they didn't record there. They pressed there.

ISOARDI

So they'd rent studio space?

BROOKS

They'd rent studio space, yes, because I always had a bass and drummer and guitar with me whenever I would either do a boogie or even sing a song. And then they went out on Normandie [Avenue]. Jules took a studio and a big pressing plant out on Normandie, way out on Normandie, somewhere near the-- I really don't know how far Normandie goes out. It's pretty far out. But they still used studios and pressed out there. He had a big pressing plant out there at this particular time, yes.

ISOARDI

Growing. How was your family reacting to all this?

BROOKS

Well, it was all right by then. It was all right by then, because I think my mother just took my father and sat him down and talked to him, because I was traveling and going away from home, which I had never been. She just took him and sat him down and talked to him. Because he came back to the point where he had accepted it, you know.

ISOARDI

Was he pleased by your success?

BROOKS

I think he was.

ISOARDI

He must have been proud at a certain point, once he found out you weren't stripping on Central. [laughs]

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah, or down there prostituting or something like that and getting in trouble with all sorts of fellows down there.

ISOARDI

Once he found you were legit, he must have been pretty proud.

BROOKS

Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah. I think he said "my daughter Hadda" quite a few times to himself plus to others, you know. But it was a very, very, very funny thing while I was in high school and college, they used to stand on the porch waiting for my boyfriend to bring me home at twelve o'clock, and five minutes after I was in trouble. I'd drive up with my boyfriend, and there they are standing on the porch like, "Where did you think I'd gone, to Chicago?" You know what I mean? But it was that closely they followed. They kept touch. They kept a hand on me, you know, until I started traveling and got away.

ISOARDI

That must have been exciting for you. But, you'd been away before then, right? You'd gone to college back at Northwestern.

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah. But, I mean, it wasn't in show biz. I mean, that was all right. That was okay. But show business was one theater to another, one theater to another, and one band to the other. I mean, I did the same thing with Artie Shaw at the Million Dollar Theatre: on back to Washington, D.C., on back to Baltimore, and then to the Apollo Theatre. And Count Basie and a few others. But, you know, I didn't play and start with them here in Los Angeles. When I was back East they joined up with me or I joined up with them. We hit Washington, Baltimore, and the Apollo.

ISOARDI

What was it like, all that traveling with the bands? I mean, there couldn't have been many women around.

BROOKS

I was on a plane. I didn't know who they were.

ISOARDI

So you never--

BROOKS

I didn't travel with them, not in a bus, no. Oh, no. If I went to Baltimore I had a couple of friends take me from Washington to Baltimore.

ISOARDI

You'd travel on your own.

BROOKS

Uh-huh. And when I left Baltimore, I took the plane and went to New York. And when I came back from New York to Los Angeles I took the plane and came home. I don't know where the band went. There was closeness while we were working together, because they worked beautifully with me. But after the show was over with, they went their way and I went my way. We didn't even socialize. I mean, Charlie invited me to his house one time for a party after our show closed here at the Million Dollar Theatre, but that's as close as we got. And Washington, D.C., there was a beautiful mansion that this lady used to run. She had bedrooms all over the place. They were beautifully furnished. King Cole stayed there, Count Basie stayed there, Charlie Barnet stayed there, Artie Shaw stayed there. I mean, they were just gorgeous. I mean, she used to fix dinners for us and just put it out on the table, and you helped yourself--\$1.50 and all you could eat. And I mean, she could cook. I mean, everything was on that table. And she'd sell whiskey, and then she'd sell beer, whatever you wanted, at fifty cents a drink, you know. I first started drinking at her house.
[laughs]

ISOARDI

Did you mind all that traveling?

BROOKS

No, not at the time. Not at the time.

ISOARDI

It was still kind of exciting?

BROOKS

Yes, not at the time. Right now I don't want to go across the street in a plane.
[laughs] Then I used to take a plane if I wanted to go across the street. "Well, how are you going to get across it?" "Well, I bought a ticket. I get on the plane. I'm going across the street now." At that particular time I was-- Well, that's the only way you could travel. And I paid a lot of money for-- At that particular time, too, they were charging you for your luggage and how heavy it weighed. When I came back from Australia, I mean, my plane fare plus-- Well, my plane fare was paid by the organization that brought me to Australia.

ISOARDI

When was that?

BROOKS

In '58, '59, '60. But then my gowns were so heavy, the ball gowns were so heavy with beads, that I paid \$351 just to have them shipped home. But they were very heavy, and they had to charge me. But over here, going over there, they paid to bring them over there. It was deducted from my income tax.

ISOARDI

Well, by the time you were traveling, then, with the bands, you went out with Barnet, and you were playing with Basie. I mean, you were at the top, all the great bands, all the great shows. Was the money pretty good, then?

BROOKS

The money was very good. Basie was seemingly a hard nut to crack because of the fact that when he was on a show--and I can't think of the fellow's name, because I was on the show myself--he had a show where we judged records, other artists' records, which I didn't like.

ISOARDI

Judged them? You commented on whether you like them or not?

BROOKS

Well, you'd always give them from zero to ten, from zero to ninety-nine, and all that sort of stuff. And I will think of that man's name.

ISOARDI

Is this a radio program?

BROOKS

It's a radio program. But when I was on the show, this man knew that I was kind of absolutely leaning towards the artists, and I wouldn't judge them unfairly. So he would say, "Just tell me what you think regardless of how it sounds. If you don't like it, tell me you don't like it," you know. But I tried to be more than just fair. But Count Basie was on the show.

ISOARDI

With you?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

Oh, this was another time.

BROOKS

This was another time. No, not all at one time, just each one was individual.

ISOARDI

Now, had you played with him?

BROOKS

I played with him. I did a couple of-- Yeah, but not before. Not before this.

ISOARDI

Oh, okay. So you hadn't met him.

BROOKS

I hadn't met him. So when he judged one of my boogies, he said, "Double zero," which means I was no good. That's how he judged my record, double zero.

ISOARDI

Were you listening to this program?

BROOKS

Uh-uh.

ISOARDI

You heard about this.

BROOKS

They told me. And then the next two weeks was coming into Christmas, and they said they would like for me to appear at the theater on Central Avenue, the Lincoln Theatre, to do a Christmas milk fund for needy kids or something like that and whatnot. And Count Basie was on there. I walked right up--

ISOARDI

Oh, he didn't know who you were.

BROOKS

Uh-uh. I walked up to him and told him, I said, "Hi. You gave me a double zero last week, didn't you?"

ISOARDI

What did he say?

BROOKS

I told him my name was Hadda Brooks. His mouth just fell open. He didn't say anything. I embarrassed him in front of about five or ten people.

ISOARDI

That must have felt good, though.

BROOKS

It did, because then, I've got news for you, he had to play the same boogie, the same boogie he gave me double zero on, his whole band played it for me while I was doing my show. [laughs] He played it.

ISOARDI

Justice.

BROOKS

So, I mean, I said, "Okay." The audience liked it. I was very, very well received. And Count Basie, I guess, was very much embarrassed.

ISOARDI

Did he say anything to you after that?

BROOKS

Uh-uh. Not a word. Not a word.

ISOARDI

But then afterwards you traveled-- You played with him.

BROOKS

I didn't travel with him. I mean, he came out here to record for Modern Records, to do something with Modern Records, and Modern Records said, "Well, we've got two songs we want you to play for Hadda Brooks." And they recorded it. Oh, they were beautiful. He did a good job on it. [laughs] He did a good job on it. And I really did not have an arrangement then, either. And I sang it--

ISOARDI

You never needed one.

BROOKS

No, I sang two with him. I sang it through once with him, and the whole thing just fell in. Beautiful.

ISOARDI

Well, that's all they needed.

BROOKS

Well, they had nothing but the best of musicians.

ISOARDI

Even when they were first recording in the thirties with Decca [Records], I don't think they ever wrote anything down. What a band.

BROOKS

You don't need anything if you've got good musicians and they know where they're going and what they are doing. And he played it.

ISOARDI

Do you remember when that was?

BROOKS

You mean what year?

ISOARDI

Yeah.

BROOKS

[laughs] No. It was before I went to Australia, though. It was before I had gone to quite a few of the European cities. I was in England and France and Germany, everywhere. And then I was going back to-- I was not going back to Australia, but I was going to Australia my first time over. It was a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful country. Loved it. No, I mean, I hadn't traveled extensively that much. I was just going around here in this country, you know, from New York to Chicago to Detroit, back to Los Angeles, and then over-- I didn't go to St. Louis, I didn't go South. I really didn't.

ISOARDI

You didn't want to go South?

BROOKS

I wouldn't dare. I mean, my temperament wasn't suited for it. I wasn't temperamentally suited for the South. Even though my records-- That's where I got a lot of recognition.

ISOARDI

Right now, as you were getting bigger and bigger, did you still have that kind of informal arrangement with Modern Records?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

Was there some point along here where you signed a contract?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

It was pretty much informal the whole way?

BROOKS

I never did sign a contract. I never did sign a contract. And I go out with his two sisters [Rosalind Bihari and Maxine Bihari Kessler], and his youngest brother [Joseph Bihari] comes in to see me whenever I'm in town and he's in town. I mean, they still are good friends. And Jules passed, you know, and his other brother [Saul Bihari] passed, and his oldest sister [Florette Bihari] passed.

ISOARDI

But Joe is still alive?

BROOKS

Joe's still around, and Roz and Maxine are still around. Those are the ones who had a lot to do-- Maxine didn't. She worked for an insurance company. But Roz is the one who was the head secretary for Jules in Modern Records. And Joe had a lot to do after I left. He fell right into the company. Joe's a pretty good, brilliant man. At the moment he's doing some architectural work, too, right now. But they have sold all of their--what you would call it, assets, is that what you want to call them?--their masters and whatnot to an English company [Virgin Records].

ISOARDI

When did they do that?

BROOKS

Oh, they did it some time before Jules passed, I think. He passed about, I think it's three years ago, practically.

ISOARDI

And about that time--

BROOKS

And about that time they are now putting out a CD on me.

ISOARDI

This English company?

BROOKS

The English company.

ISOARDI

For which you get nothing.

BROOKS

Oh, yes, I get something. Oh, I'm signed with all the-- That English company is putting out my boogies. All those boogies belong to me, and I have already been signed to publisher's rights.

ISOARDI

But you didn't have publisher's rights when you were first doing these boogies?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

How did you get them?

BROOKS

Oh, my manager got them. My manager got them. No, no, no. He found out. I signed a contract with them about four or five weeks ago, and they've got a good little what you would call royalties because of the records that have been sold that they haven't paid me for.

ISOARDI

Is this the previous Modern Records? Or the ones the English company is issuing now?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, both of them, I think. I mean, these people at Modern Records had put out my boogies. I mean, there have to be some royalties coming from them. But now they're coming in. And the company that bought them, the royalties are still coming in--the publishing rights, you know. And, I mean, the song in the picture with Jack Nicholson [The Crossing Guard] that I wrote that I did for Jules Bihari on Modern Records a long time ago, I haven't gotten anything for it. Right now I'm getting it, because it's my own composition, and the publisher's rights are coming to me.

ISOARDI

Oh, great. But you had to go back and reclaim those rights?

BROOKS

I didn't. My manager did.

ISOARDI

Is this Alan?

