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BEYOND CENTRAL

Bobby L. Bradford

Interviewed by Steven L. Isoardi

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

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CONTENTS

VOLUME I

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Biographical Summary | viii |
|----------------------------|------|

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Interview History | xi |
|-------------------------|----|

| | |
|---|---|
| TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (April 15, 2000) | 1 |
|---|---|

Family background and childhood in Cleveland, Mississippi—House in the African American neighborhood in Cleveland—Family members who played music—The church as the center of cultural and social life in the community—African Americans' infrequent interaction with whites on the other side of town—Mother, Bernice Griffin-Bradford's education in a racially mixed school in Mississippi—First gleanings of racism while growing up—School—Mother remarries after father, Webb E. Bradford Jr., leaves to work in Tulsa—Piano lessons—Radio and movie entertainment—Bradford experiences racism at a restaurant in Arizona while driving with his family out to California.

| | |
|---|----|
| TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (April 15, 2000) | 32 |
|---|----|

Bradford's present day students' naivete about racial inequality both past and present—Bradford's stepfather, Augustus Walker, takes over the operation of a hotel in South Central Los Angeles—The Latino neighborhood of Bishop Heights in which the Bradfords lived—Latino culture with which Bradford was surrounded while in L.A.—Stepfather moves the family to Detroit—Reasons Bradford loved Detroit—Bradford and his brother, Webb Eugene Bradford III, relocated to East Dallas, Texas, to live with their father—Schools in Dallas—Bradford resumes piano lessons—Trades with a local shoe repairman for his first cornet—Ease with which Bradford first took to the instrument—Prominence of the cornet over the trumpet in the late forties—Pride in appearance of African American students at the time.

| | |
|--|----|
| TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (April 15, 2000) | 65 |
|--|----|

Father approves of Bradford's aspirations as a cornetist—Bradford adjusts his schedule to fit in an advanced band class in high

school—The band teacher, James Miller—Bradford's rapid progress on his horn—Notable musicians in Miller's band—Bradford plays engagements with Buster Smith—Notable jazz musicians in the Dallas area at the time—Bradford buys his first trumpet as a high school senior—Saxophonists who influenced Bradford at the time—Methods young musicians used to learn to play jazz.

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (May 2, 2000) 86

More on Bradford buying his first trumpet—Effect equipment has on a horn player's sound—Marching band music played by Bradford's high school band—Schoolmates of Bradford's who were aspiring beboppers—Relative lack of training the more advanced players received—Classmate Cedar Walton—Engagements Bradford and his cohorts played in white clubs—Bands in the Dallas area that worked regularly—Bradford is pushed academically toward a career in medicine—His passion for bebop music—As a youngster in Cleveland, Mississippi, Bradford sees Duke Ellington in the short film *Perfume Suite*—Bradford is offered a music scholarship to Sam Houston College—Circumstances lead to Bradford's participation in the college's big band—Charts the band played.

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (May 2, 2000) 121

More on charts the band played—African Americans in Texas had to leave the state to obtain advanced degrees—Lack of women in jazz bands at the time—Reasons Bradford decided to leave college and come to Los Angeles—The civil rights climate in Texas during the early fifties—Spectre of the draft at the time of the Korean War—Bradford moves in with his mother and stepfather in L.A.—The jazz scene in L.A. in the early fifties—Bradford reencounters fellow Texan Ornette Coleman in Los Angeles—Bradford's first hearing of Coleman while in Texas—Coleman's unique musical and personal style—Bradford begins playing with Coleman—Coleman's lack of formal musical training—Bradford and Coleman play engagements and jam sessions around Los Angeles—Clifford Brown—Reaction to Coleman.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (May 2, 2000) 158

More on reaction to Coleman—Young musicians who used to play at

local jam sessions—Coleman marries and moves into his own apartment—Saxophonist George Newman—Saxophonist Earl Anderza—Bradford encounters Anderza's son many years after his birth—Frank Morgan—Bradford takes trumpet lessons with John Anderson—More about Anderza.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side One (May 9, 2000) 179

Watts in the early fifties—Police harassment Bradford experienced in Los Angeles while traveling to an engagement with Ornette Coleman—Bradford meets Ed Blackwell—Coleman's musical concept—Bradford begins composing while in the military—Bradford meets Don Cherry when Cherry is still in high school—Cherry's interest in Coleman's music—How Coleman's musical concept was at variance with that of bebop—Types of engagements Bradford played in L.A. during the early fifties—Sees Charlie Parker at the Five Four Ballroom.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side Two (May 9, 2000) 212

Bradford receives musical guidance from Wardell Gray—White jazz musicians Bradford interacted with—Hears Bud Powell at the Haig—Other musicians present on the scene in the fifties—Tours with King Perry—Bradford enlists in the air force and is stationed at Parks Air Force Base near San Francisco—Practices clandestinely while stationed at Parks—Is sent to various air bases in Texas, where he plays in the air force band—Marries Melba Joyce while stationed in Texas—Duties as a member of the air force band—After being discharged, Bradford moves his family to Austin, Texas, where he attends the University of Texas on the GI Bill—In 1959 Coleman asks Bradford to participate in his *Free Jazz* recording project—Reasons Bradford could not participate—Trouble with the marriage—In 1961 Coleman invites Bradford to come to New York to replace Don Cherry in his new band—How Charles Moffett became the drummer in the band.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side One (May 16, 2000) 244

The new music Bradford was playing with Coleman's new quartet—Rehearsing the music—The unique demands of Coleman's music—Bradford's personal contribution to Coleman's music—How playing Coleman's music affected Bradford's bebop

playing—Bradford's family joins him in New York City—Bradford works day jobs to support his family while Coleman's band rehearses—Travels to Cincinnati for a concert of Coleman's *Free Jazz* material which the band is forced to abandon before the concert—Coleman begins boycotting record companies and clubs putting his band out of work—John Coltrane sits in with Coleman's band—Bassist David Izenzon replaces Jimmy Garrison in Coleman's quartet—Bradford moves back to Texas in 1962 to finish college and begins teaching high school band in Crockett, Texas—Important music Bradford experienced while in New York—Bradford's composing—Bradford and his family move back to Los Angeles where he begins searching for a job—Reasons he couldn't get a teaching position in Los Angeles city schools—Experiences racism when applying for an insurance company job in the San Fernando Valley.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side Two (May 16, 2000) 277

Bradford becomes a workman's compensation adjustor and moves his family to Pomona—Teaches elementary school in La Puente—Woodwind player John Carter calls Bradford about playing music together—Carter and Bradford form the New Art Jazz Quartet—The renaissance of African American culture in Watts during the late sixties—Carter's compositions become the focus of the quartet—The quartet's first two recordings for Revelation Records—Bob Thiele records Carter and Bradford's next two albums for his Flying Dutchman label—Horace Tapscott—Stanley Crouch—Bradford travels to England in the early seventies, creating an explosion of compositional output—Conditions in Los Angeles which led to the Watts riots in 1965—Political and religious pressures Carter and Bradford endured during the late sixties—Reasons Bradford did not join the Nation of Islam.

CONTENTS

VOLUME II

TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side One (May 28, 2000) 309

Carter and Bradford's moments of collaboration with Tapscott—Carter and Bradford's first L.A. area appearance in the late sixties—Stanley Crouch's Black Music Infinity convenes in Claremont, California, in the early seventies—The deficiency of venues for more adventurous jazz in Los Angeles during the seventies—Carter opens Rudolph's Fine Arts Center and works there with his own trio—Differences between Bradford's and Carter's approaches to their music—How the civil rights and black pride movements changed Bradford's view of himself, his identity, and his view of his own culture and its place in modern America—Bradford's education about black history—African American role models and their impact on Bradford.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side Two (May 28, 2000) 338

Bradford and Carter's efforts to get Bob Thiele to help in promoting their music—The inherent difficulties in getting adequate recording deals playing challenging jazz music—Bradford travels to England in the early seventies and tours Europe with a quartet—Recordings which eventuated from the trip—Bradford begins teaching at California State University, Dominguez Hills and moves to Altadena—The demise of Bradford's marriage—How Bradford got his positions teaching jazz history and jazz ensemble at Pasadena City College and at Pomona College—Carter decides to concentrate on the clarinet and begins pursuing a different musical direction—The film *John Carter and Bobby Bradford: The New Music*—Bradford's view of the history of jazz.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side One (May 28, 2000) 368

Bradford's teaching method—Finding the yardstick by which to measure a jazz performance—Having a jazz musician as a teacher versus having an accomplished technician—The lack of inherent racial indignation present in jazz music—The small number of African American students in Bradford's classes—Jazz as it is presently taught

academically versus how it was learned initially—The relative unimportance of polished technique in jazz musicianship—Jazz as a vehicle for the expression of one's individuality.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side One (June 5, 2000) 384

More on Carter's concerts at Rudolph's—Bradford opens his own concert space in Pasadena, the Little Big Horn—Fate of the Little Big Horn—Musicians Bradford worked with during the mid-seventies—Audiences at the Little Big Horn—Difficulty Bradford and Carter had finding venues for their music—Bradford records the album *Science Fiction* with Ornette Coleman in 1971—Coleman's orchestral music—Reaction of orchestral musicians to Coleman and his music—Dewey Redman—Mark Dresser—Drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side Two (June 5, 2000) 414

Jazz musicians in London organize a benefit concert to help pay for Blackwell's kidney transplant—Musicians' feelings about playing with Blackwell—Blackwell's work on Bradford's *Death of a Sideman* album—Bradford's work with the West Coast version of Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra in the early eighties—His work as a sideman with David Murray and others—Bradford and Carter's work as a duo—Reaction to a performance by the duo from the Art Ensemble of Chicago—Bradford's composing during the eighties—Bradford marries Lisa Bradford in 1980 with whom he has a son, Benjamin Bradford—Changes in African American cultural and political consciousness in the eighties—Musicians from New York's "loft jazz" explosion of the mid-seventies—Speculation as to the direction some of jazz music's innovators may have taken had they lived longer.

TAPE NUMBER: X, Side One (June 5, 2000) 445

Avant-garde jazz musicians who emerged in the Los Angeles area during the late seventies—Bradford's musical involvement in theater productions—Musicians who emerged from Horace Tapscott's bands.

TAPE NUMBER: XI, Side One (June 13, 2000) 454

Carter takes up the soprano saxophone during the seventies—Carter's

series of five albums for octet, "Roots and Folklore: Episodes in the Development of American Folk Music"—Carter's inspiration for the *Castles of Ghana* album—Rare concerts undertaken by the octet—Bradford and Carter's difficulty in convincing producers and promoters to allow the use of their regular West Coast musicians—Bradford, Carter, and Coleman as composers—Projects Bradford would like to do—His freedom to do whatever music he wants—The Together Again band with Bradford, Carter, Tapscott, and others—Carter's Wind College.

TAPE NUMBER: XI, Side Two (June 13, 2000) 483

Carter's ability to draw on European music techniques to further his own musical ideas—The inspiration behind Bradford's *Death of a Sideman* album—Bradford's unrealized audition for Thelonious Monk—The considerable dedication required to sustain a life playing uncompromising music—Bradford's relationship with the Los Angeles locals at the American Federation of Musicians—The amalgamation of the Local 767 and Local 47—Improvised music in Los Angeles and venues in which it is currently presented—Jazz radio in Los Angeles—The increase in interest in Latin jazz in Los Angeles and its impact on the jazz community—The fusion of jazz with the music of different world cultures.

TAPE NUMBER: XII, Side One (June 13, 2000) 512

Recent recordings and project aspirations of Bradford's—Bradford's and Cherry's trumpet styles—Misconceptions about West Coast jazz—West Coast saxophonists who were influenced by both Lester Young and Charlie Parker—Bradford's lack of regrets.

Index 524

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: July 19, 1934, Cleveland, Mississippi.

Education: Sam Houston College, Austin, Texas, 1952-53; B.A., music education, Huston-Tillotson College, Austin, Texas, 1963.

Spouse: Melba Joyce Moore, married 1957, divorced 1970, three children; Lisa Tero Bradford, married 1979, one son.

Military Service: United States Air Force (1954-58).

CAREER HISTORY:

Cornetist/trumpet player, bandleader (Bobby Bradford Mo'tet), composer, 1950s-present.

Co-leader, John Carter-Bobby Bradford Quartet (formerly the New Art Jazz Ensemble), 1968-72.

Played cornet and/or trumpet as a sideman with:

Walter Benton

John Carter

James Clay

Ornette Coleman

Vinny Golia

Charlie Haden

John Hardee

David Murray

David “Fathead” Newman

King Perry

John Rapson

Dewey Redman

Buster Smith

John Stevens, Spontaneous Music Ensemble

Horace Tapscott

United States Air Force Band

Leo Wright

Teacher, sixth grade, Bassett Elementary School, La Puente, California, 1966-69.

Teacher, history of jazz, jazz ensemble, California State University, Dominguez Hills, 1969-73.

Teacher, jazz ensemble, improvisation, black music history, Pasadena City College, 1974-present.

Teacher, jazz history, jazz ensemble, Pomona College, 1974-present.

SELECTED RECORDINGS:

As a leader:

Love’s Dream (Emanem)

Bobby Bradford with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (Freedom)

Lost in L.A. (Soul Note)

One Night Stand (Soul Note)

As co-leader with John Carter:

Seeking (Revelation), under the name the New Art Jazz Ensemble
West Coast Hot (Novus)

Secrets (Revelation)
Flight for Four (Flying Dutchman)
Self-Determination Music (Flying Dutchman)
Comin' On (Hat Hut)

In duo with John Carter:

Tandem 1 (Emanem)
Tandem 2 (Emanem)
The New Music (video)

As a sideman:

With John Carter:
Variations (Moers Music)
Dauwhe (Black Saint)
Castles of Ghana (Gramavision)
Dance of the Love Ghosts (Gramavision)
Fields (Gramavision)
Shadows on a Wall (Gramavision)

With Ornette Coleman:
Science Fiction (Columbia)
Broken Shadows (Columbia)

With Vinny Golia:
Compositions for Large Ensemble (Nine Winds)
Lineage (Nine Winds)

With David Murray:
Murray's Steps (Black Saint)
Death of a Sideman (Black Saint)

With John Rapson:
Dances & Orations (Music & Arts)

With John Stevens and Johnny Dyani:
Detail Plus (Impetus)
Dance of the Soul (Impetus)

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Steven L. Isoardi, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., M.A., Government, University of San Francisco; M.A., Ph.D., Political Science, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Bradford's home, Altadena, California.

Dates, length of sessions: April 15, 2000 (110 minutes); May 2, 2000 (112); May 9, 2000 (89); May 16, 2000 (89); May 28, 2000 (111); June 5, 2000 (101); June 13, 2000 (103).

Total number of recorded hours: 11.9

Persons present during interview: Bradford and Isoardi.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is part of the "Beyond Central Avenue" series, which extends the UCLA Oral History Program's "Central Avenue Sounds" series and preserves the spoken memories of musicians who were active in the jazz music scene in Los Angeles from the 1950s to the 1970s. The series includes a broad range of interviewees, some of whom are well known and others who may be less known, who were chosen to document their specific point of view, contribution, role, or experience. Particular areas of focus include the African American musicians' community and the development and emergence of the so-called jazz avant-garde in Los Angeles.

In preparing for the interview, Isoardi consulted jazz histories, autobiographies, oral histories, and relevant periodicals, listened to recordings, and viewed personal archival materials when made available.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Bradford's youth in Mississippi, Los Angeles, and Detroit, his early musical development in East Dallas, Texas, continuing through his education and musical career in Los Angeles and New York, and concluding with his establishment as one of the most important modern jazz artists and educators in Southern California. Major topics

discussed include notable jazz musicians from Texas and Los Angeles during the forties and fifties, the music of Ornette Coleman, the avant-garde jazz scene in Los Angeles, Bradford's musical partnership with John Carter, and the teaching of jazz in academia.

EDITING:

Victoria Simmons, editorial assistant, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Bradford reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Alex Cline, editor, prepared the table of contents. Simmons assembled the biographical summary and interview history. Gail Ostergren, editor, compiled the index.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 15, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bob, let's begin I guess with your family background.

BRADFORD: Coming to California, maybe, for the first time?

ISOARDI: Earlier than that.

BRADFORD: Earlier than that, okay.

ISOARDI: Where you were born, who your family were, how far you can trace your family back— [mutual laughter]

BRADFORD: Oh, this will be fun. Well, I was born in Cleveland, Mississippi. This is the heart of the [Mississippi River] Delta.

ISOARDI: When was that?

BRADFORD: July 19, nineteen "quintee fra." That was my thing at school. I'd say "quintee fra," the kids would go "Pardon?" [mutual laughter] But 1934. I have an older brother who's deceased now, died a couple of years of ago—his name was [Webb] Eugene [Bradford III]—who was an illustrator and a commercial artist, in fact worked for CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System]—

ISOARDI: Out here?

BRADFORD: Yeah, here in L.A. the last ten, fifteen, twenty years of his life.

My mother's name was Bernice; she's now deceased. My father's name was Webb Eugene Bradford [Jr.]. He was from the area around Woodville, Mississippi,

and my mother was from the area Elvis Presley was from, around Tupelo [Mississippi].

ISOARDI: What was her maiden name?

BRADFORD: My mother's maiden name was Griffin. I'm trying to remember now how they got to Cleveland. It seems to me my mother—

ISOARDI: Do you remember further back in the family? Grandfathers?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'm going to get to that in a minute.

On my father's side the family were all Baptist preachers. My father's father, who was the original Webb Eugene— My father was Webb Eugene Jr., and my brother named his kid that. So my grandfather was the original Webb Eugene Bradford, a Baptist preacher, quite famous in Mississippi for being a big super-orator. He had two brothers who were also preachers. Let's see now. The oldest of the Bradford boys—this is my father's side of the family, now— his name was Bishop Johnson Bradford. Here's a guy who hitchhiked from Mississippi when he got out of high school back to someplace in Ohio and got some kind of gigolo arrangement with some woman and went to school in Ohio and became a pharmacist. He came back to Texas rather than going back to Mississippi and was one of the first black pharmacists in Dallas, Texas.

ISOARDI: Do you know where he went to school? He must have graduated from some—

BRADFORD: Yeah, he graduated from some school in Ohio. I don't know what.

ISOARDI: Wilberforce [University], maybe?

BRADFORD: Maybe, maybe. I'm not so sure. He never mentioned Wilberforce. But I know he graduated from an accredited school. But he also gigoloed with some woman to get himself through school, man. I remember that about him. His name was Bishop [Johnson] Bradford. He has a son now, my first cousin, who's a preacher in Dallas, Texas.

ISOARDI: Family tradition.

BRADFORD: Yeah, a big preacher in Dallas now.

ISOARDI: What's his name?

BRADFORD: His name is Bishop [Johnson Bradford] Jr. He's the one who carried on this tradition of the song-sermon style.

Now, my father had a younger brother whose name was Robert Delane Bradford, a Baptist preacher, also, in Oklahoma—Tulsa and Guthrie and Chickasha, Oklahoma.

I don't know an awful lot about my mother's side of the family. There's always a lot of secretive stuff about my mother's side of the family, because somewhere not too far back in my mother's side of the family—I don't have a photo here to show you, but my mother was very fair. It's clear that only maybe one generation or two back there's a white father someplace, and, you know, in the South that's sort of hush-hush—

ISOARDI: But common.

BRADFORD: Yeah, they just took it for granted. Nobody even asked any questions. If you were really fair skinned we knew there was a white father back there someplace—as opposed to, you know, a black father with a white woman. You know what I mean. In Mississippi—

ISOARDI: Rare.

BRADFORD: Yeah. So nobody questioned it. Except that with parents it remained undiscussed. As a kid you couldn't say, "Well, who is the white guy there a couple of generations back?" That was a question you didn't ask—and didn't care to ask, you know?

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: My mother's mother worked for this family in Cleveland that owned a huge lumberyard, a bunch of wealthy people. She was sort of their cook and housekeeper and all. This is my grandmother, now, on the maternal side. Her name was Azalee Hemphill originally. Yeah, then she remarried a Griffin. That's how my mother kept the Griffin name. Now, she died in an accident where— You know how they had these potbellied stoves in the middle of the room? She was adding what she thought was kerosene to the fire to get it started. Somehow there was gasoline in there too, and it blew up all over her and burned her severely, and she died not long after that.

Now, the house that I remember spending most of my life in was a great big frame house in Cleveland, Mississippi, on Ruby Street.

ISOARDI: How did your mother end up in Mississippi?

BRADFORD: She was born in Mississippi, my mother. All these people are from Mississippi, now.