BROOKS

Yeah, Alan. Alan [L.] Eichler, yeah. He did it. I mean, I wouldn't know what to do. All of this time? I mean, I've been in show business for forty-eight years. I didn't know what in the world it was.

ISOARDI

So you went for--what?--maybe twenty, thirty years, then, without--?

BROOKS

Without anything.

ISOARDI

Without any kind of agreement, nothing.

BROOKS

Nothing.

ISOARDI

Just every once in a while Modern Records would send you a check.

BROOKS

No, they never sent me a check. They never sent me a check.

ISOARDI

You mean, after your boogies were out of the jukeboxes, you wouldn't get any checks then?

BROOKS

No. No.

ISOARDI

The checks would stop?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, yeah, the check would stop-- After I started traveling I didn't-- I mean, I left Modern Records and cut my association off with them. I didn't get anything. I remember one time that I was on my way back to New York, and I went to the airport. Jules and his sister were with me. And I did owe something. Oh, yeah, they were charging me for my heavy luggage, and I didn't have the money. And Jules got angry with me. We still had plenty of time. Jules came all the way back to where his office was and wrote out a check for \$3,000, and that's the last I heard of it. I think that's exactly what he did owe me, to a certain extent, in royalties. And that was it.

ISOARDI

When was that?

BROOKS

Oh, I don't know.

ISOARDI

In the fifties?

BROOKS

Late forties, late forties. Because I was with Modern Records, but I wasn't with Modern Records when I had my own television show [The Hadda Brooks Show], you know.

ISOARDI

So you were with them for probably about four to five years, then?

BROOKS

A good four or five years. A good four or five years. It could be five or six but nothing active. I mean, I was recording and going back and whatnot. And they were recording other people, B.B. King and all of the other people, you know, quite a few other people. But when I was going around the country, like Chicago, Detroit, New York, and other places in this particular country, and then when I left and went to Europe, that's when the association cut off with Jules, because I wasn't recording with them anymore. I started recording for Toots Camarata. It was Okeh Records, Columbia [Records].

ISOARDI

Now, when did this happen? When did you go to Europe for the first time?

BROOKS

When did I go?

ISOARDI

Was that late forties, early fifties?

BROOKS

That was late forties, because I went to England.

ISOARDI

How was that set up?

BROOKS

Well, somebody saw me in Florida, and they wanted me over in England. I had not a manager, but this guy was a lawyer, Duchowny. He was a very good friend of Jules. Duchowny was sort of halfway on what you would call the funny side booking me. And then he had a booker in New York that they would get in touch with. And they kept me going around in there, you know. I mean, it just wasn't a manager at all. And then, when they sent me to Florida, this guy saw me, and right away he got in touch with this guy from New York, and they took me over to England from Florida, and from then on I didn't use him anymore. It kept going and going and going. I didn't need them. I mean, I don't say I didn't need them. They weren't in the European theater of any kind, you know. They didn't know what they were doing. All they could do is take me to Detroit, Chicago, New York, and Boston, you know.

ISOARDI

So going to England led to more things in Europe.

BROOKS

To more things in the European countries. And then, when I came back, then I had my own television show.

ISOARDI

How long were you over there?

BROOKS

How long was I over there in that part of the country? I was over there for about three months. They kept renewing my visa. And then, when I went to Australia they kept renewing my visa. I was over in Australia for about three years, Melbourne and Sydney. But in Australia they do-- What do you call it? They farm you out. Like if you had a club in Sydney, and I was in Melbourne, and you wanted me for two weeks, I mean, then you would pay me the same salary that they were paying me, however it worked. But I never lost anything.

ISOARDI

What was Europe like? That was your first trip outside the United States.

BROOKS

Yeah. It was fine. I loved it. I couldn't get my cigarettes, though. Very funny cigarettes. [laughs] Pale tobacco. And I was smoking.

ISOARDI

Like everything else in England. [laughs] Everything is pale.

BROOKS

Oh, pale, pale tobacco. And when I was over in Australia, the very first time that my cigarettes came over--I was smoking Pall Malls--one of the kids on the show, the guy who introduced the show, he brought me a little carton of Pall Malls. I said, "Oh, my God, I'm in heaven." But they tasted just like the English cigarettes. But just because it said Pall Malls I enjoyed them. Whatever.

ISOARDI

Did you do any recording in Europe?

BROOKS

No.

ISOARDI

You just performed?

BROOKS

Yeah, I just performed onstage. In Australia I entertained eight hundred people every night, and that was about a hundred people over the fire law. Every night.

ISOARDI

It wasn't a club? This was an auditorium?

BROOKS

It was a big club. Big club. Eight hundred people every night.

ISOARDI

How many nights a week did you work?

BROOKS

Six. Off on Sunday. I did one show, though, every night, that's all, just one show. At eleven thirty everybody had to quit drinking. At that particular time--

ISOARDI

Oh, right, the licensing laws.

BROOKS

Yeah, they didn't have a license. And, boy, when the show was going on, you could see the guys take the little old plastic bags out and put them in the trunk of the car. They said, "Okay, we're on now." And they didn't sell anything but mixers; you brought your own drinks. But, I mean, you could hear a pin drop. Eight hundred people. You could hear a pin drop. Nobody opened their mouth. Nobody uttered a sound except when I got through, applause. I loved it. I loved it, because over here in the United States you couldn't keep ten people quiet, let alone eight hundred.

ISOARDI

Was that a shock?

BROOKS

A shock? I thought, "Well, what am I going to do?" It was a split thing. Up here was the stage where I performed, and down here there was as many people as there were up there. I mean, I had to come from the dressing room, which was way outside, the length of it, to come all the way down over here and go up this gorgeous staircase and get onto the level. It was a beautiful club. And that's where-- My gowns, I had ball gowns. I had them made and everything. Everything. TV show every night, In Melbourne Tonight, IMT.

ISOARDI

You were on TV every night?

BROOKS

Every night.

ISOARDI

Your own show?

BROOKS

No, no, no, no, not my own show. It was called IMT, In Melbourne Tonight.

ISOARDI

Oh, it was the name of the program?

BROOKS

It was the name of the show, yes, the name of the show of the TV. Then, when I got through with the TV, I went on at eleven thirty that night--

ISOARDI

Oh, at the club.

BROOKS

--at the club.

ISOARDI

How much time did they give you on television? Did you sing a song or two?
BROOKS

Yeah, one song with a thirty-piece band. And that's where the arrangements came in. They made arrangements for every song I sang. They did a lot of production, quite a bit of production.

ISOARDI

So when you went to Europe for the first time, what was your show like then? Did you pick up all the musicians over there? Were you traveling by yourself?

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

And they provided the backup, what you needed?

BROOKS

They provided the backup, yeah.

ISOARDI

And what was your show like then? Were you combining singing with boogies?

BROOKS

No, no, no. I don't hit a boogie.

ISOARDI

Not at all?

BROOKS

I don't hit a boogie. My arms are tired. It's not so much arthritic. I mean, you can see my hand. I mean, they're arthritic. I can go so far on a boogie and then, I mean, my arms get tired and I don't do a good one. If I'm in a club it doesn't matter out here. It doesn't matter. Because, I mean, what these people are educated to, they don't know. They don't know. So I don't feel bad if I make a mistake. I don't feel bad at all. But over there I didn't do any boogies. They hired me for singing.

ISOARDI

Now you're just singing.

BROOKS

That's all I did was sing, yeah.

ISOARDI

What a change. I mean, you never thought of singing at all.

BROOKS

I mean, I figured that if I want to let them know I can still play a boogie, I'll just hit off one and go twenty-five or twenty-four bars or thirty bars and cut out, you know, just for the heck of it. No big thing. And it's not programmed. It's not scheduled on my program to do a boogie, you know. I just sing what I want to sing. I just finished at the Vine Street Bar and Grill, and I didn't do a boogie

for three weeks. It's not that I don't like boogies; I'm just not able to put them down like I know that I should or put them down like I could at the time I was doing them. The perfection is not there. And that's because of arthritis, you know. Outside of that, it doesn't tell me that I'm growing anywise older except it just makes you know you can't do what you used to do. It doesn't bother me.

ISOARDI

You've got something else to do. You can sing.

BROOKS

[laughs] Why not?

ISOARDI

Really. Well, I was going to ask you when I was first thinking about interviewing you about who your singing influences were, etc., but it sounds like you may not have had that many influences because you never thought of yourself as a singer. You just got up on stage and you did it.

BROOKS

That's right. I used to listen a lot to Billie Holiday before I thought about getting into show business. I didn't have a clue. I loved Billie Holiday. A lot of people still say I sound like Billie Holiday. A lot of people come in and ask me can I do some tunes, two or three tunes that they'd like to hear, by Billie Holiday. I do them. I do them, because, I mean, she was-- Well, she was a dear friend of mine, and I liked her. I liked her vocalizing very much.

ISOARDI

Can you point to a couple of things that you really liked about her, her style?

BROOKS

Oh, you mean her style?

ISOARDI

Well, her singing.

BROOKS

Well, her style is altogether different. Nobody can sing like Billie. It's like nobody can go behind Ella Fitzgerald. I mean, the distinctive style of the people that I know are the things that set them apart from other singers. I mean, you know when you hear Billie.

ISOARDI

Yeah, one note.

BROOKS

That's it. And I liked her singing. I used to listen to it quite a bit.

ISOARDI

Were there some recordings of hers that were your favorites?

BROOKS

Well, there's mostly all of them. [laughs] "Trav'lin Don't Explain." I didn't like "Trav'lin Light"; I didn't like it too much. But mostly a lot of the Billie Holiday

songs were my favorites. I mean, there was nobody else who could do them. Nobody else sang like her. She had a style. I was quite a bit upset when she could no longer perform because of why she could no longer perform. But I followed her singing and that was all. I've seen her. I used to go backstage. She followed me in Santa Monica. They were about ready for her to come on. I had gone to see her, and I went back to the dressing room. And I knew she was out of it. I mean, she had had quite a bit to drink. I got her together, and I brought her right to the stage and sat her on the steps. Nobody thought she was going to do it. And when they introduced her I helped her up, and she got onstage, and she never missed a beat. She never missed a beat.

ISOARDI

How did you meet her?

BROOKS

[laughs] She came into the ladies room where I was one night.

ISOARDI

Where you were performing?

BROOKS

No. It was in the hotel where a lot of the entertainers and the ball club boys used to stay. We were all in the hotel. She was waiting for her guy to come pick her up, because she was going to do a nightclub act somewhere. I was in the ladies room, and she came in, and she just stood there waiting for me to finish whatever I was doing. [laughs] I looked at her; I knew who she was. And, I mean, I never was one to do exclamations over-- So I didn't go into a fit when I saw her, you know. I was just very, very-- I wondered, "Now, what do you want? You know I'm in here, so why can't you wait outside?" [laughs] But, you know, she had a small little cigarette, what they would call a roach, a small cigarette, and she offered me part of it. And I said, "No." I wasn't even smoking at that time. I said, "No, thank you." And she just stood there, and she just kept on smoking. She told me she was waiting for her guy to come and pick her up to take her to this gig. It was the first time I ever heard the word "gig." So, okay. I finished, and she just-- When I got ready to go by her and get out, I said, "Well, it's yours now." I mean, she just hugged me, and I just walked out. And, of course, maybe I felt maybe a little bit thrilled because of somebody that absolutely might have pushed maybe a teeny bit of love in her stature on me, you know. She didn't know who I was, because I wasn't anybody at that particular time. I hadn't even met Jules Bihari. I hadn't even recorded.