I don't know how I got off the track there, but—I'm talking about my grandmother now—she worked for this family in Cleveland that was a rich white family. That was sort of her livelihood, because I remember back when I was a kid—I don't remember a grandfather figure. The guy that she was originally married to worked on the trains; I never saw him. And then the other guy, Griffin—In other words, I never physically saw the grandfathers on my mother's side. She was apparently married twice. One guy, I repeat, was a railroad worker, as a lot of black men were, you know, doing—They were Pullman porters and chefs and that kind of work. There was almost a monopoly for blacks on the trains in those days. He was gone all the time. And then she remarried when he died. But I don't remember seeing these guys.

This is all Mississippi people, now, that part of Mississippi that's near Louisiana—Woodville, that's where my father's people came from. Now, Tupelo is more central, I think, thinking about the map. That's Elvis Presley's part of Mississippi; that's where my mother was born. Actually, the town that my mother was born in is called Okalona. Then they moved to Tupelo, and then I don't know how they got to Cleveland. I don't have any idea how they made their way to Cleveland, but they finally did.

We lived in this big frame house—huge house, twice the size of the one I live in now. [mutual laughter] And we also owned the house next door, which was a little shotgun house. I don't know if you know that expression.

ISOARDI: It's sort of when you've got a central hallway that goes all the way to the back of it?

BRADFORD: Yeah, well, that's it. You've got three rooms, right? And you can open the front door and look straight through, out the back door. There's a front room, a middle room, which is usually like the bedroom with a front to it, and the back room was the kitchen. But I suppose the "shotgun" expression meant you could break it down like a shotgun and look straight through the bore; I think that's what that meant. And we owned that house next door.

I think part of how we acquired that, or my mother's mother acquired that, was she worked for this family that did building and construction, and they owned this huge lumberyard in Cleveland, Mississippi. I think their name was Nile. I remember my mother saying to her mother, saying she works for a Mrs. Nile. Those were people who owned the big lumber thing there in the town. So somehow those houses belonged to my maternal grandmother, and when my father married my mother, he sort of came into the picture to my mother who had this dowry, if you will, a big house and a house next to it. Of course, it meant nothing, you know, really, in terms of dollars and cents. They were just little frame houses in the black community. But on the real side, you owned a couple of houses. All the years I was a little kid, my mother and

father rented this house next door to another black family.

At any rate, my brother and I, you know, we grew up playing in the backyard. We had big chinaberry trees in the front and a garage in the back. There was no car, but there was a garage. Somebody must have had a car way back there.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Do you remember what kind it was?

BRADFORD: No, I don't. I just knew there was a garage, though. It was there originally for some car, but I never remember seeing one. Mom said that my father sold insurance and sold— Like a guy comes by with a little case with suit samples, and he measures you and sends it off. He did a lot of that.

ISOARDI: So he was a talker.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was. But my father in later years became a preacher, too. After about age forty-five or so he became [one], so all three of the Bradford sons became ministers. But early on he's the one with the talent in music. He's the one who loved music and literature and poetry, you know, my father.

ISOARDI: He played—?

BRADFORD: He played the clarinet and the piano, and he sang. Now the older brother—the one who became a pharmacist, you know—he couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. And neither could the young one. My father was the middle boy. His nickname was Bud, by the way. I could hear them talking, the three, when they were together, and calling my father Bud.

Anyway, this big house that we lived in, now, it wasn't like the shotgun house.

It had a hallway down the middle, but it had these big rooms on either side. There was a big living room on the right in the front where this potbellied stove was, where actually my mother's mother was accidentally burned.

ISOARDI: Single story? You didn't have an upper story?

BRADFORD: No, it didn't have an upper story. But it was up off the ground, as the houses were in that area. All the houses, you could—almost all of them—crawl up under and play.

ISOARDI: Because of flooding or—?

BRADFORD: Yeah, sometimes. This was an area where there was flooding during the rainy seasons. Almost all the houses were up off the ground on either those stone sort of cone-shaped brick things or just on those wooden stilts. In fact, on the hot days in the summer we'd play under there.

ISOARDI: It was cool.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it was cool, and it was soft dirt, and if we had little toy trucks, you know, toy cars, we'd play under the house. That's also where we would hide sometimes if we were trying to get away from some chore we didn't want to do or [if we] didn't want to go on a long errand. I could hear my mother start calling us, and we'd be hiding under the house—this is me and my older brother. We sometimes during the— This is a cotton area, this part of Mississippi.

ISOARDI: So most of the community there were working in the cotton fields?

BRADFORD: No, not all, now. There's a dozen men in there who worked on the

trains, right?

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right. Yeah.

BRADFORD: Now, it's a pretty good sized little town. Now, when I say "little"— It was a little town. I couldn't even guess at the population now, but a little town back then. Separate black section. Then if you leave that section you're going toward the town part of it, right? Then the white population residential area begins on the other side of the town, and the railroad tracks separate everything, as it did most of those little towns.

ISOARDI: About how many people were in the black section of town?

BRADFORD: God, that's a hard question to answer, because blacks had two sections. We were in one part, where I lived, and then farther away, near where the school was, there was another little population. There couldn't have been more than—oh, man—two or three thousand black people. That's a wild guess, now.

But the school that we went to was pretty good sized, because it was a school that accommodated the farm kids all around who came in on buses, you see, or came in however the best they could. So the school was called the Cleveland Colored Consolidated School, which meant that when we walked to school there were kids there who came from the farms that were ten, fifteen miles away. And the school accommodated all the kids that were in the area, so the school was huge. I'm sure there must have been fifteen hundred kids in the school.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

BRADFORD: But they were from everywhere, all around.

ISOARDI: What grades?

BRADFORD: What grades? All the way from first grade to twelve, all in one building, one campus.

ISOARDI: You mentioned your dad played music. Did he play professionally at all?

BRADFORD: No.

ISOARDI: Or was it just socially at—?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he just— He noodled on the clarinet around the house, and he played the piano. He played a little bit in church on the piano, and he sang in the choir. But he just— He was sort of self-taught on the clarinet. But he actually— Like the older brother, all these guys went to college. He didn't graduate, though, but when he got out of high school he went to Jackson college, which is still a black school in Jackson, Mississippi.

ISOARDI: Jackson State [University]?

BRADFORD: Yeah. My father went there for a year or two when he first got out of high school.

Strange, but the Bradford family— My grandmother on my father's side, my father's mother, whose name was Henrietta Isabella [Bradford], she was a teacher. Now, I don't think she spent but a couple of years in college, but whatever that took, she taught in the public schools when she was a young woman. Now, she played the organ and sang—beautiful voice. And they had a sister, the three brothers, who died

when she was about eighteen or nineteen; I never could figure out from what. But as the story goes, she had this unbelievable soprano voice. So that's the side of the family where the music genes were, my father's side. I never saw her; I've just seen photographs of her. There are no professional musicians in the group, but there seems to be a lot of music talent on my father's side.

ISOARDI: Yeah, definitely.

You're obviously going to church at least once a week, and probably more often?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. You go to church every Sunday, and during the week, depending on what age group you were in, you went to church to sing in the youth choir. And then, as you got to a point where prayer meetings got important, you had a Tuesday or Thursday night youth prayer group. Then on Sunday, in the late afternoon, after the morning Sunday school at about nine [o'clock] and then the midday service from about eleven [o'clock] to one [o'clock], you had at about five thirty in the late afternoon, early evening, what they called the BYPU, Baptist Young People's, like, sort of training union, where they—

ISOARDI: They got you all day.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Of course they had you all day on Sunday. But that was the center of social life, too, the church. Everything happened through the church. There was no other outlet. The Boy Scouts [of America] met at the church. If you had any kind of any problems in the community, whatever it was, the preacher was involved.

Everything revolved around the church.

However, in Cleveland, as I remember now, there were about four or five black churches, all with small congregations—reasonably small. But the sizes were to accommodate the size of the church. There was one church there that Aretha Franklin's father belonged to.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. It's called Peter's Rock. And that's where he went. My mother knew him.

ISOARDI: What were the different denominations? They weren't all Baptist?

BRADFORD: Yeah, these were all Baptist. All Baptist, except there was one church— No, I take that back. There was a Methodist church. There was one Methodist and there was one Sanctified. Now, Sanctified is still— How can I say this? It's pretty much like Baptist except that they are less stringent about having music in the church, playing saxophones and drums and all. And their music is more— How can I say it? When we say Sanctified church, people get up and they really—

ISOARDI: Cut loose.

BRADFORD: They cut loose, right. The Baptist church that I went to, it was gospel music, but they didn't cut loose quite as much as this church.

Now, there was a Methodist church right across the street from my house—this house that I'm talking about that I grew up in—a big brick Methodist church that had this guy who wore the black coat and the white collar. And it was in poor repair, a

brick church, and not many people in the community went. It was a very small congregation but a big brick church, run down.

ISOARDI: So it probably went back to the middle of the nineteenth century or something.

BRADFORD: I wouldn't be surprised. I had no idea about the history of this church, but the preacher, he lived next door. That's the first time I had ever heard, I think, the word "parsonage." In fact, they had this croquet [ground] set up on the back lawn of this church. But on Sunday morning, when we were on our way to our church, I'd see some people going, but it was always just a handful of people. And sometimes during the summer when, for whatever reason, the doors were open, we'd go in there and look around. And it was terribly run down—cobwebs in places and bricks falling out of place and all. But I never was curious enough about it to ask, "Well, who runs this?" Because, you know, sometimes the minister would change—there would be another guy there—as they often did in the Methodist churches. You know how they send—

ISOARDI: Yeah, they rotate.

BRADFORD: Yeah, they rotate. I'd forgotten all about that, what we're talking about right now. And it was a totally out-of-place kind of church in the neighborhood that we lived. Now, only so many people on the street that we lived even had indoor plumbing. Our house, we had indoor plumbing; the house that we rented did not; the house next door to us did not. Then four or five houses up was the only guy on the street on our side that had indoor plumbing—he worked on the trains—that had actual

flushing, you know, running water inside. We didn't have hot running water. We had a toilet and all, but the people next door had dry toilets out back. So this big brick Methodist church across the street, man, it's a really peculiar— When I think about it now, it might have gone back, as you say, into the late nineteenth century.

ISOARDI: I think the Methodists were among the first Protestants to really go down and try to convert slaves to Christianity, so maybe—

BRADFORD: It may be true, because definitely Mississippi would have been a place that would have been a target, of course. That would have been one of the real places they would have sent their missionaries.

ISOARDI: Is that place still there, do you know?

BRADFORD: Cleveland? Yeah, I—

ISOARDI: No, I mean that church.

BRADFORD: I don't know. You know, I have threatened to take Lisa [Tefo Bradford] and Benjamin [Bradford] down there. Lisa said, "No, I don't think you'll take me." [mutual laughter] But I have not been back since I left. I left with my family in 1943, I think, and haven't been back since. But I've looked it up on the [Inter]net. And, you know, on the net you can— My son is the big computer guy here, I'm not, and he says, "Let's look at the town where you were born." So we looked it up, and there's a map. We found my street.

ISOARDI: You're kidding.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. And it hadn't changed a lot, you know. I showed him where

the street was, and I showed where, if you go down that street, you go to where the one Chinese market was in the town. Well, there were two, actually, one in the black community and one in the white community—Chinese merchants, man and wife with children, who lived in the back of their place, and no other Chinese in the area for them to socialize with.

ISOARDI: They were the only ones?

BRADFORD: They were the only ones. In our neighborhood at the end of the street that I lived on, almost at the edge of the black community, as it begins to be the lower end of the commercial part of the city, there's this guy, Jack Chinaman. That's what everybody called him.

ISOARDI: You wonder how they found their way to Cleveland, Mississippi.

BRADFORD: Well, there was another Chinese market over in the white part of town. Now that I'm thinking about this—this town's getting bigger now, but—that was a part of town that I almost never went to. It was a long walk. And you had no reason to go there, you see.

Let's see, where was I? This is going to be a long thing.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, that's cool. You mentioned that you hadn't been back in almost sixty years now.

BRADFORD: I haven't. I've been threatening to go back.

ISOARDI: Well, you're talking about Mississippi in the 1930s. When do you become aware of the racism?

BRADFORD: The interesting part of this, now, is that what you know as a kid growing up is that white people live on the other side of town. They have the really nice houses, manicured lawns— You know what I'm saying? They have the nice cars. We've seen their high school, passing by there. They have a swimming pool, diving board, right? They own the businesses.

ISOARDI: New cars.

BRADFORD: Yeah, a lot of new cars. They own all the stores downtown where you're going to buy anything like refrigerators, stoves, jewelry, any of that stuff. They own all of that, right?

But you don't have to deal with them on a daily basis. I didn't come into contact with whites on a daily basis from nine to five. The only time I would [was when] I was big enough to work, and somebody would say, "Mrs. So-and-So wants to hire you to do something in her yard." Then you'd go to where they live. But you didn't come in contact with whites on a daily basis.

ISOARDI: Your teachers were all black?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We didn't have any schools in the South then where you had white teachers and black students—except, now, the strange place that my mother went to that she only she told me about here in the years just before her death. She went to a school called Mary Holmes Seminary that had white and black kids.

ISOARDI: Together in the same classroom?

BRADFORD: Yeah, in the same school. Now, I don't know if they sat together, but she said it was a church school that her mother sent her to when she started to have to stay at this place where she worked overnight. She couldn't come home to take care of her, and that great-grandmother—

Let me go back and clear this up for you. In this house, now, this is me and my brother, my mother and my father, and then there's my mother's mother Azalee, right? Then there's *her* mother.

ISOARDI: Oh, you're kidding.

BRADFORD: No, this is my great—

ISOARDI: Great-grandmother.

BRADFORD: Great-grandmother, whose name was Emma Ambrose.

ISOARDI: So you had four generations.

BRADFORD: Yeah. She was born a slave. Now, this is a woman who stayed in her own little room, came out to eat, and didn't do a lot of socializing, didn't go to church. She made these quilts—you know, this hand[-sewn] stuff. I have just a vague memory of her, except that she's the person who liked these sardines in a little "tin," we used to call them. You know how you—?

ISOARDI: Yeah, I remember those.

BRADFORD: And she wouldn't buy two or three at a time; she would send us to the store every day for a tin of sardines.

ISOARDI: One tin?

BRADFORD: One tin, and crackers. And nobody wanted to walk up to Jack Chinaman's to get these sardines, me or my brother. So she'd say—my brother's nickname was Sonny Boy—"Sonny Boy," she'd call him. He wouldn't answer; we're under the house. She'd say "Bobby!" And he'd say to me, "Don't answer, now. You know what we're going to have to do." And she'd say, "If I have to call you again I'm going to skin you alive." Well, he was braver than I was. I would yell out, "Here I am!" I would answer, because knowing that she was going to whip your ass, man, if you didn't file in—So she'd give you—The whole thing was a dime: these sardines, crackers, and some kind of soda—RC [Royal Crown] Cola, I think it was. Fifteen cents, it seems to me, it might have been. This was her whole thing, and you went every day if she could catch you. And if she didn't catch you—She was able. She wasn't an invalid or anything.

ISOARDI: Did she give you a tip?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, there was no tip. If you didn't get your butt whipped, that was your tip, right? [mutual laughter]

What was I going to say? What got me off on her? My mother's mother got so that she was having to stay in with that family she was working for. And the grandmother was getting so cranky that she wasn't taking care of my mother properly—you follow, the great-grandmother. So my mother's mother decided to send her to this school. Now, she must have had some money, didn't she, because you had to pay. I can remember my mother saying, "It cost six dollars a month for her to send

me to this school." But it was called Mary Holmes Seminary, and my mother—

ISOARDI: Baptist? Baptist place?

BRADFORD: I'm not sure. I'm going to look this up, because it's still there. My mother said to me— My mother died a couple of years ago, and towards the end I visited her a lot, and we'd sit there and we'd talk, you know, because she was bedridden the last couple of years in a nursing home. So that's when she finally began to tell me things about our family that I never asked her as a kid. And I asked her about this Mary Holmes Seminary, and she said, "Oh, yeah, there were white kids there, too." There were orphans there and kids who were sent there like in boarding school, and she said there were black and white kids. She said, "We played together every day." I said, "Now, this has got to be in somebody's book," that in Mississippi, anyplace, there were black and white kids who sat under the same roof in some kind of school. But it was a church-run seminary.

ISOARDI: Were these just really tiny kids? Or was it up through grammar school, high school, or—?

BRADFORD: I'm not sure. At this point, now, I would guess that my mom was about six or seven [years old]. I don't know how far it went.

ISOARDI: They probably didn't mind it if the kids were like five or six, but if they were twelve, thirteen, fourteen, then—

BRADFORD: When they got past puberty, right?

ISOARDI: Yeah, exactly.

BRADFORD: But I had no idea that that even was true. She said "Mary Holmes Seminary." And it's still there. I've seen something about it in the paper sometime.

ISOARDI: Different place.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Strange place, this Mississippi, you know. I mean, beautiful to see, just the landscape and all, but [gives a whistle of disbelief], right?

Anyway, so back to your question about— No, the racism, you won't get that until you finally see something like some adult black male being really reamed by some white guy, five foot two [inches], he's got this six-foot-two black guy, and he's reaming him, you know. And he's helpless. And you finally can see that all these black men are helpless. There's nothing they can do no matter what.

These guys— You'd hear some guy saying, "We worked today, and Mr. So-and-So wouldn't pay us. Said he didn't feel like writing the checks. He says, 'Come back Monday.'" And the black men all standing around really pissed off. They've worked, and they're saying, you know, almost pleading with this guy, "We've worked, and we want our money." He says, "I don't want to be bothered. Come back Monday and I'll pay you." This is Friday, and these guys walk away with their tails tucked. Then you start to get it.

ISOARDI: So it wasn't one incident. It's just that those conversations—

BRADFORD: Yeah, you can hear it. You can hear it. You can hear the black men talking about this guy that had them working out there doing something that was totally unrealistic about— He says, "Why don't we do it like this," making them do

things totally unnecessary just to be able to push them around, you know.

And when the black men are talking, they do their best for the little kids not to get it, but as soon you get big enough to— At least I could. It didn't take— You know, I don't mean to stroke myself here, but I wasn't a dumb kid, you know what I mean? I could tell right away what was going on with the adults. They'd try to make these coded conversations, and I knew what they were talking about, man, from the time I was five or six years old.

ISOARDI: How did that affect you?

BRADFORD: Well, you know, you finally realized just how you fit into this thing. I didn't have anybody say, "Hey, little nigger, get your black ass out of here" or to be stoned by some white kids or to be beat up by them. I didn't get any of that, because I didn't come in contact with white kids my age, ever, until maybe I went to the golf course when I got to about eight or nine to caddy. There might be some white kids out there, poor white kids, who wanted to caddy too, for the thirty-five cents that you— You might run into some little bullies that were trying to give you a bad time. But you didn't see these kids even. The only white people you saw were the merchants who would come through the neighborhood, the white doctor who came, or people who sold stuff door to door, or people from the city who came out for some problem with pipes in the streets or whatever, or the power poles. But you never saw the white kids unless you had an opportunity, now, if you were working for a family and there were kids there, you know. But you didn't deal with this daily.

It was a farm community that surrounded Cleveland. There were farms in every direction. I guess that cotton was probably the big thing for that part of the area. I can't think of any kind of industry that was of any consequence in the area. There might have been some milling. I can remember seeing some trucks come through with the big logs on the back.

ISOARDI: So at about five or six [years old] you started going to school?

BRADFORD: Well, you know, the funny thing is my brother— We didn't have kindergarten; there was no such thing for us. My brother, he was almost three years older than me. When it came time for him to go to school, I tagged along, and my mother would make me a lunch, too. So I guess I must have been like five, maybe four.

ISOARDI: Probably.

BRADFORD: See, the community was safe, now. There was no such thing as— Maybe there were some people around who were kind of— But we didn't worry, and parents didn't worry, about kids walking someplace in the community. You knew everybody. If there was any pedophile around, man, he wouldn't dare stick his head up, you know what I mean? You knew every family, every house, you knew the name of the family, everybody in the community knew you. If you were into any kind of naughty hanky-panky or whatever, throwing rocks at somebody's window, every male adult on the street and every female knew you by [name]. "I'm going to tell your mother." You see how contained that is? So it was okay for me.

My mother would fix my lunch and my brother's lunch, I would go to school with him, and we'd play in the morning until— You know how they play on the campus until the bell rings? And he would go in, and I would go in too. And after about ten or fifteen minutes I would leave, you see.

ISOARDI: You'd get bored?