ISOARDI

So this was out here in L.A.?

BROOKS

Yeah. It used to be the Clark Hotel down on Eighteenth [Street] and Central. That's where all the show people hung out. So, I mean, like, "Oh, okay. Billie

Holiday." But that's how I met her. And I still loved her until she passed. But like I couldn't figure how people like her with all this beautiful talent could waste it so much, you know. So I said, "Different strokes for different folks," and that's the way it was. That's her.

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ISOARDI

Okay, Hadda, let's resume. I guess you're in Europe, or you're coming back from Europe, in the late forties, early fifties. Where did your career go from there?

BROOKS

Well, my first time coming back from my European tour, it was very, very exciting, because-- I've got news for you. I was in England and quite a few parts of the European countries. And then, when I came back, I went into a club in the [San Fernando] Valley on-- What's the name of that street? I really can't think of it. It's in the Valley, Studio City. Ventura.

ISOARDI

Ventura Boulevard.

BROOKS

Ventura, yeah. It was called Jimmy O'Brien's. I was there. They had brought me in to sort of bring them out of the red. And after I was there for about three or four weeks, I mean, they came out of the red.

ISOARDI

So you were packing the house.

BROOKS

I was packing the house.

ISOARDI

What kind of a club was it?

BROOKS

It was very, very small. I don't say it was small. I'm saying it wasn't large. It was quite a nice-sized club plus a very, very beautifully extensive bar. And when I got there the people came in, came in, came in, and came in. There was only one thing that-- It didn't spoil my arrangement with that club. I mean, the two guys who owned the club there were so gracious, they were so beautiful. I mean, one would say, the oldest one would say to me, "Hadda, can you lend me two bucks, and would you lend me the car?" My car. They didn't have a car. The other one was just one who wanted to say, "Well, I love you, and we're going to go home and make love." You know what I mean. If you want the truth, then that's the truth. Okay. But the guy who asked me for the two dollars-

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ISOARDI

What were their names, by the way?

BROOKS

Wait a minute now. Jimmy O'Brien, and I'll give you the other guy's name in just a few moments, because I can't think of his name. He's the one who would say, "Can you lend me two bucks, and can I borrow the car?" But Jimmy O'Brien would be the guy who I would say was the honcho or whatever you want to say. He would stay there behind the bar and sell the drinks. Now, the surprise of Jimmy O'Brien's, which I didn't know and which I didn't come into contact with until I had another engagement somewhere--which we will come upon certainly at another time, or soon--was that the bartender, the actual bartender behind Jimmy O'Brien's was-- What's the name of these guys who had the Laugh In?

ISOARDI

Rowan and Martin? The TV show?

BROOKS

Yeah, Rowan and Martin. Okay, Rowan died. Martin was the guy who was behind the bar.

ISOARDI

Really? Very young, then.

BROOKS

Martin. I can't remember his name.

ISOARDI

Was it Dick Martin? Dan Rowan and Dick Martin.

BROOKS

Dan Rowan and Dick Martin. Okay. Dick Martin was behind the bar at this Jimmy O'Brien's club.

ISOARDI

Was he a comedian there?

BROOKS

No, he was a bartender.

ISOARDI

He was a young kid tending a bar?

BROOKS

He came to me. This gentleman called. He was giving his wife a beautiful birthday present. Money was no object. No, money was no object. And he called me out to his home. He wanted to talk to me, and he wanted to see this or see that and the other. And when I went out to talk to him, he said to me, "I'm going to do everything that I can for my wife's birthday, and I want you to be there. I want you to do two twenty-minute shows." I said, "Okay." He said, "They're going to be \$5,000 apiece, each show." I said, "Fine." And then he

asked me, "What is this you have about Bobby Short?" I said, "I don't have anything about Bobby Short." I said, "There is nothing in my repertoire or me as my life is concerned that I have anything about Bobby Short." He said, "Well, I heard that you all didn't get along." I said, "Well, that's true. I said, "Bobby Short--" A club called Spago now, which used to be called Jimmy Dolan's, up on the heights of Sunset Boulevard--

ISOARDI

Yes, the restaurant, Spago restaurant.

BROOKS

That's right. But it was Jimmy Dolan's nightclub. Jimmy Dolan told Bobby Short, he said, "I'm going to have Hadda Brooks here, and she's coming in in two weeks." And Bobby Short said, "I won't be here. I won't play on the same bill with her." And perhaps he might have thought that Mr. Dolan might have said, "Well, I'm sorry, then I'll get rid of Hadda." But Mr. Dolan said, "If you won't play with Miss Brooks, then you have to go." And at the particular time, when Mr.-- His name is-- When he knew that I was coming in, he left.

ISOARDI

Do you know why?

BROOKS

No. No. I cannot assume. I can't assume, but then I can assume as to why. He's a man, and I was a woman. I don't know exactly if that was it or whatnot. And, I mean, Mr. Bobby Short, when Mr. Dolan, Jimmy Dolan, told him that I was coming in, he said, "I won't play with her." And Mr. Jimmy Dolan said, "I'm sorry, but you are going to have to go, because she's coming in."

ISOARDI

Did you know him before this?

BROOKS

Yes.

ISOARDI

Had you ever met Bobby Short? You knew him?

BROOKS

I definitely knew him.

ISOARDI

Were you getting along okay? Or was there--?

BROOKS

We had nothing. We had no problems.

ISOARDI

So it must have been that he saw you as a threat, then, I guess, musically?

BROOKS

I'm going to say this lightly, that he saw me as a threat. Lightly. The idea was that it wasn't-- We weren't that big. We hadn't made a name for ourselves.

Bobby Short is a big name in New York. I'm a big name practically all over the country, but I've got news for you, if it was right now I could understand it, but then, I couldn't understand it. No way. And, I mean, there's no possible way that I can even talk any further about it because of the fact that this could be assumed as something like-- When I was there, I was coming into Jimmy Dolan's, it was a thing that I might hurt, and it wasn't possible. It could have been. And maybe he thought it was after all. And then, when I went to Europe and I was in Paris and I went into this club in Paris-- I was with the Harlem Globetrotters, we went into this club, and here was Bobby Troup. He was playing there.

ISOARDI

Bobby Troup?

BROOKS

Bobby Troup. That's the same guy that I am talking about who was at Jimmy Dolan's. He was the guy who didn't want to appear with me.

ISOARDI

Not Bobby Short?

BROOKS

No, I'm talking about Bobby Short. Please excuse me. This is Bobby Short. Bobby Troup was my friend. Bobby Troup played for me at Jimmy Dolan's. I mean, I've got news for you, he played for me. I mean, he was a very beautiful, very beautiful person and a gorgeous musician. But I'm now talking about Bobby Short.

ISOARDI

Right. So did you talk to him in Paris?

BROOKS

Yes, I did.

ISOARDI

Did you ask him about this incident?

BROOKS

No, I didn't ask him about it.

ISOARDI

He didn't say anything?

BROOKS

He didn't say anything at all. I didn't ask him about it, and he didn't say anything about it.

ISOARDI

Funny.

BROOKS

I went up. He introduced me out of sheer, I guess, European courtesy. He introduced me, and I went up, and I sang a tune. And he thought I was going to

take his job. This was in Paris. I didn't want his job. I didn't want anybody's job. I wanted to work. As they said, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, Miss Hadda Brooks," okay, I would go on and I'd do it. But Bobby Short turned me off in Los Angeles. Bobby Short didn't have a chance to turn me off in Paris because I wasn't there to do an entertaining engagement. I was there appearing with the Harlem Globetrotters when we were in Paris. And the next day the Harlem Globetrotters were going to play, the halftime show, and I was on, I didn't have anything to do with Bobby Short. I was there, and I did my halftime. I went out, I sang the song, and, I mean, like, forget it. If I hadn't gone there the night before I wouldn't have known Bobby Short was in town. I can't think of the name of the club, but I will. [Mars Bar]

ISOARDI

So you reestablished a relationship with the Harlem Globetrotters? You were traveling around with them and performing at halftime during their games?

BROOKS

Abe Saperstein wanted to do something for me, and Abe Saperstein wanted to do something for my husband, who was a Harlem Globetrotter. His name was Earl "Shug" Morrison, and he was a Harlem Globetrotter. Abe wanted me because of his death and because of a couple of others who had died then. He wanted me as a living wife or woman who was seemingly associated with the men of the Harlem Globetrotters. He wanted me on the half. He wanted me to do something on the half. Now that I had gone into show business, Abe Saperstein wanted to absolutely exploit.

ISOARDI

Yeah, you were a pretty big name then.

BROOKS

I was getting into a pretty big name. I was getting into a pretty big name. I mean, can you imagine? I'm singing "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" four times this way, that way, back way, and forth way into Spain, the bullring. I mean, I've got news for you. That's where Saperstein's boys appeared because of the fact that that was the biggest thing that would hold them, where they had the great big sections of the whole bullring. I've got news for you and blah, blah, blah. After they would have the bullring thing that afternoon, then Abe Saperstein and the boys would come out and do a show. They'd square off the field. And then after they did the first half of the show, then we would do the half. We'd go out there in the middle of the bullring--

ISOARDI

And then performed.

BROOKS

I'd sing, and the other girls would dance, and the guys would play the accordion and everything else and would do a show. It was a musical show.

ISOARDI

How long did you do this with the Globetrotters?

BROOKS

I did this-- It was about five months, three months, four months. Three months, something like that.

ISOARDI

What was Saperstein like? Did you get along with him?

BROOKS

Oh, God. I got anything I wanted from him. Everything. I mean, he was a very, very wonderful person. He knew, at that particular time that my husband was dead, I didn't-- I was married. I was married, but, I mean, the guy who I was married to who was a Harlem Globetrotter was dead. He looked out after me because of the fact that he thought maybe I might go into sorrow or something like that, which I didn't. Maybe one time I did, and he became very, very upset. But he was the most generous person in the world. Very generous. There was no way in the world he would say no. There was no way in the world that he'd ever push you out, and he tried to help you do just exactly what he thought was perhaps-- I'm singing "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" to that side, to that side, to that side, that four times in a row. [sings a line from the song] He said, "Because those people in the back and those people on the side, they can't hear you. So sing it. So sing it."

ISOARDI

[laughs] So you sang at the one part of the stadium, then you walked over to the other side and sang it to the other side?

BROOKS

I'd just stand right there and turn around--to the back, to the side-- I was dressed like a beautiful princess, like a queen. I mean, whenever I bought a gown I would say, "This is it. This is mine." "Put it on my bill," he'd say. "No problem. No problem."

ISOARDI

So when you were back in L.A., then, when you came back from Europe for the first time, you were playing mostly clubs, then, in Hollywood and in the Valley?

BROOKS

Right, right.

ISOARDI

And when did your television opportunity come up?

BROOKS

Well, when I was in the Valley, I-- Seemingly at one time, like nine thirty, and I was going somewhere at eleven thirty, and they wanted me to do a fifteen-minute show with a microphone in front of my face, nothing else. They wanted

me to do that. So I did fifteen minutes. Okay. They thanked me very much. And then I went where I was going, and I came back, and then all of a sudden there was another part of me they wanted, and it was fifteen minutes with just the microphone, the mike in front of my face, and nothing else. I hated it. I hated it. Because, I mean, who am I singing to? A wall? I've got news for you, that's what they wanted. However, maybe two or three months later they were calling me into the studio and saying, "Well, we're going to do a television show on you." I was very, very-- As my manager said, I was blasé. But, I mean, I wasn't blasé; I was just trying to figure what it is they were trying to do. And they are trying to say to me, "We're doing a TV show." So I said okay. So they brought me in, they gave me my format. I helped them with my format. The TV show came about on a Sunday evening, from nine o'clock to nine thirty. And as I have understood, a lot of people who wanted to see me used to rush home from whatever they were doing at nine thirty-- I mean, like, I didn't believe them, but, I mean, I guess they did. However, it was a successful show.

ISOARDI

What channel was this?

BROOKS

KCOP [channel 13]. And then what did KCOP turn to? What's the new station now? Or what was the station before KCOP? They had changed stations.

ISOARDI

When was this? Nineteen fifty or something?

BROOKS

Yeah, 1951, '52, or something like that.

ISOARDI

So the first time they brought you in, and then they just had you singing right in front of the mike. That was just a--?

BROOKS

No, no, this was something like 1949, '50. They just had me singing to fill in an evening of some fifteen minutes. "Okay, we're going to put a songstress on who will sing for fifteen minutes." It was no special show. This fifteen minutes, this was like a passé thing of, "Okay, Hadda Brooks is going to sing." There was no big thing. I mean, that's why I didn't like it. That's why I didn't-- So then, now, the next time they put me on, "What in the world?" And my manager at the time said, "Oh, come on, do it." And I said, "Well, okay." And the next time they called me was when I was actually being considered for doing a TV show.

ISOARDI

Now, this was your show. Was it called The Hadda Brooks Show?

BROOKS

Yes, it was.

ISOARDI

What was it like? What was the format?

BROOKS

Just me. I would say, "I'm very happy to join you in your living room." And then when I didn't say, "I'm happy to join you in your living room," when I'd end up the next show I would say, "I'm glad you came to my house." I mean, one of those things were either way.

ISOARDI

But did you have guests, then, appearing with you?

BROOKS

Uh-uh.

ISOARDI

It was just you for half an hour singing? Marvelous.

BROOKS

Yes, sir.

ISOARDI

Did you enjoy it?

BROOKS

Oh, yes. When they started announcing The Hadda Brooks Show , my baby grand piano was there, and the top was completely high--the opening of the top, you know--and on this side, to the right side of the piano, there was an ashtray, a great big ashtray. I was smoking at the time, which I'm not now. But I was smoking at the time. I was smoking the Pall Mall, and the cigarette was pushing out loads of swirling smoke. And then, when the director would point to me, I would start singing "To Spend Your One Night with You." I would go through maybe sixteen bars of that, and then he'd pull back from the ashtray, and he'd pull back from me, and then I would invite you to my home. Or I would say, "I'm glad that you invited me to your home." And I would sing the tunes that I had prepared. It was loads of fun, loads of fun.

ISOARDI

Did you talk at all? Or did you just sing for the whole program?

BROOKS

No, it wasn't-- I don't remember talking or giving any conversation.

ISOARDI

So it was almost kind of like a club appearance.

BROOKS

It was just like one of those clubs where you listen to the songs, and that was what you were there for. And I did all those songs I wanted to sing, and I finished them. And by the time I finished them, that was the end of the program. Then I would say good-night, "Thanks for being in my living room." I would thank you either way. It was lots of fun.

ISOARDI

Did you pick your own songs?

BROOKS

Yes, I did.

ISOARDI

So you decided what you would sing on the program?

BROOKS

Yes, I did.

ISOARDI

Marvelous. Did it pay well?

BROOKS

Well, I've got news for you, at the particular time, if you got ten cents you were happy about the whole doggone thing. You know what I mean. You didn't get \$150,000. I mean, if I had gotten \$150,000 I would have thought something was wrong with the whole doggone show, if you know what I mean. The point of it was, to a certain extent, that [Nat] King Cole came on after me, and Leo Carrillo and-- I can't think of this comedian's name because of the fact that he almost looks like-- What's his name? You know the guy. He's so well known. You can't even help me, can you?

ISOARDI

No! [laughs] I need some clues.

BROOKS

I mean, this person, he had on a funny hat, and he had the cane, and he--

ISOARDI

Oh, Charlie Chaplin?

BROOKS

He did a bit and did look like Charlie Chaplin, this guy who was on at the same time that I was on. [Buster Keaton] And without fear of contradiction, my producer told me that I had outrated both of them, which he thought was absolute-- I mean, he was just absolutely out of his mind to say, "I've got news for you. She outrated both of them." I thought it was very good. And then, now, here comes King Cole. He was going into a television show. And I had had a sponsor. I had the Hershey company [Hershey Foods Corporation]. And King Cole didn't have a sponsor, but, now, he had Peggy Lee, Nellie Lutcher, and he had-- I don't think he had Nellie Lutcher. But, I mean, he had Ella Fitzgerald. He had a lot of white singers.

ISOARDI

On his program?

BROOKS

On his show. And after they would absolutely do whatever they were going to do, they would run up and give him a kiss. Well, they didn't like it. They didn't like it. The network and the program did not like it. I mean, like Peggy came

on, and whoever else he had came in. And he did not last as long as I did. I'm by myself. And they thought that if they had King Cole with everybody who was anybody-- Female singers, they would sing the song on this show, and then they would come up and give him a kiss. Well, I mean, they cut his show right now. They cut his show right now. I never thought, to a certain extent, that King Cole was cut because of the association and the closeness with the women that he had. I never went through that. I never thought that. I only just thought that they cut the show. He wasn't on the same program or the same station, like CBS. I mean, I was on CBS or NBC--I don't know which channel it was. I just thought that they had cut him because of that fact, not because that he was doing a hell of a lot better than me. Because I didn't have anybody on my show. I was doing my show by myself. But I have known King Cole, and I did know King Cole, and he was the most beautiful, gracious man I have ever met-- before I ever became Hadda Brooks. I wasn't Hadda Brooks. I never had a clue as to what I was going to do with whatever might have come my way. And King Cole came by one afternoon into a hall, a big hall, like a Masonic hall or whatever you want to call it. The chorus girls were rehearsing, and King Cole just came in. And I walked in. I was there. I was playing because of the rehearsal. And after we took a break and I walked down to the piano, to another piano, I asked King, "What do you think about this tune?" I played it, and he listened to it and whatnot. "Oh, go on, play it. Let's hear it." He listened. He was about the sweetest thing. He listened. And he told me, he said, "Just don't take me at my word when I say clean it up. Take me at my word: present it." And I did. And it was a tune that gave me a big hit on my early record.

ISOARDI

What was the name of it?

BROOKS

"You Won't Let Me Go."

ISOARDI

Nice story.

BROOKS

But I've got news for you. He didn't say, "It's no good." He didn't say, "It's all right." He did say, "Well, I don't know whether I--" He didn't give me his opinion. He said, "Clean it up to a certain extent." I really didn't know what he meant by clean it up. I thought he'd meant just by getting the chords together, and I did. And that was it. But he was there to pick up his wife, who was in the chorus line, and that's all. He was sitting down there, and I just ran up there and played the tune for him, and he said, "I like it."

ISOARDI

Well, that must have made you felt pretty good about it.

BROOKS

It did. I recorded it. It was a big hit for me. It was a big hit for me. It was no problem. I loved him. I loved him because he gave a lot of people who were going into [show business] a good chance of trying to be somewhere. I mean, they were going to stand off in a corner and beg somebody to give them a chance to be heard. King Cole absolutely pushed a lot of people into where they are right now. I loved him for that. I mean, he did not hold himself in high esteem to the extent that "I can't help you. I will help you if you want to be helped, but I'm not going to help if you want to walk around here and act like a stupid bum. I won't do that. But if you want to be helped, I am going to help you." I walked out on the stage at the Moulin Rouge on Sunset Boulevard. We were having a big show. I think it was a milk function, a Jewish milk function. King Cole had my right-hand side, and Danny Thomas had my left-hand side, and they walked me out on the stage. How wrong could I go?

ISOARDI

[laughs] Indeed.

BROOKS

How wrong could I go? They walked me out on the stage. King Cole said, "Sing it pretty." Danny Thomas said, "Break a leg." They took me down to the piano, and I sang, and the audience busted their heads wide open. King Cole came down, got ahold of my hand, Danny Thomas took ahold of my hand and took me back up on the stage, and all three of us took a bow. What can you do?

ISOARDI

Nice experience.

BROOKS

The point of it is, they may not have gone to the extent where I was the greatest singer in the world. The point of it is is where I might have become one if they would give me a push, and that's what they did. That's what they did. A lot of others did that too, and that's to the point as to where I am right now--not the greatest singer but a recognized singer. Whatever.

1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO (MAY 4, 1994)

ISOARDI

How long did your television show last?

BROOKS

Twenty-six weeks.

ISOARDI

Every Sunday night for twenty-six weeks?

BROOKS

From nine o'clock to nine thirty every Sunday night. And it was a gorgeous thing. It was beautiful. The thing that was beautiful about it was I'd only been

appearing in clubs, and here I was doing my own television show. And here the guys said, "When the red light goes on, that's you, and when the red light goes on here, that's you too, but you've got to move from one red light to another. I'm not going to point." I thought it was gorgeous. And everybody who came to talk to me said, "Everybody I know is trying to run home at nine o'clock to get to see your television show from nine o'clock to nine thirty. Everybody is going home to see it!" I said, "Oh." And then, when Don Feddison said to me that--

ISOARDI

Now, who was he?

BROOKS

He was the producer. He said that Leo Carrillo-- And I can't remember this guy's name. Oh, he is such a great person, though. Well, I mean, I've got news for you. I came to the point where I became number one, number one-- What do you call it? Number one point in the whole roster of the whole television thing [ratings]. Like "Amly Bloobly" is second, and "Boobalee Teeleeai" is third, but Hadda Brooks is first.

ISOARDI

Right. Not bad.

BROOKS

I beat out Leo Carrillo and-- I can't think of the other guy's name. I will.

ISOARDI

So what did your family think about this?

BROOKS

My family didn't possibly know just exactly-- I mean, I really didn't know. My mother [Goldie Wright Hopgood] was more obsessed, and my mother was more-- Well, she was more interested. She knew just exactly what I was going through. My father [John M. Hopgood] didn't know, and my grandfather [Samuel A. Hopgood], I've got news for you, listened to Bob [Robert] Schuller. I don't know. When we told him, or when they told us, or when he told us he was listening to Bob Schuller, he might have been listening to me. But he had his own private room. My mother and my sister [Kathryn Hopgood Carter] and my sister's two children [Darryl and Kent Carter], they were listening to me. And whoever they had asked to listen to, maybe they were listening, but I don't know. I don't know who was listening, but I've got news for you, it stayed and carried on for twenty-six weeks, and everybody was listening to it. This I can say. This I can say.

ISOARDI

Marvelous. So why did it stop at twenty-six weeks?

BROOKS

Well, because that was a program. That was a show.

ISOARDI

So it was scheduled to last that long?