BRADFORD: Well, I couldn't stay, actually. I mean, I could have stayed, I suppose, but all I wanted to do was just walk with him and then eat my lunch and come back home. [mutual laughter] Which I did for the first year. Now, sometimes, as my mother says— She tells me that I would stay in there, so by the time I got to the first grade I could already read. But I was just following along that first year or so, maybe two years, just to take my lunch— She'd fix my lunch—I remember that very well—and I would eat it sometimes on my way to school or on my way back or there on the playground after the bell rang for my brother and all the other kids to go inside.

Now, we went to, at first, a little school, wooden, and all the grades— I'm trying to remember now. They called it the little school, and there was the big school farther away. It's vague now in my memory, but the big school was being built, a big concrete thing. And the little school apparently was the oldest one in town. It was the one with one potbellied stove in the middle, and the kids sat in little groups in this one great big room. And the teacher went around to about five grades, and there were—

ISOARDI: In one room? Five grades?

BRADFORD: One room. And you sat in your little place there, and she would stay

with each group about twenty, twenty-five minutes, and then she'd move to another group. And you had your little book on your lap. I can remember the little primer, you know. I can still even see the little chairs that we sat in. It was a funny little—

And she had a wooden leg, this teacher. Her name was Mrs. Tripp. And when she walked it was sort of like Captain Ahab, you know: step, plunk, step, plunk. All right? And she had this little strap, too. There was no discipline problem there. So she'd deal with the first grade, and she'd give you a little reading assignment to look at until she got back. Then she'd move to the second grade, then she'd move to the third, fourth, and fifth, and then she'd finally come back to first again. That's the kind of school I went to. Then, by the time I was in— Let's see, now. At ten I'm in the fourth grade. By the time I was in the fourth grade, this big concrete monster of a building was finished.

ISOARDI: That was the school you were telling me about that attracted everybody from—

BRADFORD: Yeah, all around, kids from all over and everybody. They tore down the little school, as it was called, the little frame thing that was almost about to blow down anyway. And everybody went, all grades from one to twelve, to this big concrete school that was just— It was cracking. The cement was already cracking on one side before they finished building the other side of it. Just horrible stuff, you know. But it was better than the other one. It had restrooms, it had all the working facilities and all, and it had a population of teachers there prepared to accommodate

students from grade one to grade twelve.

We as a family— My father left— God, he must have left around 1942, '43 to go to Oklahoma to work in— He left after the [Second World] War broke out and people were leaving the South for these jobs. I don't why my father— Let's see, what age would he have been now? My father was born in 1905, so he was in his thirties, right in there. He went to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and was working for Douglas Aircraft [Company]. And I can remember him— We'd see pictures later on of these B-17 [Flying Fortresses] and B-whatevers, and he would say, "I put that door on that plane." That was his big thing about working on these [B-29] Super Fortresses; that's what he did. He was a sheet metal worker.

The thing between him and my mother got really tense, because—

ISOARDI: So he took off on his own for Tulsa?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he took off on his own for Tulsa. He didn't take us, so whatever was happening, the relationship kind of deteriorated there from him either not coming back to visit or not keeping in touch by mail, with money, whatever. And my mom and he agreed to disagree. They didn't legally divorce, but my mom married this other guy. I don't think they were ever legally divorced. This other guy she married, his name was Walker, Augustus. This was the guy she remained with until he died about eight or nine years ago—my stepfather, so to speak.

ISOARDI: He was from Cleveland, also?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was from Cleveland. Now, he was an auto mechanic who

worked for one of the black funeral home directors who had a funeral home office in four or five little different towns, and he kept the vehicles running—you know, the hearses and the cars and all. He was actually from a little town called Shelby.

ISOARDI: Oh, Gerald Wilson's town.

BRADFORD: Right, same town. And he worked for these guys who owned funeral homes called Hank Brothers. These guys were all very fair. I can remember seeing them, the one in Cleveland. They were all— You know, if these guys— With just a little change in their speech they could have moved to the white part of town.

ISOARDI: Could have passed [for white].

BRADFORD: But you could tell still that they were a mixed family but all very, very fair. But they had all these funeral homes in Shelby and in this little town called Shaw and in Cleveland and some others too, I think. This stepfather of mine worked for them.

Well, anyway, they decided to leave and come to California and bring me and my brother and my mother. So we left Cleveland— Let me see if I get these dates right. We left in either 1943 or 1944. I think it's '44.

ISOARDI: Actually, let me ask you something before you start talking about that. Is music in your life at all in Cleveland other than just hearing your father or something?

BRADFORD: Yeah— No, I'm already taking piano lessons.

ISOARDI: What age did you start?

BRADFORD: Well, it seems to me I started taking piano when I was about seven.

ISOARDI: At whose urging? Or was it your own idea?

BRADFORD: It was my mother's, I think. You know, to tell you the truth, what this— Because my brother had no interest in it at all. This woman [B.O. Felder] who came to our community came from a little town not far away, and she went to various little places, and she would give her lessons at the woman's house in the community who had a piano. The kids who wanted to take lessons, we all congregated at this house.

ISOARDI: So maybe once a week she'd come through or something like that?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I think once every two weeks she came through or something like that. And the woman in our community [Callie Wright]—like a five-minute walk from my house—had a piano, and on that given day we were all sitting out on the front porch waiting for our turn inside to play the piano. You know, now that you've asked that question, I might have even asked. I don't remember asking, but my mother was quite willing to pay the quarter or whatever it was for the piano lesson.

ISOARDI: How could you practice, though? You didn't have access—

BRADFORD: I didn't have a piano in my house, now. I don't remember now what I was supposed to do in terms of practicing. I didn't have a piano.

ISOARDI: You couldn't use this lady's piano?

BRADFORD: No. Well, actually, my family was good friends with her, but it wasn't on a regular enough basis for me to go by there and play on the piano.

But now, the interesting part is her children did not play the piano, nor did they

take lessons. Her son [Ernest C. Wright], who became an engineer, he contacted me about fifteen years ago, and he had moved to Southern California. But I think he lived in someplace— Where did he live? Anyway, he contacted my mother, and then she called me, and we talked on the phone once. He left Mississippi and became an engineer and came out here and was working for some firm out here. I'll tell you a story about him in just a moment; we'll come back to him.

But I can't remember what sense was supposed to be made of my taking lessons other than I think for my mom it meant that "a kid like you should be taking piano."

ISOARDI: That's what you should be doing.

BRADFORD: Yeah, you should be taking piano. Because there was no piano in our house.

ISOARDI: Aside from that, had you heard anything else other than church music in Cleveland?

BRADFORD: Well, on the radio, yeah. We listened to music. My father liked the big bands.

ISOARDI: So you heard some—

BRADFORD: Yeah, I had heard the big bands on the radio. We had one of these big radios, you know, the kind that are about so tall [indicates about four feet tall] with a cloth grill.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

BRADFORD: You sit in front of it there, and it's got this cloth, this fabric, in there, and it's got that dial with all those numbers. I can still see it. You see, in the evening after school, starting at about four o'clock, all these serial things came on—you know, *Superman* and *The Green Hornet*, and then on to *The Shadow* and *Inner Sanctum* and all that stuff—which we just lived for, because that was it for entertainment.

There was a movie [theater] in town, and we might go to the movie on Saturday, maybe twice a month. And that was quite a walk from where we lived into the business part of the white part of town. There was a Negro section in the movie. You went up to the ticket office, and there was a flight of steps up to the balcony where black people went. And there were two movies, one called the Ellis and one called the Regent.

ISOARDI: And that was it?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that was it.

ISOARDI: That was it for the whole town, white and black?

BRADFORD: The whole town, white and black. White and black, the whole town.

What she taught us was basically church music. She used church music as a method of teaching piano. You started by playing scales and hymns. And a lot of the young women were training for jobs playing in the church, I guess. I remember one young woman, who eventually became a church pianist, who went to her for lessons on a regular basis. This woman's name was—she used initials—B.O. Felder. Our joke for B.O. was body odor, of course.

ISOARDI: Of course! [laughs]

BRADFORD: Whenever she saw kids grinning around her, she knew that's what we were saying, right? [mutual laughter] But she was quite a musician, really good.

ISOARDI: So when you leave to come to California, this is— The lesson every couple of weeks is your musical background?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that was my musical background.

ISOARDI: And you were only about, I guess—it was '43, '44—nine years old?

BRADFORD: I'd be ten, nine or ten.

ISOARDI: That's just about the same time that Horace [Tapscott] comes out here, too, from Houston.

BRADFORD: Yeah, because Horace and I, you see, were the same age. Yeah, we were both born in '34.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he came out here in '43; he was nine years old.

BRADFORD: We came by car.

ISOARDI: You drove out.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I remember it very well. In fact, we had our first real dose of discrimination coming out here. We stopped at some restaurant in Arizona. My brother sort of took to my mother's side of the family—fair skinned, you know, not with kinky hair like mine but more like my mother's. So we get out of the car, and for whatever reason my brother and my mother go into the restaurant ahead of us, and my stepfather and I are waiting to lock the car or whatever it is, and we get to the door,

and they won't let us come in. They said, "We don't serve colored here." My stepfather said, "That's my wife and son right there. What are you talking about?" And they looked over at them, and then they had to leave once they identified as being colored. That was the first time in my life, I think, that I had ever been confronted with that in actually those terms. Now, we knew better, of course, than to try to go into a white restaurant in Cleveland. That was a given, that you didn't walk in the front door of a white restaurant and sit down. You knew that. So we wouldn't have an occasion of being turned away, you see.

ISOARDI: You weren't expecting it in Arizona?

BRADFORD: I don't know. It seemed—

ISOARDI: You figured you were out of the South?

BRADFORD: I guess. Somehow we must have thought, because it seems to me now we had made other stops where there didn't seem to be any problems. It may have been just that particular town in Arizona that we stopped. I can't remember which it was. But my mom and I, we talked about that. Before she died we were laughing at it. She said, "Yeah, you and Gus"—that was my stepfather's name, Augustus—"Yeah, you guys were too dark. You couldn't come in." [mutual laughter]

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

APRIL 15, 2000

BRADFORD: Yeah, she said, "We looked out there, and you guys were— The guy stopped you at the door." We laughed about it. Black people in the South, whatever the level of discrimination was, they figured out a way to roll with the punches, you know, which they had to do to survive.

You know, I often have students— When I'm talking to my classes now about what black people endured in the South, some white student will say, "Well, why didn't you guys all leave the South?" I said, "Well, why didn't the people in South Africa all just leave and go someplace else? They don't have to put up with that apartheid. Just leave." Where would you go? And who'd pay for it? I mean, it's just that they haven't thought about it. Or some student would say— I remember being the victim of a kind of discrimination right here in Pasadena twenty-five years ago in one of the high-fashion stores down there on South Lake [Avenue]—Bullock's [department store], you know?

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, yeah.

BRADFORD: Like twenty years ago. I walk in, and a woman just keeps walking around me. Right? You know how you get just one particular salesperson. And I share that with some of the students, so some white kid would say, "Well, it seems to me black people wouldn't go to Bullock's. They'd go to their own department stores."

And I said, "Now, you see—no offense here—but the level of naïveté here is astounding." Right? I said, "Pretty soon you'll say, 'Why don't we buy just an automobile from just one black automobile manufacturer?' Which means you're so out of touch, which many of you are—" I'm saying to these kids right here who grew up in Pasadena and are going to these schools. "You don't have any idea what's happening in the world that you live in, do you? Because you've grown up totally insulated."

That's true of a lot of the black kids who grew up in this area who don't know what the real world is, who think now when you say "South Central [Los Angeles]"—They've never passed South Central except on a freeway at sixty miles an hour. And I've had them just say, "Well, it didn't look so bad." Well, of course it doesn't at sixty miles an hour. You can just sort of take your eye off the freeway for a moment and Watts doesn't look bad.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Get off one day, right?

ISOARDI: You know, it's really funny, when my wife Jeannette [Lindsay] started going down to Leimert Park and investigating it, etc., she would have friends who would say, "How can you go down there?" These were black friends.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right.

ISOARDI: And they didn't have a clue what it was like.

BRADFORD: Never been near it, and have no plans of ever going.

ISOARDI: I guess they'd grown up in Santa Monica or something all their life, but

they were just astounded that she was going.

BRADFORD: Just like black people here that grew up—I'll say, "Well, things were tough for black people in certain parts of Philadelphia, Chicago, and all." And some black kid here will say, "I don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Bradford. I see black people driving up and down the Lake Avenue in Pasadena all the time. They're driving BMWs and all." I say, "Now, son, don't you see— You think that represents the real world? You and Altadena and Pasadena?" I say, "That doesn't represent any part of black people in America."

I don't mean to get sidetracked here.

ISOARDI: Well, what time of the year are you driving out to California then? Do you remember?

BRADFORD: This is summer.

ISOARDI: Okay. So it's summertime, it's hot.

BRADFORD: This was the summer—This was the spring. Right, this was in spring.

ISOARDI: Why California? Because of work?

BRADFORD: Well, no, because my stepfather had a brother [Toby Walker] here who had a couple of businesses. He had a grocery store in Bakersfield.

ISOARDI: Bakersfield?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he had a grocery store in Bakersfield.

ISOARDI: It's like moving to the South again, isn't it? Or used be. [laughs]

BRADFORD: At first he wanted my stepfather to take over the grocery store in

Bakersfield, but he didn't want to go to Bakersfield—my stepfather, I mean. He wanted to live in L.A., and so—

ISOARDI: Smart move.

BRADFORD: He owned a small hotel over in South Central, this brother of his.

ISOARDI: Really? Do you remember which one or where?

BRADFORD: It seems like to me it might have been called the Roosevelt or something like that. It's not there anymore.

ISOARDI: Where was it at?

BRADFORD: God, man, I don't know. Someplace in the forties.

ISOARDI: Down by the Dunbar [Hotel], in that area?

BRADFORD: No, the Dunbar, that's what— Is that—?

ISOARDI: Forty-second [Street] and Central [Avenue].

BRADFORD: If it's near— You know, I keep thinking of the Dunbar as being in the thirties, but you're right, forties, so this hotel, maybe it was in the sixties. I only went there once. But it was big enough for the Internal Revenue [Service] people to take it from him.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. He got in some trouble with his taxes. This guy was also a big dope dealer; that I didn't know originally. He went to prison, and when he went to prison my stepfather took over some of the management of some of his businesses—that one in Bakersfield and that hotel too, which he finally lost because of

tax stuff. But where we lived—

ISOARDI: He was dealing grass [marijuana]?

BRADFORD: I guess. Whatever was out there to be sold, he was selling it.

ISOARDI: I don't know if there was much harder stuff that was around then.

BRADFORD: Well, yeah. There was heroin around then.

ISOARDI: It was around?

BRADFORD: Yeah. I don't know if it was a biggie, but we're talking about I guess 1944, '45. Yeah, there was some heroin around, because Charlie—

ISOARDI: Maybe opium?

BRADFORD: —Charlie Parker would be in town a year later, 1946.

ISOARDI: That's right.

BRADFORD: There might not have been a lot. But, you see, even dealing marijuana— Well, you were a big dope dealer then [even] if you were just selling grass, you know.

But we made our way to the area where Dodger Stadium is now.

ISOARDI: Chavez Ravine?

BRADFORD: Yeah. And at that point—I never heard it called that. In those days it was called Bishop Heights. And to get to it by streetcar we would take the North Broadway streetcar and ride it to the very end, where North Broadway ends. That was the last stop on the car.

ISOARDI: That doesn't take you to—

BRADFORD: Then you've got to walk.

ISOARDI: Oh, you had to hike up the—

BRADFORD: Then we had to walk up. See, but then it was— All that area that they dug out to be the stadium, that was all a big cliff with houses all over it.

ISOARDI: It was mostly Latino, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Almost all Latinos, but half a dozen or so black families. And we were the only one, my family, with kids. We went to an elementary school there in Chavez Ravine called Palo Verde, the regular Southern California school, you know, with the red tile roof—you know, whatever you call that. The teachers were white, all white, and the students were Hispanic, all Hispanic—you know, Mexican-American, second, third, fourth generation, whatever—and we were the only two black kids on the playground, me and my brother. We lived there that school year, whatever that was. It must have been '44 now rather than '43, I think.

ISOARDI: How does L.A. strike you after coming from Cleveland?

BRADFORD: Well, first thing is we didn't get to see a lot of it except for visits. On Sunday we might go in with my mother and father to visit friends of theirs there, and a lot of black people with big expensive cars in a certain part of— You know, we could drive over into West Los Angeles and see black people living kind of high on the hog. Compared to Cleveland, Mississippi, it was a revelation, but it's not like we hadn't looked at magazines and seen it, how black people were living in New York and other places. We knew that there was another world outside. We just hadn't been

able—how can I say it?—to participate, so to speak. But our lives were just going to school every day, you know, playing after school. We didn't go into L.A. except on special occasions on Sunday sometimes, because my stepfather, he wasn't big on church like my mother was. But sometimes we'd get in the car on Sunday and we'd go into a church that they'd like to go to around— You know that park there around Fifty-first [Street], Fifty-second [Street], there in Los Angeles there? There's a big park. Fifty-first and maybe—

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's near— What's down there? Not Ross Snyder [Recreation Center]?

BRADFORD: I knew the name of the park once. John [Carter] and I and Bruz Freeman played there once years ago when our band was very new. It's got a big bell stage.

ISOARDI: South Park.

BRADFORD: Is that what it's called? It's around the fifties, and it's got a big bell-shaped stage.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I think that's it.

BRADFORD: Anyway, there was a church near there with a famous black minister who was from Texas, T.M. Chambers, one of these kind of fire and brimstone Baptist preachers that people come from miles around to hear. And you know, people from the South, they like this preacher who's this orator, who can really whoop and holler. You know the kind of preacher I'm talking about. People drive— It's like theater to

them in a way, you know.

ISOARDI: It's performance.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, it's serious, but it's still about redemption and all. But not a dry lecture, but serious. As we say in musical terms, "song sermon."

Anyway, we stayed there that school year, which would be the school year I guess of like 1944 and into 1945.

ISOARDI: What grade are you in?

BRADFORD: I'm in the—

ISOARDI: Are you in the fourth—?

BRADFORD: No, I'm in the sixth grade— Fifth grade, I guess. Fifth grade. I'm ten. Fourth or fifth grade. And by the middle of the school year my brother and I are both speaking playground Spanish. [mutual laughter] You know? Whatever it took to play.

Whatever happens, the stepfather decides we're going to go back East now.

ISOARDI: Back to Cleveland?

BRADFORD: No, no, not to back Cleveland, back to the— What we think of when we say East, like to New York or Chicago or wherever. He's got another brother back there in Gary, Indiana. Now what my stepfather was looking for I have no idea. I guess a super-duper job that's going to pay big money. But I remember, he had this '41 Pontiac that was just— You know, it ran like an Elgin watch. There's no question about it. If you want to go someplace, just get in the car, man.

ISOARDI: So he packed you all up?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. We got in the car, put whatever we could in the trunk, right?

No trailer or anything. And our next stop was Detroit.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

BRADFORD: And what it turns out we're going to do in Detroit is we're going to—

Later on I discovered that my stepfather's plan was for us to go there and stay with my mother's—what would this be?—first cousin [Wilda Bell Johnson]. There's a woman in Detroit now who, she and my mother are daughters of two sisters. See, my mother's mother had a sister.

ISOARDI: Okay. So your mother and she would be first cousins.

BRADFORD: Yeah, okay. So we're going to the first cousin's place in Detroit, and he's going to park my mother and me and my brother with her while he trips around trying to find what it is he's looking for, this job, this ideal job.

ISOARDI: Actually, before you get into Detroit, let me ask you if you have any other memories of L.A. or Central Avenue or anything or—

BRADFORD: You know, what I remember during that period is Olvera Street. We got to walk to Olvera Street, which is like a two-mile walk from where we were.

ISOARDI: It sounds like you were more into Latino culture.

BRADFORD: We were then!

ISOARDI: That year you were out here.

BRADFORD: That year out here we had very little contact with black people. I

mean, some of the R and B [rhythm and blues] records that I really liked by the black artists the Latinos were playing. You see, in that period the Latinos were into R and B and wearing zoot suits and listening to—what is it?—Joe Liggins and "The Honeydripper." That was a big tune then, "The Honeydripper," right? The Latinos were wearing—The Latino gangs, the *pachucos* then, were wearing zoot suits with tattoos in here and—

ISOARDI: On their hands between their thumb and their first finger?

BRADFORD: Right in here, and drawing a little graffiti—not much, but that kind of graffiti that was real stylized: a guy in a zoot suit with a razor in his hand and blood dripping from it with a big hat like Cab Calloway. Some of them had tattoos like that. And they wore their hair—You know the hairstyle? Big, bushy hairdo, and you comb it back like this, and you put a part down here, and then you have a little ducktail, like that.