BROOKS

It was scheduled to last that long. So, I mean, King Cole was off and I was off. King Cole was off before I was off. King Cole didn't do eighteen weeks, because they got angry with him kissing white girls. They got angry at him kissing Peggy Lee and all those other girls. I mean, I didn't have anybody, no men on my show, I didn't have any women on my show, and whatnot. I mean, I had a show that was going to be continued on and on and on because of the program, the ingredients of what it was. And King Cole, after what's-her-name got through singing, I mean, she'd come up and kiss him, and blah-blah would come up and kiss him, and they didn't like that. This is just exactly what I'm trying to say. I can sing a song right now, and if you have a great big video, I can get through with the tape right now. There is no need for you to come up and kiss me. What are you kissing me for? Because I sang a tune? The best thing you can say is, "Thank you. I'm happy that you sang the tune. Thank you very much." What else? Kissing me is not going to make it a great big hit. If I sing one of the tunes that I have on my new album, the only thing I can do is just say thank you. But, you see, King Cole-- I don't know why he did it or why he went through it, but he must have. Every time Peggy Lee and Dinah Shore and everybody else, if it was a white broad and they'd get through singing, they'd come up and kiss him.

ISOARDI

Maybe they were doing it deliberately. Maybe they wanted to make a political point.

BROOKS

No. It's not a political point. It's not a political point. The point is that you're King Cole, black. I'm Peggy Lee, so I come up and kiss you for having me on your show. I don't mind kissing you, you don't mind kissing me, but the whole freaking public from here to Georgia, from Georgia to Florida, from Florida to wherever these southern companies are carrying on-- You are a black man, and you've got a white woman coming up and kissing you. Your program is not going to be on the TV long. It's not going to be on the TV long. You've got the greatest actors and singers on your show. That's great, yeah. We want to see Peggy Lee, we want to see Nellie Lutcher, we want to see everybody, but we're not going to see them come up and kiss you.

ISOARDI

So that's how he lost-- Was that his first show?

BROOKS

Oh, yeah. His only show. That's right. And the only thing that I can say is the first thing he did wrong was to have any contact with his white entertainers. That's the first thing he did wrong. And nobody told him any different.

ISOARDI

So what did you do, Hadda, after your show ended? You still had regular club dates as well as doing your TV show, I guess, right?

BROOKS

Absolutely.

ISOARDI

I guess for the TV show you don't have much rehearsal, then, do you? You just go into the studio and you--

BROOKS

I had no rehearsal, no.

ISOARDI

You just show up at the studio Sunday and you do the show live?

BROOKS

I had no rehearsal. I absolutely figured this--and I might be wrong--that anybody who comes as far as instrumentals, like bass, drums, and guitar and whatnot, if they are going to come to play with me, I'm expecting them to know what the hell they're going to do. I have no charts. I'm not going to give any charts. I'm not going to tell you what's written down there to play. If you can't go from your heart to play for me like I'm going from my heart to play for you, then you will be the person I'll fire. I want everything that's normal and human to go along with anything that I do. There's no way in the world you're going to have something written. And if it doesn't go written, then you have to do again, and all of a sudden, "Oh, I forgot that word and I forgot that chord. Gee." Forget it. No way. There's no way. There's no way. You've got to be one of those things. Let's do it from the heart. Let's do it from where you're coming from. In other words, I mean, I'm not going to make it with you. No way.

1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE (MAY 9, 1994)

ISOARDI

Okay, Hadda. I think last time we got through your TV program. I guess we talked mostly about The Hadda Brooks Show. I don't know if you've got anything else that you want to add to that, but we can go on from there. If anything comes to you, you can certainly bring it up. One thing I did want to ask you about that we haven't touched upon yet--I don't know if you had anything to do with them or not--but were you a member during this time of your professional career in the late forties, early fifties, of the musician union [American Federation of Musicians], then Local 767? Did you have anything to do with--?

BROOKS

I was fast becoming a nonmember.

ISOARDI

When did you join, though, initially?

BROOKS

Oh, I joined the union initially in 1946. I had to.

ISOARDI

So as soon as you started?

BROOKS

As soon as I started recording, you know. But then, I'm not going to say that the union was very, very, very bad for me, but then, I am going to say that the union was very, very bad for me. The idea was that, of course, naturally, like most union members, they owe so much money, and then the union calls them on the carpet. And you have to go into the office, into a room, and sit in front of all your peers. And they seemingly talked to you--to my feeling--they talked to you like you had absolutely cheated the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] out of their money, and I didn't like it. I didn't like any of those people who were members of the union and whatnot who were telling me that I owed this, and I'd better pay this, and whatnot. And I went into the president's office, and I told him, I said, "They tell me I owe you \$300. I have \$200, and I have a job coming up, and my boss will give you the other \$100 after my first week." And the union president said, "No, we will not accept the \$200. You can't work." And, of course, naturally, I didn't like that. I went to the person that I was working for, and I said, "They won't allow me to work unless I give them the \$300." So without fear or without any hesitation she gave me the other \$100 to put with my \$200. And the president told me, "I don't care how you get it. Just get it or you can't work."

ISOARDI

Do you remember who that was then?

BROOKS

Oh, I don't know. I'll tell you about him. He was Italian. Bob Manners was one of the people who was there. He's the one who told me, "I don't care how you get it." Bob Manners was the treasurer.

ISOARDI

Is this Local 47?

BROOKS

Yes, that's right. It was Local 47.

ISOARDI

It wasn't the one on Central [Avenue]. This was Local 47?

BROOKS

No, no. Here, right here in Los Angeles, out in Hollywood. Oh, I had some trouble, too, with the union in Chicago. Not because I owed them any money, but, I mean, like-- But getting back to saying Bob Manners wouldn't accept my

\$200, I went to the president, and he wouldn't accept my \$200. And then, when I went to the person that I was supposed to work for, they gave me the \$100 that would make up the \$300. They took it, and then I could go to work. Then is when I decided, "I'm sorry." I mean, "My education was my father [John M. Hopgood]'s doing, and you will not tell me when and where I can work and how much I owe you. And if you tell me how much I owe you and I don't pay you and you're not going to allow me to work, then I think this is Gestapo methods, and I think this is absolutely-- You're demanding that I do what you say to do." So then I turned around and I never went back after that particular incident. I never went back. In fact, they had me up on the board when my father was lying in state. I mean in state. Well, I mean, he died. I went to the job. I sat there, I put in my time. I did not work because, I mean, my emotions were coming for me to work. But I sat there and put in my time to let them know that I had good intentions, because they had told the union that I came there and I didn't work, and I told the union, I said, "Yes, I didn't work. I didn't work because my father died." But I did think that I was showing good faith when I went down there. And I sat right at the bar. Everybody could see me. I never touched a note and I never sang, because in grief-- And I said, "If you want to check it out, check it out." I told them the funeral home, and I told them blah, blah, blah. They checked it out. They excused me. They found out it was true, that I wasn't trying to fluff off a job. I mean, why would I fluff off a job? Anyway, the union did not come on too well with me, and, I mean, I just wanted to let them know that I would not allow them to tell me what and when and where to do-- I went back to Chicago. The head of the union was in Chicago. He told me I couldn't work because [of what] they had with Dorothy Donegan. I said, "What's Dorothy Donegan got to do with me working?" "Well, you can't get paid." I was supposed to do a radio interview, and they were supposed to play my records. And I said, "Okay, why don't you talk to the deejay and find out if he's going to pay me, because I'm not going to accept any pay." Well, now it can be told. I mean, the deejay wanted me badly. He wanted me enough, because, I mean, my records were hot. My records were going. I was coming up on a lot of popularity. He interviewed me. And he didn't give me the money, he gave my managers at that particular time the money. He paid me. But the union didn't know it, or if they did they never said anything about it. But, I mean, I went through all of that with the union.

ISOARDI

When was all of this happening?

BROOKS

[James C.] Petrillo. That was '47, '48, '49, when I first came out. Petrillo was his name. Petrillo was the--

ISOARDI

Petrillo was the head of the national union?

BROOKS

He was the head of the national union. He wasn't going to allow me to do an interview and get paid. And I told him, I said, "Okay, you don't have to." I said, "I'll do it for nothing." Which, of course, naturally, my managers weren't going to let me, and the deejay wasn't going to let me do that. So, I mean, at night, when I was working at a club--I can't remember the name of the club in Chicago--the deejay came in and put the money in my manager's hand. But then, I mean, that turned me off. And they told me, they said, "We've got Dorothy Donegan." "So you've got Dorothy Donegan. Okay. She plays the piano. I play and sing. There is a great difference. And I can't see why you want to tell me you've got Dorothy Donegan. You might have Billie Holiday. But Billie Holiday doesn't belong to the union, though, because she sings." So, I mean, I went through that. And after that I turned around and told the union, "I will not--" A man used to come in every week on Friday or Saturday at the Captain's Table and collect two dollars and some cents from my dues every week. And I said, "If he comes in again I'll get up and walk off." I never saw him again. But the union was one of those things. It was like Gestapo. "You're either going to do what I'm going to say or you're not going to work. You're either going to do what I'm going to say or, I'm telling you, you're not in the musicians union." I said, "I'm not in the musicians union anymore. You forget it."

ISOARDI

So the few experiences you had with the union were not good ones.

BROOKS

No, they weren't very good at all.

ISOARDI

I guess you probably weren't involved at all when the two unions merged?

BROOKS

I didn't even know about them. When I got through with this union here I went to Europe, and I've got news for you, there's no way in the world they could come clear across the seas.

ISOARDI

And that was the last dealing you had with Local 47?

BROOKS

That's right.

ISOARDI

And to this day you're not a member, then?

BROOKS

No way. I wouldn't go back. If you wanted to give me a membership, no, I wouldn't go back. I don't stand-- I mean, when they had me on the board, and

they had me like in court-- As musicians, all of them, I couldn't stand what you would call downing another musician. We're all in the business to make money, but I could not tell another musician, "You're wrong." Okay, so you owe something. Pay. But if you don't pay, I can't threaten you. If you don't pay, you're out of the union? No way. I couldn't do that. So I got out, and I haven't regretted it at all. None whatsoever. They don't bother me. They won't bother me. [laughs] I don't know whether they know better--I don't think I'm going to be that bold-- but, I mean, I don't think they're that strong anymore.

ISOARDI

Let me ask you what happened in your career, then, after your TV show. Is that when you started traveling quite a bit?

BROOKS

Yeah, I went to Europe.

ISOARDI

So you went to Europe for quite a few years.

BROOKS

I went to Europe, yes, because Los Angeles was a very, very hard place to play. Los Angeles was not a hard place to play, it was an impossible place to play.

ISOARDI

Why so?

BROOKS

Well, because, I've got news for you, Los Angeles is not a show town. Los Angeles didn't know who the heck I was. Los Angeles only found out about me after I came back from Europe. All of my records, as I said before, were selling in the South. All of my records were selling up north. In Los Angeles, yes, they were selling, but not enough to make me an outstanding name. And then, when I did a club here, I could see maybe fifteen to twenty-five people. They didn't know who they were coming to [see]. They were just regulars coming into the club, and they were there, and they heard me. I was very unhappy about Los Angeles. I still am. It's not a show town.

ISOARDI

So how did the chance to go to Europe come up, then? Did this come pretty soon after your TV show?