ISOARDI: You put a part—

BRADFORD: Straight down the back, not the front. Not in the front.

ISOARDI: Oh, you part it in the back?

BRADFORD: But there's a part here, and the hair is thick, and it's combed over that way. And you can see it, almost like a woman's hairstyle in the back. The men would comb it over here and there, and there's a part down the middle of the back. The front's big and puffy [a pompadour]. A big, puffy hairdo.

ISOARDI: And on the sides, each side would come straight back until it formed like a

part in the back?

BRADFORD: Part in the back, almost like a woman's hairstyle now. You see a lot of women with a comb in it where it goes like that. They comb it down the back, and then they have just a little ducktail, they'd call it, back there. My brother's hair was straight, essentially; not like mine, and he could sort of do that. And I was pissed off that I couldn't get my hair to do that, you see, because this kinky hair wouldn't behave that way. So we'd go into the restroom when the bell rang to go into classrooms after play period, you know, all the Mexican boys would go into the restroom, and they had a comb, and they'd dip it in the water, and they'd give their hair this thing, you know. My brother would watch them, and he'd dip his comb in there, and his hair would behave and do that. And he thought [strikes an attitude], "What about this, man?" And here I am getting this case now about this kinky hair that won't do this. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Are you in L.A. during the Zoot Suit Riots, when that happened?

BRADFORD: No, not that I know of. But the zoot suits were big then.

ISOARDI: I remember Paul Lopez, the trumpeter, he told me when he was growing up in East L.A., he said the choice was you either listened to swing or R and B then or mariachi, Mexican cowboy music. That was it.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I know him. This is the guy on the crutches, right? I used to see him over at Zep's Music [Center]. This is one of the places where all the guys go because you get good prices, over here in Burbank. You see a lot of the old guys just

hanging around, sitting around and chatting about the old days. I see Paul over there some days. Zep [Giuseppe Miesner]'s dead now, by the way; the store's still there. But a lot of the guys like— The big names around town came there to buy their equipment and stuff because Zep's had the best prices, because he had low overhead. He was in a little storefront right next to a laundromat when you go in there, and so you see all the guys around town, the woodwind players and all, come in and are trying out saxophones and flutes and all. I'd see Paul over there, and we'd chat about—I didn't know him back in those days, but we're about the same age. I think he may be a little older than I am. But he's a terrific trumpet player and arranger, you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he still writes and arranges like crazy.

BRADFORD: Well, he sub[stitute]s for Bobby Rodriguez at PCC [Pasadena City College] sometimes.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

BRADFORD: Bobby Rodriguez has his Wednesday night big band [class], and whenever he's out of town or can't make it Paul subs for him. So I'm leaving my four [o'clock] to five thirty class, and here comes Paul and this guy setting up for the Wednesday night big band.

So I actually didn't have any contact with black kids during that period. Our entertainment on the weekends— We got to go to downtown Los Angeles there past Olvera Street to the Majestic— I think it was the Majestic Theatre. There was a big theater— No, the Million Dollar Theatre it was called.

ISOARDI: Oh, the Million Dollar.

BRADFORD: The Million Dollar it was called. The Majestic was in Texas. Same kind of theater, though, huge theater that not only had up and down stairs but had those big seats like—Loges or whatever you call them, right? And you would see not only a movie but live stuff on stage. I can remember seeing Joe Louis punching his punching bag on stage plus a couple of cowboy movies, and the Delta Rhythm Boys and the Mills Brothers and people like that. So that was a big treat for you. But a little treat was to be able to walk to Olvera Street and eat some Mexican food.

ISOARDI: No freeway then, right?

BRADFORD: Oh, no.

ISOARDI: So you'd come just straight down.

BRADFORD: Yeah, you just walked. Even if you had the Pasadena Freeway, it wouldn't have helped. Where we were living, you see, you would have to have walked. And I remember going under a trestle—And I've looked for it. See, all that's gone now. I go down there sometimes—not recently but ten, fifteen years ago—trying to get reoriented to where things were, and I can't anymore, because everything has changed. But when we walked from the Broadway streetcar to where we lived, we went under a trestle to get to where our houses were. And it's not there anymore, obviously, either. But it was the area—It was almost like seeing these Indian cliff dwellings out in New Mexico and Arizona—this big hill and these houses dotted all over the place. And that's the area that they're now calling Chavez Ravine, which—I'd

never heard that expression. They called that area Bishop Heights when we lived there.

ISOARDI: There's a book that came out just a little while ago, months ago, that's photographs from there from I think the forties and the fifties, before they destroyed the community. I saw it at Vroman's here in Pasadena.

BRADFORD: But you don't remember what—

ISOARDI: I can't remember the title, but Vroman's had it kind of featured. And it's a collection of photographs from various communities [*Chávez Ravine, 1949: A Los Angeles Story*. Don Normark. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999].

BRADFORD: I'd like to see that. In fact, I have gone back— When I came out here in '64, as soon we got settled I drove down there trying to figure out where it was. I wish I could show my kids now where it was we used to live, but I couldn't figure it out.

ISOARDI: Well, we've been meaning to pick up a copy of it. If we do I'll bring it up and show it to you.

BRADFORD: I'm going to go down— I'm fascinated with this stuff. Just like I intend to go back to Mississippi just to see.

ISOARDI: Well, you'd probably recognize half the houses in this book.

BRADFORD: I might, I might. I remember, where we lived we had to go down these wooden steps to get to the elementary school, I mean a flight of wooden steps, man, that was unbelievable, it was so tall, to get from where our house was down to the

elementary school, this Palo Verde where we went, huge. I mean, the steps— It's like— When we had to climb up, now, it would be the height of like a three- or four- or five-story building. It was a long flight of wooden steps. I remember it very clearly. Yeah, I'd love to see that book.

So then we stayed with my mother's cousin.

ISOARDI: Back in Detroit. You're in Detroit.

BRADFORD: Back in Detroit. And we enrolled in the schools there. And I loved Detroit, man. We were right in the heart of a part of Detroit, Hastings [Street] and Russell [Street], a tough part of Detroit—east Detroit. But the schools were great. We went to one elementary school there [Trowbridge Elementary School]. Most of the teachers were white, the principal was black. Right across the street from the school there was this chain of cafeterias, like these drugstores that have a drugstore and an eating counter. You know, those— What do you call them?

ISOARDI: Soda fountains or something.

BRADFORD: There's a name for a chain around the country like them— Longreen's or—? You know what kind of company I'm talking about?

ISOARDI: Yeah, like Woolworth's.

BRADFORD: Yeah, like Woolworth's, but it wasn't Woolworth's. Some other name. And there was a big bowling alley right across from the street from the school. I loved it, man.

As soon as I got there— Somehow I thought it was great, and they thought I

was being a chump. [mutual laughter] I got the job of the kid who stands near the school with the little white belt—it comes across your shoulder and around your waist—the little safety—

ISOARDI: Oh, the crossing guard.

BRADFORD: The crossing guard. They thought I was a fool for taking this job. I thought, "Hey, man, here I've got this kit," and I had a little pass where I could come into class late after getting all the little kids across the corner.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I did that, too. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Oh, man, I thought I was in heaven. This was my uniform, this belt, right?

ISOARDI: That's right, I remember. Did you have the hat that goes with it?

BRADFORD: No, I didn't have a hat, but I had that— My mother washed the strap for me and bleached it white. Man, I thought, "Oh, God, is it heaven!"

And then there was this big library not far from where we lived—I had to get a streetcar to get there—but one of those big libraries with the big lion sculptures in front. I'd walk in there, and all these books, man—

ISOARDI: Detroit Public Library?

BRADFORD: Yeah, exactly. Detroit Public Library on Woodward Avenue. And I thought, "Wow, I can go in here and check these books out." And I had a little library card. I mean, I was in heaven. I thought, "This is the beginning of some kind of identity." The lady says, "What's your name? What school do you go to? What's your

address? Fill it out. Here's your card." I had a little billfold that had this little plastic screen in it; I could put this card in there. I thought, "Shit, man, I—"

ISOARDI: Was that your first card with your name on it?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that was the first thing with my name on it like that other than the report card at school. But this was special, man. This was this big fucking library with these— Like the New York library, same one, you know, they've got these big lions. And I thought, "There are white kids coming and going, black kids, Chinese people, everything, and I'm just like one of the rest of these people." I thought, "Hey, this is heavy."

But now, where were we living? We were living in a second-floor apartment, sharing one room with my mother's cousin and her son, who's still living in Detroit now. She must be ninety years old.

ISOARDI: That's pretty cramped. There were—what?—about four or five of you?

BRADFORD: Well, there were five, me and my mother and my brother—my stepfather's gone off to find the job—so there's three of us, then two— Five of us. Upstairs in this building there's one great big room out here and then sort of other rooms around it, like it had originally been a huge apartment. But now different families lived in each one of those little rooms, and they all shared the big central room, right? No refrigerator, just a cook stove. You cooked everything that day.

ISOARDI: Did you have an ice man bring a block of ice around or something like that?

BRADFORD: Well, no. In the winter you kept everything outside the window—just raise the window. Sometimes the milk would freeze, sometimes it wouldn't.

But I was happier than I had ever been in my life. I can remember, we slept on the floor, me and my brother and Feltus [Johnson], who was our cousin, on this pallet, we called it, and my mom and her cousin slept in the bed. We were deliriously happy, you know what I'm saying? The schools were great. I could sense that I had a handle on what I was supposed to be learning in school. We had these unbelievable libraries, we had these big movies.

There was the Brewster Community Center near walking distance from where we were, where Joe Louis apparently started to train as a boxer. Here's a community center that's got a gym, an indoor pool, which—I was just astounded. And in the winter—Now, coming from the South, my mother said, "Well, now, you can't go swimming in the winter. You'll catch your death of cold." "It's a heated pool, Mom." "I don't care. You're not going swimming." So what we would do—now get this: we'd go swimming—Because Feltus, his mother didn't mind, but my mother said no good. So the three of us would go, and we'd get—The streets are damp, and it's dirty. We'd put our hands down in the streets—right?—and get them dirty and dirty our faces on the way home, because you know how it was clear if you'd been swimming; your skin was sort of dry and ashy. We'd dirty our faces on the way home so my mother wouldn't know we went swimming in the winter. [mutual laughter] This is Detroit. Now—

ISOARDI: Well, let me ask you, is there anything going on musically that year you're in L.A.?

BRADFORD: Nothing. For me? Not a stitch of any kind of music.

ISOARDI: So you're not even doing the odd piano lessons?

BRADFORD: No, I'm not doing the odd piano lessons. Listening to the radio, that's about it.

ISOARDI: What are you listening to when you're listening to the radio? The big bands?

BRADFORD: You know, I can't remember. L.A. was like a drought for me for music that period. I don't remember anything important. I can't even remember what part of the house the radio was in, so that tells you something there. [mutual laughter] And we certainly didn't have that big radio that we had back home.

All that was still there, we left all of that there. My mom rented the house out to some family. But we didn't take any furnishings or anything, just our clothes. I think in her haste to get away to try to make a life for herself— She was trying to get out of there and start a new life with this new husband, you know, and not have to deal with whatever problem would arise with my natural father. They were never legally divorced, which made their subsequent marriages all invalid. He married later, and so did she—him, you know, this guy, Augustus—but there was never any argument about it.

So we stayed in Detroit that school year.

Now, what's happened during this time is that my father has been working at Douglas Aircraft all this time.

ISOARDI: In Tulsa.

BRADFORD: In Tulsa. Now, the oldest brother, the one that's the pharmacist, right—? He's a preacher and a pharmacist; so is the younger brother [a preacher]. The older boy and the younger, they're preachers now, one in Oklahoma, and one has made his way to Dallas, Texas. How he chose Dallas I don't know. But he's got this little drugstore where he fills prescriptions—you know, sundries and all this business. But now, as a preacher he goes to two or three different churches as kind of an itinerant minister. He tells my father, "Why don't you come here and take over the drugstore for me? You'd make a good living, as good as you're making there. It would be a business, you'd be your own boss," and all this stuff. So somewhere in there between 1944 and 1946 my father goes to Dallas.

ISOARDI: It was probably better work than working in Douglas Aircraft.

BRADFORD: Well, I don't know. He was making good money for what it was at Douglas Aircraft. I don't know what made him decide to leave there. You know, the war work was good. Everybody was getting paid. You know, there was a crunch on, and they want—

ISOARDI: Maybe he knew it would end.

BRADFORD: Well, he might have thought— He might have wanted to come to a place— My uncle was a big one, now, for having your own business. He said, "I'll

never work for anybody." That was his thing: "I don't work for people. They work for me." And I could hear him talking to my father about it sometimes. He says, "You don't want to work for people. You work for yourself, your own business." And he said, "I never want a job." You know, he was that kind of hustler.

Anyhow, so what happens? My stepfather, somehow, and my mother—And I'm sure my stepfather convinced my mother that "We can do better for ourselves if you send the boys to their father." So there's some kind of Baptist convention in Detroit that summer, right? The drugstore preacher is going to come to Detroit for some big national Baptist convention, and we're going to be put in the car with him and sent back to Texas when he goes back, to be with our natural father.

I'm upset, my brother's upset. Man, we don't want to go to Texas, we want to stay in Detroit. This is heaven. At that point for us it was. My brother liked to draw; always had a flair for it, a real talent for drawing. And he had these—

ISOARDI: Well, he becomes a graphic artist, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, in later years, when he finished his high school, as soon as he finished his high school in Texas, he's going right back to Detroit and go to Cass Tech[nical Union School]—

ISOARDI: Yeah, famous place.

BRADFORD: —and study drawing and illustration and all. But, anyhow, the uncle comes, puts us in this big old Chrysler, we're on our way back to Texas.

So by June or July of 1946—I'm clear on that—we're in Texas. We're in East

Dallas, the toughest part of Dallas, Texas, for blacks—I mean a real notoriously tough part of Dallas, Texas. They've got this one big knife that they call the East Dallas special, right? It's a tough part. The church that we go to is right across the street, like fifteen yards from my house. The drugstore is on the corner, church on one corner; grocery store on one corner, and another grocery store on the other corner. And we live in the back of the drugstore.

The uncle, now, who owns the thing is going to move to another city, Marshall, Texas. From there he will use that as his base of his itinerant preaching all over the area, and the agreement is, I guess, my father will give him so much of the take each week. My father runs the store. He closes the pharmacy part of it because he's not a pharmacist. It's just sundries, ice cream soda, over-the-counter medicine, you know, that kind of drugstore. And it was going okay. I was in the sixth grade, my brother then in the eighth grade, I guess.

ISOARDI: Where were you going to school?

BRADFORD: I went to the elementary school, which was about a five-minute walk from where we lived [Julia C. Frazier Elementary School]. My brother went to high school right away, because we didn't have a junior high school there. No, I take that back. My brother went to this elementary school where I went for one year, in the eighth grade, and I in the sixth, I guess. We went from grades one through eight in the school, then you went to high school. High school was nine, ten, eleven, twelve. So he rode the big yellow bus from where we lived; it took him over into South Dallas.

There was a big high school there that accommodated East Dallas in a part we call Oak Cliff, and then all the rural areas. And the other high school across town, on the north side, was the other black high school. Dallas is a big town. The black people had two high schools: Booker T. Washington [High School] on the north side of town, which accommodated black people on the north side of Dallas and northeast and any farm areas on that side. Where I went, Lincoln [High School], accommodated people from South Dallas, from Oak Cliff, as it was called, parts of southwest, and then rural South Dallas. They all went to this big—two thousand kids—Lincoln High, about the same size as Booker T. Washington on the other side of town.

Now, his high school had a band. But, now, at elementary school we didn't have any music, but I started—

ISOARDI: None whatsoever?

BRADFORD: No, none whatsoever, but I started to take piano again. And this was at my own—

ISOARDI: You wanted to.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. There was the woman who played the piano in our church, Baptist church. She taught the local piano. As soon as I found out that she taught piano lessons I said, "I want to start taking piano lessons." My father said, "Well, yeah." We walked to her place, she had a piano, and I could practice on the piano in the church, and a couple of neighbors had pianos. So there was a piano.

ISOARDI: There were plenty of places to play. Why piano? Because certainly about

that time—I mean, sometimes in some neighborhoods if you played piano you'd get your ass kicked by all your friends. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Oh, well, see, that's what's going to make me quit ultimately. [mutual laughter] That's coming down the road.

ISOARDI: Why piano, though? Because it was what you knew from before?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I had a handle on that already. It was also what was accessible. I wouldn't think of having to ask my father at that time to buy me a saxophone or anything.

ISOARDI: Oh, I see.

BRADFORD: It hadn't occurred to me that that would have been feasible, right? Which it wouldn't have. I'm sure he would have said, "Oh, no, can't afford that." I can hear him now.

But I took piano, and as my buddies—The pressure got on. "Oh, man, we're playing street football out here." And the area we lived in, the street wasn't paved, so we played sandlot football in the street, and we'd stop for a car that came every now and then, just move out of the way, and we'd get back to it. The streets were unpaved, kind of sandy sort of loam, and we played football out there and stickball and whatever. I'd be practicing the piano at the church, or I might be going across the street to practice the piano, and the guys want to play baseball or football—mostly football. And finally they said, "Man, what is this sissy piano shit?" So I quit playing the piano after about—

ISOARDI: Peer pressure.

BRADFORD: Yeah, peer pressure. I quit playing the piano.

Then, there's this guy right across the street there, you know, there's this— On one corner, as I said, there's a grocery store, and there's another grocery store. Well, right next to it there's a couple of other commercial little storefronts in there. There's a dry cleaner's and then a television-radio repair shop right in there, and a shoe shop. The guy who had a shoe shop had an old beat-up cornet, and he used to sit on this— There was a front porch that ran along in front of all the businesses, almost like the Old West, where there's an ongoing—

ISOARDI: Yeah, long wooden porch.

BRADFORD: Long wooden porch. And he'd sit out there when he wasn't fixing shoes and play this cornet. He just played pop tunes. He had a nice, pretty tone on the horn, and he'd be playing "Stardust" sometimes, or he'd play "Chattanooga Choo Choo" or [hums "Sentimental Journey"]—what's the name of that?

ISOARDI: "Up a Lazy River"?

BRADFORD: [continues humming "Sentimental Journey"] What's the name of that song? [they start humming it together]

ISOARDI: Oh, I know that song.

BRADFORD: [sings] "Seven, that's the time we leave, at seven—" He'd play that. [sings] "The railroad track that takes me back—" What is the name of that? Is that the "Chattanooga Choo Choo"?

ISOARDI: No, it's not.

BRADFORD: No, the "Chattanooga Choo Choo" is some other thing.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's a different one. It's a little more up-tempo.

BRADFORD: It's something about a train.

ISOARDI: Oh, God, yeah.

BRADFORD: [sings] "That's the time we leave, at—" Anyhow, he'd be playing songs like that. You know, he'd play some Cole Porter tune. I remember him playing "Begin the Beguine." He'd be sitting there [hums first bars of "Begin the Beguine"], just sitting there playing the horn. And he was playing all these songs by ear, and I'd sit over there sometimes and just listen to him play.

Christmas was coming there this one year. I must have been in high school. I was in high school already; I must have been in ninth or tenth grade. I had been throwing the *Dallas Morning News*. You know, I had a little paper route. And at the end of the week you made about six or eight bucks, something like that. When you finally paid the paper bill, what you had left was yours. And I had bought myself a Bulova watch—Bulova, that was a biggie, right? I had been paying on this thing in layaway for about a year to get it out. So I had this new Bulova watch, which probably only cost \$19.95 brand new. So I said to him one day—I don't know what possessed me—I said, "I'll trade you my watch for that cornet." And he looked at it—it was brand new—and he said, "Go ask your father and see. If he says okay, I'll trade with you."

So I went to my house, I just walked around back, made a circle around the house, and came back. I didn't even go in to ask my father. I made a loop around my house, came back, and told this guy, "My father says, yeah, it's my watch, I can do what I want with it." So he says, "Okay." I peeled it off right there, man. He gave me the horn, and he said, "You want me to show you something?" I said, "Yeah, I've been watching you." He said, "I'm going to show you how to play [sings opening bar of "Blues in the Night"]" "My mama done told me—" Because that was a lot of open— You only used one of the valves to play that part. You could play that by just [inaudible] this middle valve, and I had been watching the embouchure and all, you know.

You know how with some kids— And, again, I'm saying this in a way that you can see what I'm saying. I had a flair for this right off the bat, man. I had a good ear, and I knew how music went and all, but playing the trumpet with this embouchure thing—I had been watching him, and I'm saying to myself, "Man, I can do this." So he said, "I'll show you this." And in about five minutes I was playing "My mama done told me"—kind of raggedy, but I had the thing. Because I could see how it worked, you know what I mean? It might have been—

ISOARDI: Was your time good, too?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I had it all going in music. I always had good time.

The teachers probably would have discouraged me right away. If you couldn't keep time, the music teachers were right away saying, "Oh, no, no, no." They wouldn't

waste a lot of time with you if you couldn't count, you know. That's, like, just fundamental. If you couldn't keep track of the beats they would just say to you, "Oh, no, this boy, just get him off. Yeah, let him do something else. He can't keep time." You know what I mean? That was like unthinkable. You might have some trouble with the pitches, getting the wrong notes, but if you couldn't count the time, it's like—"This kid doesn't have any music in him. Just don't let him do it." I can hear the music teacher saying to one girl—She couldn't count. She just couldn't get the—You know, she'd hold her notes too long. And I could hear [the teacher] saying to her mother—she's just looking at her mother and shaking her head like this—"Don't waste your money." Because there were all these people waiting to get the slot, because she could only teach so many.

But I could see it, just how it worked, and he showed that fingering was really easy on just that part of it—[sings] "My mama done told me—" I can remember, I said, "I can do that, man. Just let me have it. Let me get the pucker." And in about five or ten minutes, man, I was playing [hums "Blues in the Night"]. So he said, "Yeah, yeah, that's it."

ISOARDI: He must have been surprised.

BRADFORD: I guess he was, but he was looking at this watch. [mutual laughter] He was looking at this new watch, man. He was a shoemaker.

ISOARDI: But that must have been hard. I mean, he obviously enjoyed going out there and playing.

BRADFORD: He did.

ISOARDI: Did he have another cornet?

BRADFORD: No, he didn't, not to my knowledge. This watch was brand new, and it had a tinted crystal, you know, when they were in. The crystal was tinted sort of rose. That was high fashion.

ISOARDI: So he really—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Man, everybody— All of the black men had a Bulova watch with either green- or rose- or orange-tinted crystal. Oh, man, that was the height.

ISOARDI: You'd probably heard a cornet before, right?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I knew what it was, but I'd never come close to it like that.

ISOARDI: When you heard this guy doing it, though, that sound got to you.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I loved it. I'd go there and sit with him— He had this really beautiful tone. He couldn't read music, but he could play the cornet. And he had this really beautiful sound on it, this really rich cornet sound.

ISOARDI: Did you appreciate—? I mean, you were still pretty young at this time.

BRADFORD: I'm fourteen.

ISOARDI: So you'd be in high school? Freshman or ninth grade?

BRADFORD: No, I'm in the ninth or tenth grade.

ISOARDI: Well, I mean, you knew the difference between a cornet and trumpet.

BRADFORD: I didn't then. As far as I was concerned that was a trumpet.

ISOARDI: That was a trumpet.

BRADFORD: In fact, people ask me how do I manage to play the cornet now? And I remind them, my first instrument was a cornet, though I didn't choose it because that was a fact then.

The cornets were still popular in the bands then. The trumpet still had not taken over, where the cornets were eliminated. In my high school band almost all the other boys, except the older ones who were just beginning to get hip to trumpets, they all played cornets. And all the music, all the parts, said "cornet" on it. In the marching band, all the music didn't say "trumpet," it was "first cornet," "second cornet," like that. If you went to a pawn shop looking for an instrument, there would be a lot of cornets in the window. The trumpets were— You know, the trumpet— Everybody knew, now, that Louis Armstrong played the trumpet, and so did Harry James and all, but the cornets were still around. There were lots of them.

ISOARDI: Probably, yeah. Cheaper maybe then, too.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, they were cheaper. As the trumpets came in they got to be cheaper and cheaper. Because, you see, by the time I'm out of high school, Miles Davis and all these guys, we all know that they played Martin trumpets, and everybody wants a new Martin trumpet, man. I graduated in 1952 from high school. By that time everybody knows that the trumpet is— The cats: Dizzy [Gillespie], Miles, Fats Navarro, all these guys played Martin trumpets. And if you have the money to get yourself a trumpet, that was it. Though I was still— I played the cornet all the way through, until almost my last year in high school, when I finally did get a trumpet.

But anyhow, this horn had this old case, you know. The horn was beat to hell. Oh, man, it was so beat up. And the case— You know how these cases, that felt sort of inside? You know how that stuff smells? This was old. It was like it had been wet. It had that terrible smell and all, but I was so— Oh, man, I went home. I couldn't even— You know how when you get so excited you can't even hear? You know what I mean? I went home, and my father said— He asked me something about the horn, and I said— I forget what lie I told him, but just to soften the blow about the watch. But then when we finally did come to grips with the thing about it, I finally told him that I traded my watch, and I thought he was going to be really upset about it. He said, "It's your watch. It's your money from throwing newspapers. You do what you want." He said, " I certainly wasn't going to buy you a new horn."

ISOARDI: So you guessed right, his reaction.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. He said, "It's your money. You earned it throwing the newspaper." I got up every morning at five o'clock and threw the newspaper. And that was my pocket money. I mean, he didn't take any of it like a lot of— Later on, if I had an outside job and I'm living at home, he'd say, "Now, you've got to put a little in the kitty here if you're living here and working," something like that. But he didn't take any of that. Because at the end of the week, after throwing those papers seven days, you wind up with about seven or eight bucks. What you did then was buy clothes that you wanted that your family couldn't afford or wouldn't buy for you. If you wanted some argyle socks, you know, that's what you bought, if you could. Or

you wanted this fancy shirt that all the guys were wearing.

You know, it's funny about this population of kids at this black school that I went to. There was a sense of style with the very poorest of kids, about dance, dress, music—even in football and basketball there was style. I never thought about this until I went off to college and I got a bigger picture of— You know, like when I was going to the University of Texas at one point and when I was in the military, just watching the difference in these social and athletic situations between blacks and whites, when I was finally free to really look, there was a sense of style with these people that is just—I don't know where it comes from. I guess it goes all the way back to Africa. They dressed—The high school that I went to, when these kids came out in the morning at the bus stop—They were poor as a church mouse, all of them, though people worked, but they were dressed like they were going to Harvard [University]. There were these jeans, like you're wearing here now, they were starched and pressed in a crease. The girls were fully made up. And whatever clothes they wore, they fit, man; they fit like a glove. They were clean as a whistle. Any kid in the whole group now who came to school looking kind of scruffy, I mean, he caught it. You just—No matter how poor, you couldn't come to school dirty. Just unthinkable. The very poorest of kids. The girls looked like they must have spent an hour every morning getting ready to go to school. They wore the same clothes almost all the time, but they must have washed every night. Shoes shined. I mean, there was no bum-looking guy out of the whole school population—There were a couple of guys, now,

that were just total bag men. I don't know what their problem was, but they caught it every day. I don't know what this thing was about. The basketball players, they spent as much time now developing style as they did any kind of precision. [mutual laughter] They went to how their uniforms looked— Some of the football players would adjust their uniforms, all kinds of stuff. Just style.

Anyway, before I get to the high school here— Is it time to flip it over?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

APRIL 15, 2000

BRADFORD: So I take this trumpet home right away, and I'm already in there on it trying to get going.

ISOARDI: Cornet?

BRADFORD: Cornet, right. And it's mid-year—

ISOARDI: Your dad [Webb Eugene Bradford Jr.] doesn't object to the sounds?

BRADFORD: No, no, no. He's delighted—

ISOARDI: He's cool with it.

BRADFORD: —because he played the clarinet. He didn't have the clarinet now—something had happened to the clarinet over the years—but he's not bothered at all by it.

Now, I'm in the tenth grade. I'm in high school, and I'm a good student, and the homeroom teacher [Carrie Brown] has already planned my whole curriculum for the four years I'm going to be there. Any student that showed any sign of any real talent, they already had told them, from the elementary school that you went to, "Here's a kid, now, that can do something. Don't let him slide." So I had to take Latin. No choice with that.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I had four years of it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, no choice. Kids that weren't promising didn't have to take it. I

had to take it. I had to take the full range of whatever math was offered, you know—

ISOARDI: So this is college prep[aration] curriculum.

BRADFORD: Well, in a sense. It's the prime black preparation, whatever was available in the black schools to get you ready to go to college. You have to take algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, the kids who could do it. They didn't push the ones whom they knew couldn't. So it's mid-year, and the band preparation course—like Band 1, Band 2, that would be in the fall and the spring, and then you'd get into the big band—I couldn't take. So I went by the band director and I said, "I want to play this cornet I've got here." And he said, "Well, take band." I said, "Well, I can't, because I'm already set for next semester—programmed. This semester, we're halfway through it." I said, "But on my study hall period I'd like to come over here and try to get a start on playing this cornet."

ISOARDI: So you didn't have any outside teacher, right?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, no outside. Just a high school band director. And he said, "Well, if your teacher will let you come out of study hall and come over here, we'll get one of the other guys to try to help you with this." But he had students who were already now two thirds of the way through the fall semester who had been coming to his class—Every day you took band—yeah, band preparation—and then the actual band met at the seventh period, at the very end of the day.

ISOARDI: Every day, then?

BRADFORD: Every day. Every day you had Advanced Band, it was called.

ISOARDI: Do you remember his name?

BRADFORD: Yeah. J. R. Miller. He was very ill, and I think he had either prostate or colon cancer. He even might have had rectal cancer of some kind, because he was losing weight over a long period. The last semester that I had him—and then we got a new teacher—he was sitting on one of those little rubber inner tubes in the classroom every day, and very frail. So I spent a year with him, and he died, and another band director [James White] came in.

Now, he [Miller] had been a professional trumpet player playing with some swing bands. His nickname was "Hooks." They called him "Hooks" Miller, but his initials were J. R. I think it was James R. Miller—J.R. or J.K. James K. Miller, James R. Miller—anyway, James Miller. A really terrific trumpet player. Brass was his primary [specialty]. We played all the instruments, but he was really basically a trumpet player, and a good one. A good musician. And he said, "You do the best you can." He said, "You can try to catch up with these guys, and you can come during your study hall, and maybe if you can catch up you can come into advanced band in the fall with these guys who have been studying. But they've got a year's jump on you." Well, of course, I was just—what's the word for it?—man, I was crazed. [mutual laughter]
Right?

ISOARDI: Did you have room in your schedule for Advanced Band?

BRADFORD: Well, see, Advanced Band came at the very end of the day at the seventh period. That was the time of the day in the fall when most of the people were

going to have study hall.

ISOARDI: Oh, so it fit.

BRADFORD: But the band prepped things. That wasn't a time that I could go, see.

So anyhow, I got myself one of those books, you know, the books that they use, and I just started to read the instructions. They had the picture of the embouchure there, and I got a feel for that, and what button made the— You know? And I basically was self-taught.

ISOARDI: You had no problems with embouchure? You were right from the get-go?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, I had it right from the get-go, man, because I had been watching this guy across the street. So I finally came one day to the band teacher and I said, "This is what I'm doing so far, and I want to check with you on the fingering and all this stuff." And I played some of the things for him, and he said, "Yeah, yeah, you're doing all right there." I didn't even know the word embouchure then, but—if I had had some kind of really fishy embouchure he would have said, "Oh, no, no, you can't do that." Because every now and then a kid would come in with a trumpet over here— [demonstrates the improper lip placement on the mouthpiece] You know, some guy would come in who was playing like that, and he'd say, "Oh, no, no, no, you can't—" Well, see, once you start with this faulty embouchure it's hard to change.

ISOARDI: Art Farmer told me what hell he went through because of trying to teach himself to play as a kid.

BRADFORD: That's the biggie, right. You get off to a bad start, you make some

mistakes, and you've got to start all over—if you can. Usually you just quit. A lot of guys switched to trombone then or saxophone or whatever, because you were just too late. Once you get that embouchure, it's almost like you're right-handed and now somebody says "Start writing left-handed." It's too late, because these muscles are so set that way, and you're so fearful about placing them in a different position. Yeah, it's just a nightmare.

Well, anyhow, I worked and worked and worked, and I got some of the other trumpet players that were in that class to show me things about the horn, and by the fall I was in the band. I went in with those same guys. And I had actually eclipsed all those guys that were playing trumpet who had started in the fall.

ISOARDI: No kidding. In a semester?

BRADFORD: Yeah, well, not— In other words, over the summer and the spring semester. I had the rest of the fall semester to work on it, then the spring semester to go in when I could on my study hall when the teacher would let me out, and then the summer. By the fall of the following year I was playing well enough to be playing second and third parts in the band.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

BRADFORD: And these guys that had been taking trumpet all this time, he used to use me to beat them over the head. [mutual laughter] He'd say, "Now, listen, here you are screwing the part up here— This boy started months ago, and here he is playing your part. Now, what the hell are you—?" And this guy was a notorious

disciplinarian. He's the guy who gave— You know "Fathead," the saxophonist? David ["Fathead"] Newman?

ISOARDI: "Fathead"? Yeah.

BRADFORD: He's the guy who named David Newman "Fathead." [mutual laughter] When you didn't get a part right, instead of calling you stupid—

ISOARDI: Who was this guy?

BRADFORD: This is J. K. Miller.

ISOARDI: Oh, it's still the same—

BRADFORD: It's the same Miller.

ISOARDI: All right, he's still with you.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he's the guy— Now, Fathead, you see, was two years ahead of me in school. Fathead had him all the way through high school. He's the guy who if you didn't do what you were supposed to do, you'd get this paddle. Everybody knew that— He was a serious disciplinarian. Oh, when he said "quiet," it was everybody quiet. If you had any trouble, man, you got this paddle on your back end—you know, when he was still in good health, right?

So the other trumpet players that weren't cutting their parts, man, he'd say, "Now, look at what this guy did." And I was going [adopts appearance of trying to look innocent or blameless], you know. [mutual laughter]

But there were other trumpet players who were way ahead of me who were really smoking, man. There were some guys in the band who were driven, as I was, to

play the trumpet, who had already taken all the band, and who were like tenth, eleventh, twelfth graders at the time. Good trumpet players. I mean, half a dozen really smoking guys in the band. So I wasn't on any ego trip, now. There were guys there who would make me really run out back, man, and cry. There were some really very talented kids. Now—

ISOARDI: When you mention—I'm sorry, Bob—the band, is this like a school orchestra? Or is this a swing band?

BRADFORD: No, this is a football band.

ISOARDI: Marching band?

BRADFORD: Marching band, that's it. Marching band, that's all. That's all we did. We'd play marches, and then when the football season was over you had like a concert band. But the concert band—

ISOARDI: Light classics type of stuff?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Well, you know, regular— You know, like the stuff you'd play in a concert band. Light classics. The "William Tell Overture," stuff like that. But there wasn't a lot of emphasis on that, because when the football season wasn't in we were a pep band for the basketball team. But there wasn't a lot of focus on the concert side of the band. Mostly football band.

But, now, in that band you had all these guys in there, the hipsters, who wore the Ray-Ban sunglasses who wanted to hear Charlie Parker. You know that group. Now, in this band, a year ahead of me, now, is Cedar Walton playing the glockenspiel

and playing clarinet sometimes.

ISOARDI: He never touched the piano?

BRADFORD: Well, yeah, he played the piano, but there is no occasion to play the piano.

ISOARDI: Yeah, in a band like that, sure.

BRADFORD: There wasn't even a piano in the rehearsal room where we were.

ISOARDI: But he was studying piano?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. His mother was a piano teacher. And he was so far ahead of the rest of us, man, it's like not even talking about it. You see, he was already into really advanced chords and harmonies when we were in high school. He was light years ahead of all of us, but there were some very talented kids in this band.

David Newman—Fathead—was one, a really precocious saxophone player who was playing professionally while he was still in high school, playing baritone saxophone and alto [saxophone]. And only later in his career did he switch to tenor [saxophone], because that was the instrument, I think, that got more work. But early on, alto, playing like Louis Jordan, and then, when he heard Charlie Parker, going to Charlie Parker, but knowing all of Louis Jordan's stuff. You know, Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five.

ISOARDI: Yes, certainly.

BRADFORD: James Clay.

ISOARDI: He was there?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was a year behind me in this band. This is the guy who comes to Los Angeles—

ISOARDI: Oh, right, you guys—

BRADFORD: Yeah. Same guys, same band. I was looking at one of the new photo books at Vroman's [Book Store] the other day. There's a great shot of him on the floor like this with his saxophone, sitting there, you know, during the period when he made that record with Wes Montgomery and with Nat Adderley. An unbelievable talent who died just several years ago in Dallas, Texas.

ISOARDI: He was just a year behind you?

BRADFORD: Just a year behind me. Cedar Walton a year ahead of me, and David Newman, Fathead, about two years ahead of us.

ISOARDI: Wow.

BRADFORD: So our ages, you see, we're all right in there. I'm sixty-five now. James Clay, if he had lived until now, would probably be sixty-four, sixty-three. Cedar Walton is—I think we're the same age. He was a year ahead of me in school, though, so he skipped a grade or whatever. Fathead is probably sixty-seven now—I'm guessing, but right in there.

And there were other guys who never left to be famous who were good players. There was one clarinet player in the band that we called "Pumpkin" that was just a motherfucker of a clarinet player. Cedar Walton played the clarinet, but he wouldn't even take the clarinet out in the presence of this guy. Unbelievable clarinet player. I

mean, serious.

ISOARDI: But he never had a career?

BRADFORD: Never had a career. He lived in the part of Dallas we called Oak Cliff. I don't know what ever happened to him. There was another trumpet player there, a couple of trumpet players— One guy, James Gray, a really good trumpet player who went on to school in Austin, Texas, that I saw when I was in college—he went to Tillotson College—who went into administration. From what I've heard now, he's in someplace in Virginia, where he's like the assistant superintendent of schools or something—got a Ph.D. in education. Good trumpet player. There was another saxophone player who died early; his name was Jim Davis. I think he got caught in drugs or something, but terrific— These were lots of guys in this band who already had a very mature sound while they were still in high school. There were three or four guys who had the Charlie Parker thing down, man, in high school.

ISOARDI: Are you guys doing anything with this on the outside?

BRADFORD: Nothing—

ISOARDI: Are there bands that you guys perform in?

BRADFORD: Well, when you get to be about sixteen you can play in the beer joints. You could get away with that. And almost all of us who could play well enough were playing the beer joints around town on weekends, when you got big enough so that your parents would let you go out and be in that environment, playing rhythm and blues, and trying to play jazz in that setting, though—playing rhythm and blues and

trying to Charlie Parker or Dizzy [Gillespie] licks in that setting. And being surrounded by the older guys in the town like Buster Smith.

ISOARDI: Buster Smith was in town then?

BRADFORD: Buster Smith was in town then.

It's too bad the people on the tape now won't be able to see this, but I'm going to show you some pictures of some of these guys that some of them sent me recently when I asked. Now, here is—I don't know whether you want to use tape up on this or not.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Well, I can describe it.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Here's a photo of Buster Smith late in life, and Count Basie is in his—Probably two years before his death. And he comes to Dallas, Texas, and Buster comes backstage to say hello.

ISOARDI: My goodness.

BRADFORD: You know the story is that Basie ripped off a lot of Buster's music. Well, of course, in this photo Buster's got the last laugh, doesn't he? He's still in fairly good health.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he's looking good.

BRADFORD: Basie, you can see there, is on his way out. But this is Buster. Now, I played—

ISOARDI: I didn't know he retired to Texas or settled in Dallas.

BRADFORD: He settled in Dallas. In fact, I don't know where—I think he's from

Texas originally.

Now, Buster had a brother who played the piano; his name was Boston, as in Massachusetts. Boston Smith played the piano. Now, when I grew up, Buster lived in my neighborhood, and he used to drive an old pickup truck and go fishing all the time. And he played the bass, because he had lost all his teeth. And I played jobs with him when I was still in high school. I had no idea who he was.

ISOARDI: No kidding? With him playing bass?

BRADFORD: With him playing bass, right. I had no idea who he was. I knew he was an old pro who retired in the community.

ISOARDI: The guy who taught Charlie Parker.

BRADFORD: Right. We had him in town.

We had John Hardee, a tenor saxophonist who played with [Duke] Ellington at one point. We had Freddie Jenkins, the left-handed trumpet player who played with Duke Ellington. He retired with emphysema or something like that and was writing for one of the local newspapers—like there was a black newspaper called the *Afro-American*. Freddie Jenkins was in town. Budd Johnson's brother—you know Budd Johnson, the tenor player?

ISOARDI: Yeah, yeah.

BRADFORD: He had a brother named Keg [Johnson].

ISOARDI: Oh, Keg! He was a trombonist.

BRADFORD: Trombone player. I'll show you Keg here in one of the photos when he

went on to play with Ray Charles.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: And this is the environment. See, we've got all these cats, man.