BROOKS

After my TV show, yes. There was a man in England. I was working in a club in the [San Fernando] Valley. It was a gay club. He came in, and he asked me did I want to go to Florida, on Lincoln Boulevard, where all the big clubs were. And he said, "You're going to be on the show with Chuey Reyes." Chuey Reyes would do one show. Chuey Reyes was a socialite band. When Chuey Reyes got through doing his show, then I would do my show. He was over there on a big stage, and I was over here intimately. And I said, "Well, it's all right with me. I

can get out of this town." So I went to Florida. I worked there. And then I went back to Florida another time, and I worked there with-- I can't think of the guy's name. [sings] "Once in love with Amy--" Ray Bolger. I worked on the stage with Ray Bolger in Florida. And then I left Florida, and then I went to another town in Georgia. I went to Georgia. And I thought, "Jesus Christmas, what am I doing in Georgia?" And almost everybody in the town knew that I was absolutely frightened. They gave me parties to try to get my mind off of what I was thinking and this and that and the other. After I left Florida, I did one week in Georgia. Then I came back to the "United States." And then, when I came back to the "United States," I went to Toronto. And in Toronto I was called from Los Angeles; they wanted me to come to Australia. And then I continued my European trips from over in Australia.

ISOARDI

You just kept traveling, then?

BROOKS

Well, most of the time I was in Australia. I did England, and I did Paris, but most of the time I was in Australia until I actually started traveling with the Harlem Globetrotters. Then I went everywhere. I mean, eighty-three thousand miles in three months with the Harlem Globetrotters.

ISOARDI

Gee, that's hard traveling.

BROOKS

It's hard traveling. It wasn't hard traveling because we had great big planes, and we had buses from one little short town to the other. So, like, we'd stand up in the middle of Spain, on the border of Spain, and get that thing with that goat gut and put it full of wine, and we'd hold it up to our [mimicks drinking] and drink it, you know. And by the time we got to the place where we were going-- We played in the bullring in Spain. Let's see, it was Barcelona, the isle of Majorca, and the biggest, the other town in Spain.

ISOARDI

Madrid?

BROOKS

Madrid. Thank you. Madrid. One of my costars on the show-- It was hot. It was in the summer, and we had our off-the-shoulder cotton dresses, and we went down in the middle of town to shop. But after we left the town they called the cops, because we were--to use a better word than saying anything else-- embarrassing the city, because it was a religious city, and we weren't supposed to bare our shoulders. So when we were coming back we got a taxi going back to our hotel. The hotel had a six-foot fence around it, or a concrete fence around it, and you weren't supposed to come out there undressed like that. So we got halfway past the shopping center, and there was a whistle, a shrill

whistle, like a cop's whistle. And the taxi driver stopped on a dime. Of course, we didn't know what he was talking about, but he talked to the driver, and afterwards the driver told us, he said we were an insult to the town because of the fact that we did not cover our shoulders, and this was a religious town, the isle of Majorca, and [he had to] get us back to the hotel as fast as he could. And we told them, we told the police, that we were part of the Harlem Globetrotters show and whatnot, and he sort of cooled down then, but he said, "Get them back as fast as you can before somebody else stops you and won't understand."

ISOARDI

Gee.

BROOKS

So we got back.

ISOARDI

Crazy.

BROOKS

Yeah. And we went swimming in the pool. We could not come out of the yard or the pool beyond the six- foot--

ISOARDI

Unless you were dressed head to toe?

BROOKS

Right. So that was my part of going around most of Europe. I mean, like the eighty-three thousand miles in three months included that. It included Spain, it included Portugal, it included Paris, it included Germany, it included England, it included San Remo [Italy], everything, everything.

ISOARDI

Exciting to see that many places. Even though that was a lot of miles, it must have been--

BROOKS

Yes, right, absolutely.

ISOARDI

Were you someone who really got out and saw what was there or--?

BROOKS

Well, I didn't go sightseeing at all, no. I didn't go sightseeing at all. The only time that I went sightseeing was when we were in Rome, and I went into the Colosseum.

ISOARDI

Now, why did you want to specifically see the Colosseum?

BROOKS

Well, I've got news for you. We saw a lot of biblical pictures of how they used to feed the human beings to the lions. And I've got news, they had tiers and tiers and tiers and tiers. And it was a bit dilapidated; it had somewhat

deteriorated. I wanted to see. I mean, we went, me and the Harlem Globetrotters-- Of course, we weren't allowed to fraternize, but we did. Abe Saperstein said no fraternizing, but we did. We went at around eleven o'clock at night at the Colosseum.

ISOARDI

Was that a good time to see it?

BROOKS

No, just there. We were out and had a few drinks and came back. We wanted to go see the Colosseum.

ISOARDI

Why not? [laughs]

BROOKS

Yeah, why not. Yeah. I was very impressed with the Colosseum, because this was something that I had read about in history and whatnot, and I was there to see it. Seemingly the other girls in the entertainment field-- This is the only way I can clear that statement up: I was very outgoing. The fellows wanted to take me here and there. There was no sex. There were no off-limit things. I mean, we were just going to go out and have fun. We went out in Düsseldorf, Germany, and, I mean, I got up and sang "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" in one of the clubs, and they gave me three dozen of the most beautiful yellow and red roses I've ever seen in my life and a doll. But the boys were very happy, you know. And the other girls, who were white--I was the only black one, if you want to say so--on the whole entertainment circuit-- But they took me out and whatnot. And of course, Abe was back over here in the United States looking after his little leagues. He came back and heard about it, but there's nothing that happened. I mean, I've got news for him, I was too old to come up pregnant. [laughs] So he couldn't worry about it. Goose Tatum was on, and Meadowlark Lemon was on the Harlem Globetrotters.

ISOARDI

You had known them for quite some time.

BROOKS

I'd known them for quite some time. I'd known them for quite some time. I mean, it was fun. After we left Spain we had more crates of champagne on the bus. They gave it to us, crates of champagne. And then they gave us great big, great big ham sandwiches. We could drink all the champagne we wanted. Well, they poured some of it on us. [laughs] But Abe allowed that, because he was there, too. Abe didn't drink, but, I mean, he did allow that not to insult the people. He had us drink a few bottles and eat the sandwiches that they gave to us as a luncheon. It was fun.

ISOARDI

I'll bet.

BROOKS

It was fun.

ISOARDI

Where was your favorite audience? Do you have a particular spot that you enjoyed playing more than any other?

BROOKS

In Germany I loved it. I went to Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Berlin. Those were the three places. I enjoyed every one of those cities. I didn't like Paris.

ISOARDI

Really?

BROOKS

I didn't like Paris at all. I still don't. Outside of that, outside of Paris, I had the best time, the most beautiful time, and the great, successful time in Australia, because I was over there for five to six years.

ISOARDI

That long?

BROOKS

Well, they kept renewing-- I used to come home, but they renewed my visa, so I'd have to come back. But they were beautiful. I don't know whether I mentioned it, but I used to entertain eight hundred people a night.

ISOARDI

You did. You also mentioned you had a brief appearance on TV regularly.

BROOKS

I had every night on TV. It was called IMT, In Melbourne Tonight . They're the people, In Melbourne Tonight , channel four, who had brought me over there. I had an appearance every night on TV, and then I would leave that TV and maybe have two or three hours to change or get myself together, and I didn't go on until eleven thirty. Well, see, the TV show would go on at eight o'clock, but then my regular show, at a place called the Flame, something like that, I went on at eleven thirty. One show.

ISOARDI

They only had to do one show a night?

BROOKS

One show. At this club, which seated eight hundred people, one show at eleven thirty.

ISOARDI

For an hour, hour and a half, two hours?

BROOKS

I worked about forty-five minutes.

ISOARDI

That's all you had to do?

BROOKS

That's all I had to do was one show. And the compere, as they used to call the emcee, he used to say, "Fasten your seat belts, here she comes." [laughs] And I'd have to walk about-- It was a two-tiered place, as you would say. There was a downstairs they would seat and an upstairs they would seat. But I would go upstairs, because that was where the band and the piano was, and I'd look over the whole room. It was a very beautiful club, just beautiful. Jim Nowles, who owed the club, was somewhat of a gangster. He wanted to think he was. He wanted to think he was. I mean, we were going to pick up somebody at the airport, and somebody was coming towards him, and he was going that way, and he wouldn't back up. They had to back up. But we all knew that about him, so, I mean, we never said anything as far as that was concerned. Except one time I said, "Well, we're not going to get to the airport this way if you're going to sit here." He said, "That's right, Miss Brooks, but--" Then he started blowing his horn, and they backed up. It was a very beautiful place. The women there were extremely beautiful. They were squeaky clean. The men were very much gentlemen. Much. There was no way in the world I could find a better gentleman than I found in Australia. This is Melbourne and Sydney.

ISOARDI

Why did you come back?

BROOKS

I don't know.

ISOARDI

It sounds like you were a queen down there, Hadda.

BROOKS

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That's what it was. I've got news for you, eight hundred people every night. And I couldn't raise ten people here in Los Angeles. And if I did raise ten people, I mean, they talked so loud you thought they were on the show. I mean, I was very disappointed with Los Angeles. But it happened that way. It was great. It was just beautiful.

ISOARDI

When was the last time you were down there?

BROOKS

It's been about-- Let's see, '60. Since 1960.

ISOARDI

That's a while!

BROOKS

Yeah. They wanted me to come back, but I won't go, because I don't want to fly.

ISOARDI

Oh, that's a lot of flying. [laughs]

BROOKS

I've got news for you. Can I tell you? That's fifteen hours. But, I mean, I figured if I could get a car we could race across the ocean. Maybe I'd walk. [laughter] Maybe if I could get there by walking or take a car across, I mean, it would be okay. There's no problem.

ISOARDI

But you don't want to fly at all now?

BROOKS

I'm not crazy about flying that distance. I'm not even crazy about going to New York, that distance. I think if I have to go back to New York, which I was about to three years ago, I would take the train and take my time and get there. Anywhere--Chicago, Detroit, New York, whichever. I don't think I want to fly anymore. I used to not care about it. If I wanted to go across the street I'd take a plane. A long time ago, but you know how young you are and you're foolish. Okay. [laughs] That happened. That absolutely happened.

ISOARDI

So you really found your best audiences were outside the United States.

BROOKS

Yes, the best.

ISOARDI

It's sad in a way. That happens to just too many great performers and great artists in this country.

BROOKS

It's very sad, because, you see, the saying was that in Australia-- The attention was in Australia. They had in their mind, "If she was good enough to bring all the way over here, then we are going to be polite enough to listen to her." "Now, if we don't like you, we won't come back, but if we do like it, we'll support it." But that was their whole thing. "She came all this way, she must be good. Well, let's find out. We're not going to talk. We're going to give her a chance to prove just exactly why she was brought over here. And if we like her--" This is what I'd like to say: "If you like me, come back. If you don't like me, don't bother, because I'm not any more happy with your appearances or your company or your audience than you are with mine. Why are you going to be uncomfortable? And why should you make me uncomfortable? If you don't like me, don't come back. I have nothing more to give than what you've already seen. If you like it, beautiful. No problem."

ISOARDI

Sounds like they liked it.