ISOARDI: Well, didn't Keg Johnson end up in L.A.?

BRADFORD: He may have— Well, he came here, I think, playing with Ray Charles.

But he's Texas— I'll go back to that photo now. I'll show you a picture of him with Ray Charles's band. I think Keg is still in it in the early sixties. Where is he here, now? Ah, here's the Ray Charles band. There's Keg there.

ISOARDI: Ah, jeez.

BRADFORD: There's James Clay.

ISOARDI: From 1962— "The Ray Charles Orchestra."

BRADFORD: There's Leroy Cooper. Now, I didn't go to high school with him. He went to Booker T. Washington [High School], I think. He played with us. There's Hank Crawford. There's—I can't think of this trombone player's name. What's his name that played with Max Roach at one point? Julian Priester.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: Julian was in the Ray Charles band. Ray Charles had a terrific band.

ISOARDI: Man, no kidding. What a lineup.

BRADFORD: The other guys you wouldn't know, I don't think.

ISOARDI: Well, I mean, shit, he always had great bands. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. That was a great band. Fathead was in that band, except that

he wasn't in that photo.

ISOARDI: Oh, man. What a band.

BRADFORD: Now, these are the young guys around Dallas, Texas, that people have sent me photos of, these guys. James Clay is still sort of like the mentor of the young guys. That was not long before his death when he was in poor health there.

ISOARDI: Gee, look how thin he is.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He will be dead not long after that. This is him here hearing some of the young players. The guy that sent me this, I told him I'm doing some Southwest stuff. There's my first wife [Melba Joyce Moore] back there doing something that when they took this picture— She lives in New York now. That's Carmen [Bradford]'s mother. This is us playing once—this is my shoulder here; you can't see [me]. There's James Clay—

ISOARDI: This is an old photo.

BRADFORD: —and Billy Harper.

ISOARDI: Billy Harper?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Billy Harper's from Houston, but he would come to Dallas a lot. Now, this is Dee Barton.

ISOARDI: The trombonist.

BRADFORD: Trombone player that played with Stan Kenton and all. These are Texas guys, right? We used to play with Dee Barton. This is like 1958, '59. Dee has a brother who played the bass and the trombone named Willie, or Will [Barton], I

guess.

ISOARDI: Jeez. Nice stuff, Bob.

BRADFORD: Isn't it? And here's another photo of James Clay and a bass player that we all grew up with who's dead now. If there's any stuff that you ever want to xerox just for your records, you're welcome to do so. This is Billy Harper again.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. He's a good player. Two good tenor players.

BRADFORD: Now, this is Bob Bradford in high school with the rest of the guys in the high school band.

ISOARDI: No kidding. Anybody we would know?

BRADFORD: No, none of these guys. All good players, though.

ISOARDI: Is that you?

BRADFORD: Yeah, looking— I'm so cool, right?

ISOARDI: You look cool. [mutual laughter] But look at the nice smile you've got.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Big toothy. I had these buck teeth, man; there was no way to hide— [laughs] All these guys are players now. This guy is an administrator in the Dallas schools with a Ph.D., Herbie Johnson. This guy's a trombone player. I don't know what he does. This guy was a big administrator and real estate guy who played the tuba and string bass. This guy is a good trumpet player, too. I was the big cheese in this group, though, you know. You can see how I'm letting them all hang out with me.

ISOARDI: This is— Maybe you're a senior, junior then?

BRADFORD: Yeah, this would have been— That would have been the junior year.

ISOARDI: The fall of '51.

BRADFORD: Yeah, the fall of '51. This is the original photo that I— That's the Ray Charles band there.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. Oh, that's nice.

BRADFORD: This is Cedar Walton going back there to give some sort of award to some kid who's a real piano phenom[enon]. Cedar goes back periodically. You know how they bring them back— They've got a magnet school in Dallas now for the arts. So they—

ISOARDI: To pull these kids in.

BRADFORD: We had to pull these kids in. This kid was apparently a real talent, and Cedar came back to give him the award or some such thing.

Now, this is— Let's see if there's anybody here worth mentioning that you'd know. This is guys from Dallas, all. This is an alto/tenor player here nicknamed "Worm" [Eugene Halton]. I forget this guy. This is a drummer, Sol Samuels. This is an alto player. This guy [Claude Johnson] played baritone and piano. All these guys were good players; I mean strong players. This guy Eugene Halton, we called him "Worm." He lived in Las Vegas for a long time playing and working. Now, this is a guy who was sort of about the age of Buster Smith. He had bands around Dallas. This is Fuzz Phillips; he played alto.

ISOARDI: One of the local big bandleaders.

BRADFORD: Well, yeah, a real combo guy. This is one of the young—

ISOARDI: Did anyone still call Buster Smith "Prof"?

BRADFORD: Yeah, everybody called him "Prof." We still called him "Prof." Now, here's another picture of "Prof" here.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. That's a nice shot.

BRADFORD: This is— What's this guy's name now? Clarinet player from New Orleans? Batiste?

ISOARDI: Oh, Alvin Batiste?

BRADFORD: Yeah. He was in Dallas for some occasion there. That's James Clay again. This is a trumpet player from Austin, Texas, Martin Banks, who played with Philly Joe [Jones] in the Tadd Dameron memorial band.

ISOARDI: Gee, you know, he looks a little bit like John [Carter].

BRADFORD: Yeah, a little bit, I suppose. That beard and—

ISOARDI: Yeah, kind of the shape of the face?

BRADFORD: He and I are about the same age. Now, he played with Ray Charles. He also played with that Tadd Dameron band— Not with Tadd Dameron, but the band that Philly Joe put together, calling it Dameronia or something. He played trumpet with that band in New York. He had some trouble with his teeth—I don't know whether he's still playing or not—but a good trumpet player.

If you ever have need for any of that, now, you know I've got it.

ISOARDI: That's great. Hold on to that stuff.

BRADFORD: I guess this is a good place where we can quit, eh? So I'm in high school now, playing in the high school band.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Doing well.

BRADFORD: And listening to records, buying old 78 [rpm recording]s as they come out, trying to learn—

ISOARDI: The hottest stuff?

BRADFORD: Yeah, listening to Miles Davis, Dizzy, Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, Fats Navarro—

ISOARDI: You're still playing cornet?

BRADFORD: Yeah. I got a trumpet— My last year in high school I get myself a— You know, I'm still throwing the newspaper, getting up at five o'clock. I think that's why I have insomnia now, right? And I get an new Olds trumpet—Olds Ambassador it was called. It cost \$119.95. I go down and pay ten bucks down on it, and the payments are—I can still see the contract now—like five dollars and forty-four cents a month. So I have a trumpet now.

ISOARDI: Who are you listening—? Is there one player that really grabs you back then? One trumpet—?

BRADFORD: Back then— You know, I didn't realize it then, but I liked the saxophone players more than I did the trumpet players then. Even though I was copying from records now: Miles Davis, Fats Navarro, Dizzy Gillespie. But the saxophone players are the ones who really touched me. Charlie Parker, Dexter

Gordon—who else was I listening to?—Sonny Stitt. Sonny Stitt was a biggie. All the saxophone players were trying to play the tenor like Sonny Stitt, man. I think now—I think it's safe to say the big daddies of the bebop tenor style begin with people like Charlie Rouse, Dexter Gordon, Teddy Edwards, Morris Lane—I don't know if that name means anything to you.

ISOARDI: No, I don't that one.

BRADFORD: Those were the big guys on the tenor. When Sonny Stitt decided to move from alto to tenor, he became the big daddy, because he brought all that serious alto speed and technique to the tenor. And everybody from about 1949 on was listening to Sonny Stitt on the tenor, because he had that big, unbelievable sound and that speed. Dexter was still around and playing beautifully, and so was Charlie Rouse and some of these other guys, but Sonny Stitt was the big guy, because he had that wonderful sound and speed. I'm repeating myself here, but he was—

He would come to Dallas, Texas, sometimes in the company of Gene Ammons. Now, Gene Ammons, everybody, all the guys, said, "Oh, he plays these beautiful ballads." But the fast stuff—It was Sonny Stitt everybody wanted to hear. So sometimes it was the Gene Ammons band, and he would come to Dallas, Texas, and it would say, "Gene Ammons and his band, featuring Sonny Stitt." And they played for dancing. We didn't have any jazz clubs now, so you went to the Yacht Club, which black people would rent. It was in the white part of town, a white club, but they would rent it out to blacks on Monday night. Or you would come to the black part of town,

the Rose Room. So it would be Gene Ammons up there playing blues—a lot of blues and a lot of ballads—and Sonny Stitt playing alto, tenor, and baritone.

ISOARDI: What was he like on bari[tone]?

BRADFORD: Killer. Smoking on baritone. He was one of the few guys that could go to all three of those and keep that speed and sound. Scared the daylights out of me, man.

And we were listening to those guys' records, buying the records. Fathead and people like that, we're listening to them. That's the only place you could learn then was to listen to these guys when they came to town, if you could go, and buy the records. There were no books. There were no Jamey Aebersold play-along-with-me records. There was no [*The Real Book*. You know how they have *The Real Book* now, the fake one? None of that. Nothing. You bought the records and you listened to these guys, and you copied what you could copy. And any information you could get from these guys when they came to town, you did so.

Now, when these guys came to town playing, all the musicians who were free and old enough to do it, they'd hang out with them. You'd run errands for these guys, go get them weed, go take their white shirts to the laundry. Someone would say, "You know where there's a restaurant where I can get some collard greens and cornbread and black-eyed peas?" Yeah. You'd run errands for these guys. Then they would write you out songs, the melodies to some of these difficult pieces. They'd write out chord progressions for the piano players. Because when they came to town, you know, it

was risky. You want to get a bag or penny matchbox of weed like this— [shakes box of matches] That's the way weed came, right? Already manicured. "Say, man, go out and get me a matchbox of weed." So you'd know where to go without them having to go out and get arrested, you see. So they'd send you on these errands, and when they came back to town, as soon as they got to town they'd say, "Where's so-and-so? Because I know this guy, and he's going to get me some weed, and I won't get arrested." Or "Where's the guy that can get me liquor after a certain hour?" Because Texas, you know, the liquor laws were such that some counties in Texas were dry. Not Dallas, by the way, but after a certain hour you couldn't get liquor. So you knew where to go to find a guy where you could go get a fifth of whiskey at twelve o'clock at night.

So Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons and all these guys, they'd write you out—The piano players with the bands would write you out chord progressions and melodies and all. That was it; that was your education—the records and approaching these guys when they came to town. They're right there from New York. You thought, "Wow, man. That's it." You know?

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

MAY 2, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bob, last time we were—

BRADFORD: So when I was going to switch from the cornet to the trumpet, I guess I had played the cornet in—let's see—tenth and eleventh grade in the band, and I got the trumpet that last year.

ISOARDI: How did you get the trumpet?

BRADFORD: I was still throwing the *Dallas Morning News*. And all the guys at school, we were all aware of the bebop trumpet players. And we saw pictures of these guys, they were all playing Martin; that was the hot trumpet. Dizzy [Gillespie], Miles [Davis], Fats [Navarro], Kenny Dorham, all these guys played a Martin, so everybody had to have a trumpet. I was the only guy left in the band with a cornet.

You know, strangely enough, at this age—I don't know whether it was because it was just me and my father [Webb Eugene Bradford Jr.] and my brother [Webb Eugene Bradford III] and no mother there—we were really independent, my brother and I, in terms of buying our own clothes, seeing about everything for ourselves. He didn't do any of the stuff like taking you to buy things or to see if you needed this. He'd say, "Well, if you need so-and-so, you need another pair of shoes, here's the money. Go get them." If you made a boo-boo and bought something that didn't fit, it was too bad. Now, that's not a criticism of him, you know. We just got a lot of

responsibility laid on us really young, and in a way that was good.

So when I had to get the horn, I just said, "I want to get a trumpet." The first thing he says— "What's wrong with the cornet?" was his answer, you know, right away. "That's playing all right." Then I said, "Well, you know, you can't hit the high notes on this," which was bullshit. [mutual laughter] I wanted the trumpet. So he said, "Well, just show me now how it doesn't." So I played the cornet for him, and I kind of half-assed tried to play a high note. He says, "Man, I can see you're not really giving that any oomph. Now, if you want to go ahead and spend your money on a trumpet, go ahead. But there's nothing wrong with the cornet. You keep playing that." So I was— You know, I wanted the style, right?

So I went to the music store in town where I bought it. It was Klein Music in downtown Dallas. And I picked out this Olds Ambassador trumpet. I think I paid ten dollars down, and the monthly payment was like five dollars and seventy-seven cents; something like that seems to ring a bell. And I guess I must have traded the cornet in. But there I was with my new Olds Ambassador. That was the model— Good student trumpet, man, really good. For years, Olds, that was a really good student horn, up until about— Oh, it's been ten, fifteen years ago the Olds company finally went out of business.

ISOARDI: What was it like switching over to a trumpet, playing a trumpet?

BRADFORD: The same. There's no change. The trumpet was—

ISOARDI: It didn't affect your playing at all? Your sound or anything like that?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. Ten minutes after you get the horn you're already— It's just a question of it being— You hold it— The trumpet is a little heavier in your hand because it's longer and more end-heavy. But after you play it for a while, you know, you forget all about the cornet. Same thing right now. When I put down my cornet and I start playing the trumpet, for the first ten minutes or so I feel a difference, and after a while you don't even remember. Sometimes I listen to some of my own records and I'm not sure whether it's trumpet or cornet.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

BRADFORD: Because what happens is that whatever horn you're playing— If I'm playing a cornet or trumpet or somebody else's horn, I'm trying to get my sound. You see? So you try to make— Whatever mechanical things stand in your way, you're trying to get past them to get the sound you're looking for.

It's like Art Farmer. When Art Farmer switched to flugelhorn, he didn't sound much different than he did on the trumpet. Because he wanted that sound out of the trumpet. The flugelhorn was just easier to play physically, you know, which it is. But when Art Farmer's playing— It's hard sometimes unless he's playing the upper register to tell which one he's playing, even when he's playing that flumpet, because he has this sound. When Art Farmer gets a horn in his hands, after he plays it for a half hour or so, if it's your horn or his horn he still gets his sound. Now, it's easier with good equipment, selected equipment, but he can get the sound out of your horn or anybody else's horn. Because the sound is in his head. You just have to do a little more

manipulation to get it to come out of a cheaper horn or some horn that's unfamiliar.

But what you do to get the sound is in your head. Air pressure and tongue placement and—

ISOARDI: But the horns have different qualities, though, don't they? The horn's different, etc., you get a different feel, don't you? It doesn't affect you that much?

BRADFORD: No. I mean, the thing is— It's like driving a new Buick versus a little Toyota Corolla. You know what I'm saying? It's like they both get you down the road. The Buick is a more comfortable ride, you know what I mean? But when you get these horns out— Now, if you get a really expensive horn, it's like giving a guy who's a beginner a set of very sophisticated golf clubs . You're just wasting money, you know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah, completely.

BRADFORD: So for a kid—I didn't know enough about it for it to make a lot of difference anyway. That could have been a two-thousand-dollar trumpet or a hundred-dollar trumpet, which is what it was. What I knew about it, you see, it wouldn't have made a lot of difference. But when you know how to use all the things that an expensive trumpet has available to you, then you can get more out of it. But, you see, if you gave Dizzy Gillespie a three-hundred-dollar trumpet and let him play it for a half hour, it's still Dizzy. Oh, yeah. Unless it's something that's poorly manufactured, now, with some defects. But if it's a legitimate trumpet, you give Dizzy a few minutes there with it, man, it's going to be Dizzy.

It's like with Charlie Parker. I've heard Charlie Parker play other people's horns.

ISOARDI: Well, he played everything, right out of pawn shops.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I heard him play Frank Morgan's saxophone. As soon as "Bird" [Charlie Parker] plays it for a few minutes, it's just—

ISOARDI: It's Bird.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it's Bird. It's like getting back to— You know what a distinct sound Johnny Hodges has?

ISOARDI: Oh, God, yes.

BRADFORD: Now, could you see Johnny Hodges—? He'd take Charlie Parker's saxophone, thirty minutes or so, he'd say [sings long glissando leading into slow melodic phrase]. Right?

ISOARDI: [laughs] Yeah, it's true.

BRADFORD: What he's getting out of the horn now is not the horn; he's just trying to make the horn behave, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah. Are you very conscious of mouthpieces, then?

BRADFORD: Well, now, that's another thing. Mouthpieces make the job easier. You can still get your sound. Now, if you get a mouthpiece that's so tiny you can't really get your lip in it, that's like giving some baseball player a bat that's either too little or too big. Then you've got some problems there.

But mouthpieces are important. They make the job easier, too, because you

want a mouthpiece geared toward the kind of work that you do. You see, a guy that plays in the Los Angeles Philharmonic [Orchestra] wouldn't use the same kind of mouthpiece as a guy who played lead trumpet with Count Basie, because that symphonic trumpet player, he's never asked to play those notes, those high notes, especially for two or three hours. So a trumpet player playing lead trumpet in a Count Basie band has got to have a mouthpiece that will help him do all that hard work back there, play all those high notes, for that extended period. And if you've got really thin lips as opposed to fleshy, you might want the right size. To that extent, yeah, the mouthpiece would make the job easier or harder. But the mouthpiece won't give you any sound.

Now, some saxophone player who wants to play rock saxophone could buy a mouthpiece for the tenor saxophone that makes it sound brighter or darker, but after a while, even then, when he gets used to that mouthpiece, then it gets to be him again, too. It's like good equipment can be specifically pointed towards the kind of work that you do, but the sound— Like these guys in jazz, they all have that really personal sound—

ISOARDI: It doesn't matter.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's them. That's them. Stanley Turrentine picks up a tenor saxophone, man, and you know who it is in ten seconds, don't you?

ISOARDI: Exactly, by the first bar.

BRADFORD: Well, he can do that on anybody's saxophone. It might take him a few

minutes to get adjusted to it— You know that [mimics the sound of Turrentine popping a high note] that he does.

So I get this Olds Ambassador trumpet, I'm playing in the band there in high school— And I think I mentioned to you that in the band, though he was a year ahead of me, Cedar Walton played glockenspiel. [David] "Fathead" [Newman] played alto saxophone. He was two years, I think, ahead of me there. James Clay was a year behind me. Those are the guys whose names would ring bells to people who might read this stuff—you know, really important players in the years to follow.

ISOARDI: This is a high-quality band.

BRADFORD: Well, it was actually— It had a lot of really talented people in it, but it was just a great big loud football band.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right.

BRADFORD: It wasn't a really good band in terms of a good marching band that plays these marches with dynamics and really accurate rhythmic interpretation. It was just a big loud football band that played these marches at football games. When those cheerleaders and all marched out on the field, there would be about a hundred of them out there with little white skirts on, little white boots with tassels on them, and they're carrying these big flags, and the band's going [sings "Stars and Stripes Forever"]. That's what we played. [some background conversation interrupts as Ulises Bela, saxophonist with the band Ozomatli, and his girlfriend enter Bradford's studio bringing him some Cuban cigars]

BRADFORD: One of the big stars from Ozomatli just came in bringing me a cigar that he brought back— Cuban cigars. I know you can't smell these on the tape, but I'll just—I'll smell them for you. [mutual laughter] I'd like to tell you guys on tape there that this is a Cohiba [brand cigar] and a Montecristo in the right [hand], and Romeo y Julieta. Oh, is this bad or what? [tape recorder off]

ISOARDI: Let's see, you were talking about the marching band and all the people who were playing: Cedar Walton, James Clay—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. It wasn't in the truest sense a really good marching band; it wasn't a good band. I romanticize sometimes about it, but it was just a big loud football band. But there were a lot of talented kids there.

ISOARDI: Were any of these kids getting together and playing in bands after school, things like that?

BRADFORD: The only ones who were trying to do something after school now was that little clique of ours, the little boppers that were wearing the Ray-Bans, or whatever you call those sunglasses—

ISOARDI: [laughs] Horn-rimmed glasses.

BRADFORD: Yeah, whatever that company was that was making those slick sunglasses then. There were a couple of other guys in the group now whose names—Who didn't finally do anything in music, but who were part of our little bop clique. There was an alto player named Jim Davis, and there was another trumpet player—I can't think of his name now—but he'd come to school with his eyes red from smoking

weed [marijuana] every day, man. Because that was already hip, you know, smoking weed—for them, at least. I hadn't quite gotten the hang of that yet. I was still a little Baptist boy and that was a biggie for me, seeing these guys coming to school with their eyes red, you know, everybody talking about their smoking weed.