BROOKS

They loved it for six years. What I didn't like was that they used to farm you out in Australia. Now, they sent me to Sydney twice, see. But they don't cut

down on your salary; they give you the same salary. Like the man across the street is Sydney. He's got a club. He gives the man that I'm working for in Melbourne what the man is giving me, but I am working for the same-- I don't know who makes any money, except they're making money by selling liquor. And I've got news for you, those people drink beer like they drink water. Of course, Sydney was now like San Francisco. It was very out. Sydney used to stay open until three and four o'clock in the morning. Melbourne closed at twelve [o'clock]. It wasn't a licensed place. Melbourne didn't have a license for liquor. You could buy all the sodas and the pineapple juice and orange juice and whatever, but you couldn't buy any liquor. Before I left, now, they had come back into their license. But I had worked five years, and when I came on you could see all the men going out to their cars taking their liquor in their little satchel bags and putting it in the trunk of their cars, because they didn't have a license. There was no service and no drinking during the show. That's another thing I liked about it, because you could get as drunk as you wanted before the show, and, I mean, that didn't help as far as that was concerned, but they never got out of line. They were just beautiful people. Absolutely. And when I came back from Australia I did a picture with Ann Dvorak and George Brent. Or did I tell you about that?

ISOARDI

Yes.

BROOKS

Ann Dvorak and George Brent and-- It was an English production company [Eagle Lion]. Both the directors were brothers, and they were called Jason [Leigh and Will Jason]. I'm really not at the point where I can name the company, which is right across me, but I can't think of it. But I was singing the song for Ann Dvorak, who was in love with-- And then, of course, naturally, I'm doing this song, you know-- The name of the picture is *Out of the Blue*, the name of the song is "Out of the Blue," and I'm singing "Out of the Blue," and she would come up to me, and she would said to me, "Would you please do it again, Hadda?" But she didn't say "Hadda," she said "Hanna." Oh, Leigh Jason was one of the directors' names. I said, "Mr. Jason, if she's saying 'Hanna,' why can't she take out the two n's and make the two d's and say 'Hadda'?" So okay, she took a voiceover. "Hadda, please play it again. Hadda, please play it again." She was very sweet about it, very nice about it. That was one of my first pictures.

ISOARDI

How did you get that job?

BROOKS

Oh, Tommy Dorsey heard me sing "That's My Desire," and he took the record over to Leigh Jason, and Leigh Jason played the record, and Leigh Jason got in

touch with my manager and asked him could I do the show. I wore my own gowns. I went to I. Magnin and got gorgeous gowns and whatnot. It wasn't one of those things where they outfitted you. But it was a very good picture to a certain extent.

ISOARDI

Did it make a difference in terms of your career?

BROOKS

No. Not a difference. I mean, it enhanced it that I was in a picture. Outside of that--

ISOARDI

Now, this wasn't the only-- You were subsequently in some more pictures, as well.

BROOKS

Oh, I had two, three more. I mean, like I just finished a picture. But I mean, I had a picture with Humphrey Bogart.

ISOARDI

Which one was that?

BROOKS

It was called In a Lonely Place. I sang "I Hadn't Anyone Till You." Nicholas Ray was the director, and Gloria Grahame, his wife, ex-wife, was in the picture. And they told her that if she gave him any trouble she'd be out of a picture, because they were in the throes of a divorce. Frank Lovejoy and-- When I went in to talk about the auditioning, Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald had auditioned for it they told me. And then they took me over to the studio, and I sang "I Hadn't Anyone Till You," and Nicholas Ray was trying to say, "Well, can you do it this way?" And I said something like, "I'll try." And "Can you do it this way?" after I tried and whatnot. Humphrey Bogart got a little upset, and he said, "Listen, let her do it as she so pleases. You can't make a Shirley Temple out of a Judy Garland." Humphrey Bogart said that. As he said that, then he sat, and I sang as I so pleased, as I felt the song should be sung, you know. And they kept it in the picture. And then the next picture I made-- Well, we're getting ahead of ourselves, because it's just maybe a month ago I did a picture with Jack Nicholson and--

ISOARDI

So this hasn't come out yet, though?

BROOKS

It hasn't come out yet, no. It's called The Crossing Guard.

ISOARDI

What are you doing in that?

BROOKS

I sang. Oh, yeah. I can't act. I mean, I can. I guess I can if they give me a picture. I mean, I'd hit somebody upside their head if they wanted to give me a bottle. But no, I mean, I just sang. I sang a song that I wrote, "Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere" and they used it in the picture.

ISOARDI

That's the name of the song?

BROOKS

"Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere," that's right. And--what's his name?--Sean Penn directed.

ISOARDI

Really?

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

Gee, I didn't know he was doing directing.

BROOKS

Oh, they said to me before-- Well, when they called me to the office of the casting director, he told me that Sean Penn was a genius. He said they think-- He is a genius. He can on the spur of the moment change his mind and come out with another idea that is perfect. So, I mean, I didn't have any trouble with him. In fact, when I was going to do my scene, and I sang, and I was supposed to follow my record, which I knew I couldn't-- I can never follow my record, because I don't do it the same way twice. I've got news for you, you get off me; I'll sing like I please. But when they had me doing the scene and the record started playing, then I started hitting the chords on that piano, seemingly--thank God it was in the same key as the record, the piano--and I sang out loud to synchronize with my own record. And Sean Penn said, "Okay, cut." And then he cut it again, and I knew I wasn't coming through, you know. So then I really got down to business, and I listened to the record. And I sang it out loud, and I played it out loud, the piano. In other words, they weren't listening to the record. It was like a bar scene. They were listening to me, but Sean Penn was looking at how I was synchronizing with the record, and it came out perfect. And he ran over to the piano, and I said, "Well, how was that?" He just looked and just smiled. "Okay. Now we're going to take your hands," you know, we're-- And I figured, now, if he's going to photograph my hands, then it's all right.

ISOARDI

Yeah. Was Jack Nicholson in that scene?

BROOKS

Yeah, he was inside the other room, because I was singing to the whole room. See, I'm at the bar, and then there's another, a big what you'd call a cocktail room. It was at Nicky Blair's [Restaurant]. You know Nicky Blair's on Sunset

Boulevard? That's where it was filmed. So I was very happy about the whole thing, because I knew that I had gone word for word with that record. But otherwise I couldn't have done it.

ISOARDI

Well, that's great. I'll look forward to seeing that.

BROOKS

Yeah, me too, because I want to see what's happening! [laughs] I want to see what's happening.

ISOARDI

Yeah, really, really. So after Australia, I mean, you came back-- Were you still traveling outside the United States and performing in the sixties?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, I have been invited. I have been invited to England, I have been invited to Australia, and I have been invited to Brazil. I guess they're waiting on me to say yes or no, because I haven't even given either one of them a thought. I don't want to go.

ISOARDI

[laughs] Hard to get.

BROOKS

I don't want to go. No, no, no. The only thing that keeps me-- If it was across the street I'd be over there right now.

ISOARDI

Yeah. Well, you could take a train down to Brazil. It would take you a while, but-- [laughs]

BROOKS

Yeah, I know, but I could really walk across the water too, I guess.

ISOARDI

What about a cruise? Take a ship? You could take a ship down to Rio [de Janeiro].

BROOKS

Oh, really?

ISOARDI

You wouldn't have to fly, then.

BROOKS

Well, I mean-- Now, that's one thing I have never been on.

ISOARDI

You have never taken a cruise?

BROOKS

I have been on every transportation from a bus on up to a plane, and I have never gone on a boat.

ISOARDI

That's what you should do. Write back and tell them, "I'll go if you put me on a cruise ship. I'll come down." [laughs]

BROOKS

I guess so. Then here comes a twenty-foot wave, and that capsizes us. [laughs] I'm not a fatalist, but, I mean, I'm thinking. That sounds like a fatalist, though, doesn't it.

ISOARDI

Yeah, it does. [laughs]

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah. Sorry. [laughs] I probably would be the only one who got on that boat who would be swimming over twenty-foot waves, you know, and I'd take one of my favorite doggone whales or sharks and, "Take me on home, honey." I'd be riding his back if he was swimming. "Come on now, we've got about five hundred more miles to go. You can take me, drop me off by the edge, and beach yourself." [laughs] I don't think I could make it.

ISOARDI

Well, when did this happen that you don't want to get on a plane or travel much?

BROOKS

When did it happen?

ISOARDI

Yeah. Was this pretty recent? When did you stop--?

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, like when I went to New York just about two years ago, two and a half years ago-- I went to Melvin's Pub two and a half years ago, and my manager booked the flight. Four hours. I got on the plane, and he said to me, "Well, what do you want?" I said, "You know what I want." He said, "A double?" I said, "Yes, and keep them coming." But, I mean, I'm not that crazy about-- If I had to go back to New York-- Melvin's Pub wants me to come back to the club when the picture with Jack Nicholson comes out.

ISOARDI

Are you going to go?

BROOKS

Yeah, on a train. On the train. I'm not going to fly; I'll go on the train. In fact, if they want me back there in six days, I will take eight days.

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ISOARDI

Well, Hadda, any thoughts looking back on your career?

BROOKS

You mean good or bad?

ISOARDI

Both. Do you have any general thoughts about it?

BROOKS

Well, general thoughts. I mean, like, as I said sometime before, with all the education that my father [John M. Hopgood] gave me, I didn't have a clue when I got into show business exactly-- With all the education that I had in music, there was no thought of what I was going to do. I didn't have a clue. I was just going to school, studying in and getting out and whatnot. I'm very happy that I came into show business. I'm very happy that I have been recognized, like in the [Rhythm and Blues] Hall of Fame in the category of pioneer. That was a good height of my career.

ISOARDI

You think so? You think that was a very satisfying high point for you?

BROOKS

It was a satisfying height in that from your peers you are recognized, and from a lot of the people that, for as long as you know and for as long as they know you have been in show business, they decided to induct you into the Hall of Fame, to put you in the category of rhythm and blues, to put you in the category of pioneer. In other words, I mean, I have had a lot of write-ups since then saying that there were a lot of people-- That I had come forward and pushed towards a recognition as of today. Because of what I did, because of what they admired me for, because of how much they wanted to go behind my action-- I have had those answers in letters and write-ups to acknowledge those things, you know. So I think that-- I'm trying to figure out, where else can you go? Where else can you go? What else is there to say?

ISOARDI

So with your education, you're glad that your career took the turn it did?