But there were about eight or ten of us in there who were interested in jazz. And out of that group— We broke up into little groups. I and James Clay and another kid, Herbie Johnson, we had our little group that was— The two saxes and the trumpet and drums and—what else?— We didn't have an [upright] bass player. All we had was a drummer. And we made ourselves some little stands out of cardboard, you know, the little things where you put the top on to the bottom part to hold the music. And sometimes they'd hire us to play for dances at school, and the kids would come up— We couldn't play anything, you know. Well, we knew a couple of little tunes, you know, but we kept playing the same thing over and over, and the kids—

ISOARDI: Sort of R and B [rhythm and blues] stuff?

BRADFORD: Yeah, kind of R and B stuff, and some jazz things too, but they would say, "Oh, you guys stop. We'll put records on, because we're getting tired of that," you know.

But, you know, out of that little group, now— At that point, James Clay was clearly now the most precocious of our little group there. He was already a kid who could get over the horn and could get up there and do it already. I mean, he was just a natural, just like David Newman—Fathead. These guys just— I can't believe it.

Fathead was already traveling around the country with blues bands while he was still in high school—

ISOARDI: No kidding.

BRADFORD: —playing alto and baritone saxophone. And he didn't have any real saxophone instruction. These guys were just intuitive about how the horn ought to be played, and watching professionals so that they would see— Picking up things about embouchure and sound and listening to records, you know. About the only weak aspect about that playing was probably sight reading, which they didn't get a lot of experience at, you know.

ISOARDI: And that wasn't something that was emphasized at the school?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, to this extent all you had in school in terms of training was the prep[aration course]—band one, band two—

ISOARDI: Oh, and that was it?

BRADFORD: Then you got into the advanced band. Well, you didn't really get any more training, so to speak, after that. You picked up things, but he didn't stop the whole band to say, "Now this is how you read this rhythm." You know what I'm saying? It's like the football player: Once you get to be a junior on the high school team, you don't get any more fundamentals.

ISOARDI: Yeah, you know all the plays.

BRADFORD: Well, it's too bad if you didn't get them all, because the coach would just send you out there to play by that time. He's not telling you, "You're not playing

fundamental football," or you missed the basketball so "You're not dribbling properly."

It's too late for that. You know, he's already dealing with somebody who's a junior player; only the people who are the first year out there get into basics. And whatever you got that first couple of years, after that you go in there and play, you know. And the original band director [James Miller] that was so good who died my second year there, he was replaced by a guy who was not originally a music major [James White].

I think he was some sort of science major, but he played instruments or something.

ISOARDI: He knew enough.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he knew enough to get the job as band director. So he couldn't help any of us. He played the bass, but he couldn't really be of any help to the horn players or any of that, so he just sort of fronted the band, you know.

ISOARDI: So what did you do for instruction?

BRADFORD: Well, we didn't have any instruction as such. The people that were coming along in band one and band two, they were sort of teaching themselves. This guy had the class, but he couldn't really help them, except— Now, he knew how to play the bass, but he couldn't *teach* music, you see, in the sense that you show a kid now, "Here's how to read these rhythms in 6/8 or this in 4/4 or 2/4." He didn't know the fine— All he had was sort of general knowledge about music. That's like sending somebody into class now who says, "Well, I have a degree in English, and I'm going to teach Spanish to this class now, and I'll get the book and I'll read a couple of chapters ahead of the students." You know?

So for the last two and a half, three years of high school there, we had this band—two years anyway—where everybody was kind of going mostly off their own momentum. Two or three of the guys were taking private lessons from people in the neighborhoods where they lived, you know.

ISOARDI: Were there any good private teachers around?

BRADFORD: No, there were guys around who played, but they didn't teach. Like, you know, "Mr. Brown's" trumpet studio didn't have any of that, and the white teachers weren't taking the black students. The only white guy in that town who taught me anything at all was one of the guys who was one of the owner's sons where I bought the trumpet, the Klein Music company. He had a son who was, oh, I guess in his thirties, who worked at his dad's store, you know, who had a family, named Jack [Klein]. And sometimes I could come down on Saturday morning when the store first opened, and he'd give me like a half hour lesson, or forty-five minutes for five bucks, or something like that. And I learned just enough from him to know what it was I needed to learn.

ISOARDI: And everything else was just listening to the records?

BRADFORD: Listening to the records, right, that's what everybody else was doing. Some of what these guys were playing, it was a purely intuitive response to what was happening—you know, "What do you do to get this?" And some of these people walked right out of high school into professional music.

But it was real narrow. They knew how to do that, but you couldn't take them

right out of that and say, "Here, we want you to play in this circus band. You're going to have to sight read a lot of music for these different acts like the trapeze and all." They would have been just totally dumbfounded. They couldn't do it, you see?

But they were working toward that aspect of the music that they were interested in. How to get that sound, like these guys on record—whatever it took—and how to learn these tunes. And how to play these songs mostly by ear rather than studying the harmony underneath, like a piano player might, which most of them did later on. Now, Cedar Walton, of course, was a special case. I remember very clearly in high school, Cedar Walton, his favorite piano players during that period were Oscar Peterson and George Shearing and people like that that he liked. Cedar already knew the harmonies in those songs.

But we rarely got to deal with him at school because he didn't play piano at school. And his mother, you see, was a piano teacher, so he was well trained from the very beginning. And Cedar didn't get to hang out with the street bunch. You know, Mom had kind of a handle on where he came and went. In fact, I can remember occasions where we had to go by his house and tell a story to his mother to get him to leave the house to go play. Because, you know, [they were] what I would like to think of as a typical black middle class family. She just didn't let him wander around with no particular direction. Just to say to Mom, "Well, Mom, I'm going out and I'll be back late tonight." I mean, not that everybody else did that who wasn't middle class, I don't mean that. I'm just trying to get you to see that here was a guy whose parents

kept a leash on what he did, you know. And he had to study the piano on a regular basis because his mom was a teacher. So he read music very well, he knew these harmonies. While most of us were still copying the records and playing by ear, Cedar knew the right chords, but he didn't get to go and hang out at these beer joints and stuff when he was fifteen, sixteen, like some of the other guys did.

I don't mean that in a bad way, as if the people in the lower economic thing were just not concerned about their kids. But what Cedar represented was the kind of family that thought that everything meant keeping the kid kind of tied in. As soon as he gets out of high school send him right off to college and push him toward that kind of middle class life, so to speak. I may not be describing this the best way, but you know what I'm talking about? Like some of these other guys, you see, were going around and hanging around the beer joints when they were fifteen and coming home late at night. Well, Cedar couldn't have gotten away with that, you see. Nor could I for that matter.

ISOARDI: You'd never hung around the beer joints when you were in high school?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. Not until, like, eleventh grade, when I got big enough to go and play at places. And even then we would be playing at— There's one picture I'll show you here, where we were playing at a white club called the Round-Up, and we were still in high school. I'm not in that particular shot, but James Clay and this kid Herbie Johnson are both playing there, dressed nicely, and you can see the jukebox in front. It was a club called the Round-Up, and the R and B band played after the

country-western band quit at midnight. The black band came on and played from midnight to two.

ISOARDI: Would the audience change, too?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, the audience stayed right there, right?. White audience. And there are kids up there on the stage now who are seventeen, eighteen years old, but you don't get to mingle with the crowd, so nobody's going to ask you for I.D. Now they couldn't have had any sixteen, seventeen year old white kids out there in the audience, but the black people who are going to play, you're going to leave the stage and go right to the little dressing room and take your fifteen minute break and come out and play again.

You're playing R and B, and there was a white audience out there that liked [sings first line of "I Love You, Yes I Do" and scats a doo-wop line], stuff like that. They loved to dance to it. They liked this music, they liked "Night Train," and they liked Duke Ellington's— Like "Jeep's Blues"— [sings first few bars] They loved it. They loved to dance to that, you know. Now a lot of people out there who came to hear the cowboy bands—we called it hillbilly—some of them left, but others stuck around. And this had one of those great big balls in the middle of the room hanging from the shaft that spun around with the little pieces of glass, the little mirrors on it.

ISOARDI: It was like something from the twenties.

BRADFORD: Right, exactly. And this club is called the Round-Up. I played there with Buster Smith. Sometimes Buster—

ISOARDI: And that's when he was playing bass.

BRADFORD: Yeah, playing bass. I never saw him with a saxophone in his hand, except sitting around the house.

ISOARDI: Did you ever ask him about that when you got to know him a little bit?

BRADFORD: No. By the time I got to really know Buster I'm already gone off to college. I don't see him anymore. When it would have had some meaning for me, I was not there anymore to ask him. And he didn't spend a lot of time trying to tell you about who he was or who he was supposed to be or whether he was famous or not. You'd have to ask him all of those things if you wanted to know anything about that. You see, he was there in town.

There was John Hardee, tenor player. There's a great album that's been rereleased in about the last ten years with John Hardee and Ike Quebec. You know this tenor player? Swing guy—

ISOARDI: Yeah, certainly I know him.

BRADFORD: He and John Hardee have a record with the two tenors on it and it's been—

ISOARDI: No, I don't know the record, but, yeah, I certainly know him.

BRADFORD: Hell of a tenor player. He was living in Dallas, Texas. So was Freddie Jenkins, who used to play with— You know, the left-handed trumpet player with Duke Ellington. Keg Johnson was there part of the time—

ISOARDI: Trombonist.

BRADFORD: Right. Now, though he left probably when I was maybe a ten-year-old, Red Garland grew up there. You know, the piano player?

ISOARDI: Wow.

BRADFORD: There were a lot of adult men around town who played in bands all over Dallas. There's another guy who had a band, his name was Red Calhoun; he played in white clubs only. You never saw this guy. He played nights, like Friday, Saturday, Sunday night with his band. He had an eight or ten piece band, played the country clubs. You never saw this guy. He didn't go to church, so he slept late and he played in the clubs at night. But we all knew him, you know, he had a good band around town. The white people would hire him to play for their affairs where you wanted a band of ten pieces or so.

ISOARDI: Society band?

BRADFORD: Yeah, a society band. Red Calhoun and his orchestra. There was another band, Leo Phillips and his band, that I played with on occasion. There were two or three of those around town. A society band was exactly what it was, but they always had a blues repertoire, too. But they played Basie charts, you know, or Basie tunes, and they'd play, I'm sure, some of the popular stuff such as Glenn Miller was playing. I'm sure they knew how to play "In the Mood"—whatever the crowd wanted. They'd play waltzes, you know, they had anything you wanted. If you wanted a polka I'm sure they'd whip it out.

ISOARDI: So you were playing some of these gigs when you were in high school?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, yeah. Eleventh, twelfth grade, I played weekends.

ISOARDI: What's the pay like?

BRADFORD: Oh, for a trumpet player like myself, five bucks.

ISOARDI: Five bucks a night?

BRADFORD: Yeah, six bucks maybe. If you were like a thirty-five or forty year old trumpet player around town, you know, it might be ten or fifteen or twenty bucks, but you could get a guy my age for five bucks. [mutual laughter] I was glad to do it.

ISOARDI: Did you have to be in a union or anything?

BRADFORD: Oh, no.

ISOARDI: This was an open town then for musicians?

BRADFORD: Yeah. There might have been a white union, though I doubt it. But there was no black union. I don't actually think there was a union. I'm almost certain there wasn't. No union. Didn't even know what that meant.

ISOARDI: Yeah, Texas certainly isn't a union state.

BRADFORD: Oh, no. I'm sure. If there was a union it might have had some control over the Dallas Symphony or something like that—

ISOARDI: That would be about it.

BRADFORD: Dallas always had a kind of second, third level orchestra that wasn't so bad. In fact at one point Dallas had a really good orchestra. I don't know what they do now, but I know in the sixties, seventies, they had a good orchestra.

ISOARDI: Your dad, what does he think about your getting these gigs at night?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, I'm getting good grades in school. Now, anytime I could go out and earn money, my father was in favor of it. Not because he would take it, but because he thought that was a sign that you were trying to get ahead.

ISOARDI: Responsibility and all that.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah, you were a hustler, right? But he would take— He'd say, "Now, out of some of that money you've got— You can't squander all that. You're responsible now for buying your own socks and underwear" or "you have to save some for this—" You know. You couldn't just take the money and go just screw it off buying ice cream for your girlfriend. You had to kind of squirrel some of that away. And there was no conflict in his mind about me playing these beer joints versus my being the good-Baptist-prayer-meeting-singing-in-the-choir boy. That was just business.

ISOARDI: At the time were you thinking about a career in music?

BRADFORD: I am, but he's not. Now he's thinking, because I was a good student and— We didn't have a junior high. Our elementary school went to grade eight.

ISOARDI: Eight and then you went into— That's what mine was like, too.

BRADFORD: The teachers at our elementary school said to him, "This kid's got a good mind. You ought to push him toward, you know, some kind of profession." So when I got to high school, they already had an agenda for me there. They had transferred my records and they assigned me to a certain homeroom teacher [Carrie Brown]. That's why I couldn't take band [class] that first year that I got the cornet.

She already had me taking Latin, chemistry—

ISOARDI: This was all college prep stuff.

BRADFORD: Yeah, not like a real college prep school around here, but for our purposes, yeah. Not that curriculum that the football players were interested in or people who could get out of it. See, you didn't have to take a foreign language if you didn't want to, but they had Latin and Spanish. And the people who— Parents who were on their case said, "You are going to take one or the other." And so the homeroom teacher said, "Now Latin will prepare you to take other languages. You'll have a basis." I'm thinking, "Oh, *e pluribus unum*," right?

ISOARDI: [laughs] That's the line they gave me, too.

BRADFORD: Right. But there we are, you know, translating Cicero, not knowing what it's all about. In fact, I met one of my coworkers here at Pomona College. He was a Yale graduate in theology who was the chair of the music department at Pomona once. We were talking about what we had studied in school, and I began to recite something out of one of my Latin classes, like "*Gallia est omnis divisa*"

ISOARDI: Julius Caesar.

BRADFORD: Right. "All Gaul is divided in—"

ISOARDI: "—divided into three parts."

BRADFORD: He said, "Where'd you learn that?" It's like "Bradford, I'm impressed!" Because he sees me as this jazz guy with dark glasses and all. So I said to him, "Where'd you learn it?" [mutual laughter] Right? But he was a sweet guy, now, he

didn't mean that in a bad way. But here's a guy with a Ph.D. from Yale, but who's also a music student who decided not to be ordained and to pursue music, and we were just talking about our childhoods. He said, "You know, it's very interesting how certain kinds of families, we all have something in common," that no matter what group you're in, there's this mom or dad who said, "Now, my kid is going to do this." I said, "Exactly."

When I came home from school every day, my father said to me any day I walked in, "What did you do today at school?" And if I said, "Well, we learned how to do so and so in algebra," he'd say, "Show me. Show me what. Show me." You know. I'd say, "We're talking about logarithms today." He'd say, "Show me." When the report came out, he'd say, "Let's see it." Not like a parent who just never looked at it. You had to sign it. Some parents didn't even sign it; kids signed them themselves. But he wanted to see.

Like a lot of parents, he thought that music was great, but looking around at the people who played music— A lot of their lives weren't too attractive.

Some white doctor in Dallas, Texas, had told the principal of our high school, "Pick two boys out that you think could cut it in medical school and push them into a science curriculum, and when they graduate I'll make sure that they go to medical school." So this guy gave this doctor my name and this other black kid who was not a musician named Melvin Chambers, who later on went off to school and became an engineer. He lives somewhere near Washington, D.C. right now [running] some

international company he owns now as an electronics super-duper. He was a brilliant kid. We were in competition for who was the— You know, whatever that's about. In the classrooms, we were the most outspoken and the best read I guess. But I think this kid probably had a few points on me in I.Q., because he was good in math, you know. He was good in composition, literature. He was a whiz in—

ISOARDI: Across the board then.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was— Except in music now. He couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. You could be sitting there next to him, and we would be singing the school song and I would hear [sings random, off-key phrase], just dreadful stuff. [mutual laughter]

Anyhow, this principal got his name and mine from one of the other teachers, and so then they told my father about it. He said, "Now you've got a chance to be a doctor." And by that time I had the Charlie Parker bug.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

BRADFORD: So I said, "Oh, I want to be a musician. I want to play this trumpet." He said, "You can play that trumpet on weekends." he said. So I just kind of went along with his program. I took the courses I was wanted to be taking, but I had no intention of being a doctor. I had no real interest in it. I liked the idea: "Hey, what if I were Doctor Bradford? That would be great, wouldn't it?" But I had no interest in medicine. I hadn't even thought about how much money you would make or what it would do for your life and all of that, you know, in terms of just economics. I was in

love with this music. I had heard Charlie Parker and Dexter Gordon and Fats Navarro, man, and there was no turning back then.

I was about fourteen by then, when I heard these guys. People in the neighborhood, these musicians who— One piano player in particular named L. J. Bomar, who lived in a housing project about, oh, a five-minute walk from where we lived. I'd pass by his place, you know, going to and fro on a little main street, and I could hear him in there playing the piano. The front door's open, if it's warm weather, in Texas; back door, too, so you get some breeze through the house. He's in there playing the piano, listening to these records. Eyes red, right? And he'd say, "Come on in and I'll play this for you." He knew I played the trumpet because the guys would pass by this little store, and I would be playing— Everybody knows everybody, you know; it's a small community.

He said, "Listen to this," and it seems like to me he played this thing with Fats and Dexter Gordon on it. I can't remember the name of it—some blues—like "Dexter's Deck" or "Dexter Digs In" or something like that. It wasn't Charlie Parker; it was Dexter. [sings hard-swinging, medium-tempo bebop phrase] They were going [sings very up-tempo eighth-note bebop phrase], and I thought, "Oh, man!" And then here comes Fats Navarro, a very, very sophisticated harmonic trumpet player. I had heard Harry James and all these guys, and Cootie Williams with Duke Ellington—you know what I mean?—but the boppers, the language was just so slick, man.

And then I would look in the newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the other

newspaper—what was it?—*Chicago Defender*. We'd see every now and then articles on these guys, the new records they were making, and they were dressed slick and— You know, it was just another world, these guys. They were another breed, these beboppers, you know.

ISOARDI: Those newspapers, would you get them regularly in Dallas?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, every week. The *Pittsburgh Courier* came every week. In fact, I— You know, part of my little thing to make money was [delivering] the *Pittsburgh Courier*. You know how they had the newsprint? The front page was pink with black lettering? We got the *Pittsburgh Courier* every week, yeah, and the *Chicago Defender* once a week.

ISOARDI: Right, there was no black newspaper in Dallas.

BRADFORD: Yeah, there was, but it was a godawful little rag. Whoever it was couldn't even spell, who wrote the articles. All they had on there was who was murdered and stuff like that. You know, one of those newspapers that would have in it about how somebody had had a party, and the paper would tell how much food they had had at the party—that kind of paper.

ISOARDI: Yeah, terrible.

BRADFORD: Yeah, just a rag, a local paper, you know. But these papers were from outside, you know, good writers.

ISOARDI: Yeah, they covered a lot of the nation.

BRADFORD: Yes, they did. They covered the black political scene—

ISOARDI: The theater scene, the music scene—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, everything. That's where I'd see pictures of Lena Horne, you know, and— What's this comic? What was his name? They were— What did they call him? Something and— Two black comedians that were really big.

ISOARDI: They were a team?

BRADFORD: It was like—

ISOARDI: Butterbeans?

BRADFORD: No, not Butterbeans and Susie. These were two men.

ISOARDI: Oh, two guys.

BRADFORD: They were, like, Johnson and Robertson or something like that. I can't think of their names now, but they would be in there. And of course there would be pictures of Stepin Fetchit and Mantan Moreland, you know, whenever these guys did something, if they were doing a new movie— There would be a picture of Duke Ellington. You'd see him all suave at the keyboard with his tuxedo and all this stuff, man.

In fact I remember once going to the movie in Cleveland, Mississippi, now, when I was a kid. It had to be before I was ten years old. And you know the little short subjects, as they called them, in between the big movies? There's a cowboy movie and sort of a film noir, some Alan Ladd, you know, that kind of stuff. There would be the two movies on Saturday. Well, then they have a cartoon and sometimes a short. And there was a thing of Duke Ellington called the "Perfume Suite." There's

Ellington behind the keyboard and these tiny little bottles of really expensive perfume on the piano. I remember it to this day.