BROOKS

Oh, yes, yes. With my education, I'm glad. Because, I mean, whether my father was happy about my exposure as to what I was going to do in show business, I mean, I'm quite sure that he came to the point, whether he let me know it or not, that he was very proud of just exactly what I did, what he had showed and what he worked for to give me my education. I'm quite sure that he came to the point in his mind, whether he let me know it or not, that he was very satisfied with the way it turned out. And my mother [Goldie Wright Hopgood] always was. I mean, my mother was one person. A man doesn't trust his daughter. A woman will. A mother will. So, I mean, like when they were standing out on the porch, it was my father's idea--twelve o'clock--if I was there five minutes after, they wondered where in the world you've been. Well, hell, trying to get home. And my mother was okay. She was standing out there with my father

and grandfather [Samuel A. Hopgood] to keep them from jumping on me, from asking me questions. So, I mean, the interest was there, the love was there. I didn't even have a clue I was going into show business. I was in high school coming home with my boyfriend. [laughs] I'm very surprised they even let me go out, you know. But it was to the point where I was going on sixteen, seventeen, and my girlfriends and I, we were-- They had to let me go out. There was no way they could keep me in. But they always thought-- I mean, my daddy and granddaddy, "Oh, well, I don't know. Something might happen." And there was no way, no way. Carole Landis, whom I came very much [in contact with] in the picture of *Out of the Blue*, about three days after the picture she committed suicide, and we all had a very, very hard time getting over that. Because she was so much in love with Rex Harrison, and he wouldn't recognize her or give her the time of day, and she just committed suicide. But that was the only sad thing that happened on any other incidents of where I was or the pictures or what I was doing in any of the clubs, you know. Right now, I mean, there are so many people who are coming into death. I've been to so many memorial services. I mean, I never thought I would go to those things. It wasn't that point, and it wasn't that disease at the time. Now it's an impossibility to even think of a lot of people that I know and that I have known who have just gone away, you know. And it's a waste. It's a waste. But there's nothing you can do, I guess. I feel very sad about it, very bad about it. There's life, and then there's something about you taking your life. You know what you're doing. Adamantly I'm saying they know what they're doing, but they have no reason to even think about stopping. I feel very bad about it. Anyway, my sister [Kathryn Hopgood Carter]'s a nurse--altogether different from me. My mother was a practitioner, and my two nephews, one [Kent Carter]'s LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] and one [Darryl Carter]'s a [Los Angeles County] sheriff.

ISOARDI

Everyone pretty much stayed in the family mold except you.

BROOKS

Oh, yeah. I was the black sheep.

ISOARDI

Yeah. I mean, your nephews followed your father.

BROOKS

Yeah, yeah. And my grandfather had the money. [laughs] Oh, my father used to fight and fuss with him all the time. I mean, "Don't give the girls more than I can give them. Because you can do it better than I can, but I don't want them-- I want them looking up to you, but not because of what you can do for them financially." Oh, yeah. I mean, as I said, I've always said I was the black sheep of the family. I mean, I'm the one who got out in the world.

ISOARDI

Yeah, you really had an impact.

BROOKS

Yeah, I'm the one who got out in the world. My nephews are LAPD and sheriff. I mean, they were right here, born right there in that big house that their mother and father [Charles B. Carter] built for them or built for themselves and grew up until they got married right back there and then moved away and bought their own home. And they're still LAPD and sheriff. They never caused their mother any problems. I didn't cause my mother any problems, my father any problems either. I mean, they just thought my environment was going to cause them problems. They just thought that because I wasn't at home. I wasn't under their thumb. They couldn't watch me. When I decided to travel and get out of town or get out of the country, they couldn't watch me. Within their minds, that was their worry. I was the only one who didn't stay home. I was the only one.

ISOARDI

You've had a successful career, and now you're recognized in the Hall of Fame as a pioneer, as a founder.

BROOKS

Yes.

ISOARDI

Is there a down side anywhere? Do you have any regrets about anything?

BROOKS

You mean about my career?

ISOARDI

Yeah.

BROOKS

No, I don't have any regrets about my career, because, I mean, like-- I took some things in certain ways that I knew that possibly may not come, or certain ways that-- I mean, there were a couple of things that I did that I didn't want to do. I mean, before I got my television show [The Hadda Brooks Show] they called me to do fifteen minutes at this radio station. I can't think of the name of the radio station. Oh yeah, the one that did my television show, KCOP. I sang for fifteen minutes to a microphone--no audience, a radio--from eleven [o'clock] to eleven fifteen. They called me once, and some friends of mine talked me into doing it. I said, "I'm singing to a wall." Okay, I did that. And then I think two months later they called me again. I fought, but I went on, and I did it for fifteen minutes, and in another month or so they called me and said, "You've got a television show." I couldn't believe it. "We have you on a television show." Don Feddison. He was so proud when I had upturned Leo Carrillo and Buster Keaton and put them into second rating. They were second and I was first, the first rating. Then here comes [Nat] King Cole. Well, they dropped him because he was kissing all the girls. So I didn't have a variety

show; I had the show by myself. I was talking to my audience from where I was, like in my living room, whether I was their living room or not. I mean, I was thanking them for listening to me. I was thanking them for coming to my house, or thanking them for inviting me. And they were saying, "Oh, we had to get home on Sunday because we knew you were coming on." I enjoyed that. I enjoyed having to go out there every week and let them know what songs I was singing so they could get clearance. It was fun. They've still got my piano up underneath the stage.

ISOARDI

No kidding.

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

Do you have any tapes of your performances on that TV show?

BROOKS

Can't find it.

ISOARDI

None? They don't exist?

BROOKS

Can't find it. Alan [L. Eichler], my manager, has been-- Because, I mean, it was playing Sunday here and Tuesday in San Francisco. Can't find it. Not one.

ISOARDI

What do you mean it was playing?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, they showed it.

ISOARDI

Oh, you mean they broadcast your--?

BROOKS

They broadcast my show in San Francisco on Tuesday.

ISOARDI

Oh, as well. And neither city has any copies anywhere?

BROOKS

Can't find them.

ISOARDI

Oh, too bad.

BROOKS

Alan has even gone to Don Feddison's office and his daughter's. I don't know why, I don't know why, because I did a lot of shows.

ISOARDI

Maybe back then they just weren't keeping the tape?

BROOKS

Well, maybe at that particular-- Maybe they weren't taping it.
ISOARDI

Because you were being shown live.

BROOKS

Well, they had to tape it if they sent it to San Francisco. How were they going to--? It wasn't remote.

ISOARDI

Oh, that's right.

BROOKS

I mean, if it was going from here to, say, Pasadena, then they had to have a tape to send it to Pasadena for it to play. And that's just what they were doing, sending the tape to San Francisco on Tuesday. It was playing--

ISOARDI

It was shown there Tuesday night.

BROOKS

Yeah.

ISOARDI

Oh, there had to be--

BROOKS

KSO. There had to be a tape. They can't find it.

ISOARDI

You would think at least one--

BROOKS

I'm going to ask them for my piano. [laughs]

ISOARDI

That would be grand, wouldn't it?

BROOKS

Yes. Yes. When I was at Perino's-- When Alan first started with me he booked me in Perino's.

ISOARDI

Over on Wilshire Boulevard?

BROOKS

Yeah. He booked me in Perino's, and then I was doing a television show at the same channel where I had done my television show.

ISOARDI

KCOP?

BROOKS

Yeah. It was an interview, you know. And one of the crewmen was still on that stage and knew me when--

ISOARDI

The same one?

BROOKS

One of them that knew me when I was doing my television show.

ISOARDI

From--what?--thirty years earlier?

BROOKS

I guess so.

ISOARDI

Amazing.

BROOKS

He came by, and he shook my hand. He said, "I was one of your crewmen who did your show." And he said, "I want to show you something. We've still got the piano you played on." I said, "Well, where is it?" He said, "It's underneath the stage."

ISOARDI

So they're not even using it.

BROOKS

Uh-uh. They opened up the doors and showed me the piano. I said, "I'm going out there and just beg like I'm a homeless little beer drinker." [laughs] I'm going to ask them, "Can I have that piano?"

ISOARDI

Oh, they should give it to you.

BROOKS

Well, it's still there; it's not being used. I'm going--

ISOARDI

Plus, you gave them a number-one show for half a year.

BROOKS

That's right.

ISOARDI

You've earned it.

BROOKS

Buster Keaton was out, and Leo Carrillo was out, and Don Feddison made it. He was so happy about me taking over the first spot. But I can't find Don Feddison. Don Feddison's daughter is doing something with his office. I don't know whether Don Feddison-- I don't think she told, because Alan would have told me. She didn't say that Don Feddison was dead, but she did say that she was handling the office of Don Feddison.

ISOARDI

Maybe he's incapacitated.

BROOKS

Well, I mean, some people can't live thirty years and continue on, you know. I don't know. I don't know.

ISOARDI

Well, do you have any general thoughts, Hadda? Anything else you'd like to say or get down before we--?

BROOKS

Well, what I may say just could not have any impact on what this might carry on with. I'm very happy about it, if that's what you want. I'm very happy about-- But I don't think that-- I've been asked to do an autobiography, but, I mean, I was trying to say-- Oh, I forgot to tell you I had a private audience with the pope.

ISOARDI

Private? One on one?

BROOKS

Pope Pius XII. Abe Saperstein arranged that when I was in Rome.

ISOARDI

I didn't know Abe Saperstein was that powerful.

BROOKS

Oh.

ISOARDI

[laughs] He was.

BROOKS

Oh, he was powerful, all right. He was very powerful. I mean, the only country he didn't take us into was South Africa, because he knew that that was not the place to take his boys in. The girls would go crazy, everybody else would have a fit, and none of us may have come out alive. I mean, he's just-- "I'm sorry, you don't see the boys. If you do you see them on television if you've got any."

ISOARDI

Why did you want to meet the pope? Did you ask him if you could meet the pope?

BROOKS

Yes.

ISOARDI

Why did you want to meet him?

BROOKS

Well, I mean, that was the highlight of Rome--I mean, that and the Colosseum.

ISOARDI

How long did you talk with him? Did you chat with him?

BROOKS

I chatted with him for about thirty minutes, and he allowed me to kiss his hand. I allowed him to bless me. He talked to me, and he wanted to know what types of songs I sang, and he wanted to know how long I'd been with the Harlem Globetrotters, how long I had been in show business, and where was I going

from there, and how did I like Rome, and-- Just like somebody sitting down and having tea, but we were standing up. [laughs] Pope Pius XII. I had pictures of him with me talking to him. I think my sister's got them, but I don't know where she has them. But, as I said, my life has been quite fulfilled. I like how it has turned out. I like exactly what's happened, and then to the height of what I accomplished with the inducting into the Rhythm and Blues Hall of Fame.

ISOARDI

Also you're so admired by so many women, because you really did it by yourself, and you did it on your own, and you made it.

BROOKS

Yes. Yes. Yes. I mean, I never thought of it that way, but that's true. That's the way it goes.

ISOARDI

Because you were on your own from the first day of your professional career.

BROOKS

From the first day of my career. I never had anybody to carry me across the stage. I walked out, opened my mouth, and put my heart in it. I sang. I played the piano. I hit the boogie. In fact, I went into Chicago with about four or five men--my managers and my distributors and whatever and whatnot--and the deejay said, "Well, where's Hadda Brooks?" And my manager said at that particular time, "Well, there she is." He said, "She?" He said, "Her hand is so heavy I thought it was a he. Her left hand was so heavy that I thought it was a he." I said, "No, it's me." There are a lot of things that can be little innuendos, you know, that could be said and whatnot. I am now very happy that the height of what I think is the achievement has been achieved. And I'm hoping everybody might come to the point where they might appreciate some of the things that I have given. Whatever.

ISOARDI

The rest of us are richer for it.

BROOKS

I hope some things can be achieved or some things can be thought of, looked at, listened to, learned from. And if it's going to go down in history, then let it go down in history, but, I mean, give me the thought of something that somebody else did, even though I'm a beginner. If they're great enough to go behind, let's go behind--not completely, but take the most beautiful thoughts that this person can put out and sort of combine them with your thoughts and put them out yourself. And then maybe there's some achievement that can go on. Really. Whatever.

ISOARDI

Hadda, thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

BROOKS

You're very welcome. I hope you've got everything you want.
ISOARDI

I hope you've said everything you want.
BROOKS

[laughs] I don't know. [laughs] I don't know.

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