I didn't get it then, how privileged I was to see this, how that even got its way to Mississippi, because I'm sure the whites and blacks were thinking, "What is this?" He was at the keyboard playing all these thirteenths, man. And I was listening to that, and I thought—I admired this guy, but I didn't know what the hell he was doing. I could tell this was some hip shit he was playing, man. You could hear this guy at the piano—Everybody was playing stuff like this in those days; all we were hearing was—[plays a boogie-woogie ostinato on piano] You hear Duke Ellington [plays a few bars in a moody, elegant Ellington style]; you thought, "My God, what is this?" We're not hearing this on weekends, right? It's so slick. And him dressed beautifully—There was no Uncle Tom, you know, none of that shuffling around on the screen with this guy. Everybody knew, now, here's something special. Even if you don't like it, you like it. And a lot of people didn't understand his music, white and black, because, you know, you really had to listen to what this guy was doing. But we knew he was a heavy, right? And somebody that you ought to listen to the second time because he's doing something that is so slick that you're going to have to sit down now and really get at this.

ISOARDI: So you're still—I mean, even after the boppers you still really appreciated Ellington.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, Duke Ellington. You know, I didn't start to really take Duke

Ellington apart and to study his music until I was in college, when it hit me harmonically what I was going to have to try to learn about him. I didn't quite get the level he was as a composer and orchestrator. I didn't realize how many people were stealing from him, you know. I didn't understand that jazz orchestration, you see, was something that was dominated by just a handful of people and the rest of the people were just copying. You know, by the time I was in— By 1949 Ellington, boy, he had done damn near everything you could do, you know.

One day, right in the middle of the semester there, this one band director, the one that was kind of somewhat incompetent that I had the last couple of years there— That might not be the right word to use for him, but— He did the best he could; he just wasn't a music major is what I'm saying, God bless him. He did, however, point us in the right direction by saying, "I'm bringing guys in here from the little black colleges all around, and they're going to listen to some of you guys playing. If you impress them now you'll get a scholarship to go off to one of these schools and you'll get to go to college."

Well, I knew at our house we didn't have any money to go to college, unless I was going to try to be the doctor bit. Because we were living— You know, as things were we had this little sundries store—it wasn't a drugstore anymore—and a lot of people thought if you had a store you had money, but— You know what I mean? Once you add up and pay your bills, you have a lot less than the people who have jobs in the community. But we happened to have this little store.

Anyway, this guy, Bertrand Adams was his name, he was the band director at Sam Houston College, and he would come to the larger cities trying to recruit kids to come to Sam Houston College as music majors. And he showed one day in the band room, and my band director introduced him. He said, "This is Bert Adams." Bertrand was his name. He just died a couple of years ago—

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: —in Austin, Texas, yeah. I used to talk to him periodically over the years. In fact, I kept in touch with him all through the last thirty, forty years. We talked at least once or twice every year—at New Years, at Christmas, or in the middle of— And sometimes he'd call me out of the clear blue.

ISOARDI: That's nice.

BRADFORD: He listened and he said, "You and you and you," and I was one of them. He said, "I'll get you a scholarship, you come to college, and you'll have your tuition and your books and part of your room and board."

ISOARDI: Well, you played for him, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but you've got to be the music department roadie. You've got to play in the pep band for football and basketball; you've got to play in the concert band; you've got to play in the brass ensemble; you've got to play in that sacred music set, because this is a Methodist school; you've got to set up the stands when the band gets ready to rehearse, put them up when we're through, pass out the music, do all this stuff. That earns you the scholarship that you got. So you're like a little music department

roadie.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really.

BRADFORD: But no problem, you know.

ISOARDI: Did you have to do an audition for him at your high school?

BRADFORD: Well, you— He sat there and listened to the band play, you know, and the band director would say, "Now you've got a solo on this piece here." And we pulled out some little— And you'd get to play on it, and he'd sit and listen to how you were playing there. And he said, "What about you and you—" And he'd tell those guys, "I'm offering this amount of money in terms of scholarship. That means that when you come your parents will only have to pay so much to augment what we're giving you there to go to school." So I graduated in January, in three and a half years.

ISOARDI: This is January of what year?

BRADFORD: This is January, 1952. I was supposed to graduate that June, but I had enough credits because I had taken all this stuff, and I decided not to hang around until June. So I graduated in January and went off to college. Graduated on Friday night, showed up at college Monday morning.

ISOARDI: No kidding? Sam Houston.

BRADFORD: Yeah, with the big steamer trunk. [mutual laughter] Now, get this— You know what I'm talking about, a steamer trunk, right? Now when you get assigned your room in the dormitory, there are four of us in one room. Two double— You know the bunk beds?

ISOARDI: Two bunk beds?

BRADFORD: Two bunk beds on either side. And your chest of drawers and your space in the room, that's that trunk.

ISOARDI: That's your desk too, I guess.

BRADFORD: Well, no, not your desk. There was one desk that you all had to share.

ISOARDI: Four people share one desk.

BRADFORD: Four people. Four people, one desk. You take your turn. If you couldn't, you'd go over to the library and use that desk. There's one desk in the room.

You open that trunk up and you see all these drawers, and there's a place in there, you know, where you hang suits on the left side and the drawer's on the right. That was your chest of drawers and your little place where you kept everything.

ISOARDI: You never unpacked, essentially.

BRADFORD: No, that's right. All you had to do was close up and everything was ready to go someplace else.

ISOARDI: Well, that's good training for being a musician.

BRADFORD: Oh, listen—

But I was so glad to be in college. It was just— Oh, man.

ISOARDI: But what about your—I mean, has your dad given up any hope of your being a doctor then? You were getting a music scholarship, right?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, by then he'd given up. He said this guy wants to play like— And he was beginning to toss these names around then. They would say, "Is Bobby

going to go and be a lawyer or doctor?" And he'd say, "Oh, no, he wants to play jazz. He wants to play like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and those guys." Well, he was just mouthing, you know.

ISOARDI: Did you get a full scholarship?

BRADFORD: Well, full to the extent now that my family only had to pay about five hundred bucks each semester. They sent about \$500 down each semester to augment what the scholarship would give me. So it paid for books, tuition, and part of the room and board.

Now, this was Sam Houston College, not to be confused with the white school not very far from there called Sam Houston State Teachers College [now Sam Houston State University]. But both of these are named after, you know, the famous Texas guy. Now, by 1954 that school and another black school, oh, about a mile and half away, merged. There was another black school in Austin, too, called Tillotson College, which was originally a girl's school—but both Methodist. Then it became coed, I guess, somewhere in the early forties. Then they finally decided that to save both schools, because they were always in financial trouble, they would merge, and it became Houston-Tillotson College, which is what it is now.

ISOARDI: What about—? This is 1952, so I guess you're eighteen years old or just about?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'm going to be eighteen that summer.

ISOARDI: That summer? What about the Korean War and the draft? Because you're

in college, is that going to get you out of the draft?

BRADFORD: Well, you know, I'm trying to remember now what happened about—I registered for the draft, and it came not too long after that. In fact, I stayed there that semester, which would be the spring semester, right? Then I came back in the fall of 1952, right?

ISOARDI: Back to college after summer—Okay.

BRADFORD: Back to college. Went home and worked for my dad during the summer, came back in the fall, and then I stayed the fall semester, and the next semester, which would be now the—

ISOARDI: The first semester of your second year?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Second year of college. January '53?

BRADFORD: Yeah, so I finished the second year of college. In other words, that first year I came in mid-year, which means I did January of '52, then I did the fall of '52 and the spring of '53. So I get a year and a half of school there, don't I?

ISOARDI: Right, right.

BRADFORD: Now, in the summer of 1953, when I would have wanted to return in the fall to start another year, I decided to come to Los Angeles.

ISOARDI: To quit school?

BRADFORD: Yeah, to leave college.

ISOARDI: Why?

BRADFORD: Oh, I— See, the jazz thing there— We had a big jazz band. My roommate was Leo Wright—

ISOARDI: Oh, you're kidding.

BRADFORD: —the alto player with Dizzy. Now, he had come the fall before I came, so when I got there he already had one semester in. But I happened to be assigned to the room that he was in; he was my roommate. He and one other trumpet player from Fort Worth, Texas, a guy named Willie Crenshaw. And then I forgot who the other roommate was— I think it was a French horn player from Tulsa, Oklahoma, or something like that. The four of us were in there. But Leo was playing lead alto in the big jazz band.

Now, when I got there the big jazz band had four trumpet players in it, so I had to wait my turn, right? But as the gods would have it, these guys were playing softball, one of the trumpet players in the band gets clobbered with either the ball or the bat, and it breaks his jawbone.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: So they wire his jawbone together and close it, and he can't play. So I'm pulled up out of the ranks to fill in—

ISOARDI: This is your first semester?

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. A month after I'm there, I'm pulled into the big jazz band.

ISOARDI: This was meant to be for you.

BRADFORD: Yeah, this was a good jazz band. Now, I don't mean— In comparison

to what I said about the high school marching band— This Bertrand Adams was a well-trained musician, a trombone player. He had a master's degree in music, you know, really sharp. Like a lot of the people, he did all of his education out of Texas and came back to Texas to live and teach.

ISOARDI: What were the charts like that you guys were playing?

BRADFORD: Well, believe it or not we had guys who had come— See, now Bert Adams had played with some big bands—I think he played with Lucky Millinder or some people like that—and he was an arranger too. We had some charts in the band, I remember, by Wild Bill Davison—you know, the organ player?

ISOARDI: Oh, really? The organ player, yeah.

BRADFORD: Now, he and Bert were old friends because they both went to college together. And Wild Bill taught Bert how to orchestrate; I found this out years later. So we had arrangements in there now that these guys had copied from records, the full thing. We had some charts in there now— Think about this: When bands would come to town—traveling bands—it would be somebody like Lucky Millinder, because they have a big band, you know. And even the Basie band, these guys would go to the gig, and Basie would let them copy charts.

ISOARDI: Oh, no kidding?

BRADFORD: Everybody would sit up there and copy your own part, right? So this library, this "book" as we called it, had some good arrangements in it. It had some stocks [stock arrangements], too; it had some Les Brown stocks in it. I remember we

had a great arrangement of "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," from the Les Brown band. A really good arrangement.

ISOARDI: But you were doing mostly—I mean, this is pretty straight ahead swing.

Do you have any bebop charts?

BRADFORD: Yeah, we had "Emanon," Dizzy Gillespie.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, one of our features—

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

MAY 2, 2000

BRADFORD: All right, we had "Emanon" in the book, we had "Manteca," we had some of the other Gil Fuller stuff, you know, "Oop Bop Sh' Bam," all of those things. Now, some of that stuff could be bought during those days, I can't remember— But some of the stuff, some of the guys in the area who had been in that band before, we had two or three guys in the band now who were good arrangers. One guy from Oklahoma whose name was James Jennings—

ISOARDI: Who was arranging bebop charts?

BRADFORD: Arranging bebop charts for the band, some original stuff.

ISOARDI: Man.

BRADFORD: And there was another guy who had played in the band years earlier who would come back periodically and bring charts to the band. I can't think of his name right now. And there was another guy from San Antonio, Texas—Ernest Hegwood—who was a good arranger. Writing beautiful charts, bop charts. Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: And you had somebody playing congas?

BRADFORD: Yeah—

ISOARDI: For those Dizzy charts?

BRADFORD: Yeah, this Herbert Stamp played the congas and sang, too. This was a good band, man.

ISOARDI: Now, what's it like? You're there a month, and you're thrown in the middle of this band.

BRADFORD: Oh, man, I was in heaven, of course.

ISOARDI: But coming out of a school where they just had a marching band.

BRADFORD: That's right. Well, except for our little—

ISOARDI: Your own little groups, yeah.

BRADFORD: But now, the concert band that this school had was terrific. We played regular concert band literature. But, see, there were enough musicians there. We had flute players and people who could play flute and piccolo. We had an oboe player, a bassoon player, and this concert band.

But now, here were kids from the state of Texas— It was the cream of the crop, going to these little colleges. You see, we couldn't go to the other schools. Any talented black kids in Texas, now, who were going to college were going to go to these little black schools. Because that's all you could go to, unless your parents had money to send you to Los Angeles, where you could go to UCLA or something. And for the most part the kids didn't.

ISOARDI: People didn't.

BRADFORD: Now, the odd thing about the faculty in these little colleges, and in some of the high schools too, like mine— Texas in those days— You see, there were no schools where black people could get advanced degrees in Texas. You couldn't get a master's in Texas. Texas would pay you a little stipend to leave in the summer and

go someplace else and get your master's degree and come back. And half of the faculty in my high school, they had degrees from 'SC [University of Southern California], Northwestern [University], University of Michigan.

ISOARDI: Crazy.

BRADFORD: Yeah, insane.

ISOARDI: Just crazy.

BRADFORD: And some people would say, "Well, why didn't they—? When they left, why didn't they stay?" Well, that was their home, you know? It's like people say to the Jews, "Why did you want to go back to Berlin?" "That's my home." "That's who I am. I grew up in Texas, I want to come back, I want to live here. My people are here."

But this guy Bert Adams, now he had this concert band, boy, that was [whistles in amazement]—

ISOARDI: How big?

BRADFORD: Forty pieces maybe, something like that. A lot of girls, you know. Played clarinet.

ISOARDI: Any girls in the jazz band?

BRADFORD: In the jazz band? No, it was kind of unheard of then. Outside, there were some professional women playing, but— Because, you know, there was the black swing band, the Sweethearts of Rhythm.

ISOARDI: But that was an all-girls band.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. There were some women playing, but I can't think of a band now that was mixed that had a woman in it in those days.

ISOARDI: Well, at one point, Dizzy had Melba Liston.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that was a little later. It might have been then, though, I'm not sure.

ISOARDI: Well, Gerald Wilson had Melba earlier.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Now, when I remember Melba sort of making her appearance, it seems to me it would be like around 1955.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, the State Department bands with Dizzy.

BRADFORD: Yeah, something like that. And she might have played with Lionel Hampton a little before that, I'm not sure.

ISOARDI: When you join the band, what are you playing? What part?

BRADFORD: Third.

ISOARDI: Third trumpet.

BRADFORD: Third trumpet.

ISOARDI: So the guy who got knocked in the jaw was playing third trumpet?

BRADFORD: Yeah. His name— Now, what did we call him? "Geechee".

ISOARDI: Geechee?

BRADFORD: Geechee. He was real fair-skinned with kind of—

ISOARDI: Yeah, but that's not a flattering term.

BRADFORD: Well, yeah, but for us it was, now. It meant, now, you're some kind

of— It meant you're kind of a half-breed, that's what it meant. But it didn't mean— It wasn't malicious, nor was it meant to insult him. It's like if you had a big head, bigger than average, they might call you "Hey, Headquarters."

ISOARDI: Oh, all right.

BRADFORD: They give you a name.

ISOARDI: Or "Pops" [Louis Armstrong] gets called "Satchmo"— "Satchel Mouth."

BRADFORD: Right, "Satchel Mouth." Or if you had big ears they'd say "Hey, 'Lobes.'" That might be your name for the rest of the— But after that it was just meant to identify, right? They might say, "Hey, you, 'Feets.'" You know what I mean? Or like all those guitar players who were into folk: "Crippled Bill" and "Blind Lemon" [Jefferson] and "Shaky Bill," all those. Those names just meant to identify. It didn't mean to be offensive.

So this guy, he was from Oklahoma. It seems like he was from Chickasha, Oklahoma. Marshall Travis was his name—very fair skinned and kind of hazel greenish eyes. When I ran into him years later he had joined the army, and then made a career of the army. I saw him about 1961 or '62, and he had made his way back to Texas, and he was, oh, something like a tech[nical] sergeant or something in the army, had made a career of it.

ISOARDI: You're not in any danger of getting drafted during this time?

BRADFORD: Well, at that point I had—

ISOARDI: You registered for the draft. But you never heard from them then?

BRADFORD: No, until I came to Los Angeles that summer. I lived with my mother [Bernice Griffin Walker] out on [East] Eightieth [Street] and San Pedro [Street].

ISOARDI: Why do you leave Sam Houston and come to L.A.?

BRADFORD: I just felt like it wasn't— You know, things weren't going to get any better there in terms of jazz. And Leo said he was leaving, you know.

ISOARDI: So you had come to a point where you wanted to stretch a bit more? Is that kind of—?

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. See, you didn't get any classes, now. The black schools— You didn't get any classes in jazz. Nothing. In fact, if they—

ISOARDI: But you were a music major, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but just classical music. You're not getting your jazz chops up theoretically or anything like that. If they heard you in the practice room in there playing jazz they'd knock on the window.

ISOARDI: Oh, man. What did they even have a jazz band for?

BRADFORD: Well, but, you see, the jazz band was Bertrand Adams's thing. Now, how the jazz band worked, it got the school a kind of a lot of notoriety, if you will.

ISOARDI: So they tolerated it.

BRADFORD: It made a little pocket money for us. Now, sometimes that band would play Friday, Saturday, Sunday night at these frat houses. And I don't know what they paid him, but he made a little money out of it, and he gave everybody in the band five bucks each, right? But that was part of your job now if you won a scholarship. And

some of the kids weren't on scholarship, but they wanted to play in the jazz band. There was a guy who was here in Altadena who died a couple of years ago—we ran into each other—he was in that band. I hadn't seen him since. He worked for the post office in Los Angeles for years.

ISOARDI: Oh, he didn't have a career in music?

BRADFORD: No, not music. His name was Bruno, we called him. Now, what was Bruno's name? He played valve trombone in the band. And he lived in Altadena. He died about three years ago here, about my age—I mean, a year or so between our ages. But he had heard from somebody else at Pasadena City College. He came down there one day. We had kind of a reunion sort of, and I didn't see him anymore after that. We didn't socialize; we were just kind of too far apart. But he came to school—He was one of those kids whose family could afford to send him to school. He dressed nicely. Good trombone player. He was from Galveston. Brunswick. That was an odd name for a black family, wasn't it?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: William Brunswick.

ISOARDI: German name, eh?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Brunswick. And we called him Bruno.

ISOARDI: Bruno Brunswick.

BRADFORD: Yeah. He didn't improvise, but good reader. He played his part. He was from Galveston. But some of the guys, half of the guys in the band, like me and

Leo and some of the others, we were on scholarship, so we had to play in that jazz band.

But Bert always took care of his "boys," as he would say. Weekends we were playing these charts. People loved the band. We played for all kinds of affairs. We were always out at the University of Texas playing. We're looking around thinking, "Hey, man, this is kind of a nice school, isn't it?" You know what I mean? You know, they've got those oil rigs on campus. [mutual laughter] You know, whatever that thing is that looks like a mule, [which is what] they call it. The campus is full of those. And we'd joke and say, "This separate but equal shit, I don't know what they mean by that."

ISOARDI: About the equal part. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Right. So that's the summer of '53. I didn't go back. I came to Los Angeles to be with my mother and my stepfather [Augustus Walker].

ISOARDI: Actually, before you get to L.A., let me ask you about—I mean, you mention separate but equal. There are rumblings of the civil rights movement that's going to explode in a few years.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. The rumblings, now—

ISOARDI: Are you sensing anything politically? Is anything going on there?

BRADFORD: Yeah, because the thing is, 1953, Heman Sweatt will apply for admission to the University of Texas, a guy who's a postal worker. And we're watching all of this go down, you know. Oh, yeah, there are rumblings all over the

South and Southwest that this thing is going to change, but in the meantime you just go to class every day. And there was a population in our school who were waiting for the door to crack over there. They couldn't wait to get to go over there, because they had plans for education in terms of being Ph.D.s and all and were interested in being educators, and they had no problems being the first. And this guy Heman Sweatt happened to be the one who would be the one to apply. And as it turns out, when I came back out of the military I went to the University of Texas. But things had already— They weren't pretty, but the big jolt was already over, because that would be 1958.

ISOARDI: But there was feeling that this was coming?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: But when? 'Fifty-two or '53?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Everybody knew that the walls were coming down, I think.

ISOARDI: What about the Korean War? I mean, you're not drafted to go to Korea or anything. Is that very present? Is that something you guys ever thought much about?

BRADFORD: No, somehow the war was distant. I'm trying to remember now— You see, the big killer years for the war in Korea are '51 and '52, aren't they? That's when all that Pork Chop Hill—

ISOARDI: Yeah, because it begins in '50. It begins in the summer of '50.

BRADFORD: So then the years when a lot of people are dying are '51 and '52, aren't they?

ISOARDI: And then it sort of settles into a stalemate.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Somehow the war is distant. We're in college—

ISOARDI: You don't have any friends who have been drafted or who are over there or anything like that?

BRADFORD: I actually do.

ISOARDI: Kids from the neighborhood?

BRADFORD: I do. I had one trumpet player friend of mine who was drafted and went into the army and came back with a big scar on his face from—I don't know what he got— And I was expecting to hear from these people, which I did in the summer of 1954. I came back off a little road trip with an R and B band called King Perry and his Stompers or whatever we called ourselves, an R and B band. And a letter was waiting—"Greetings," you know.

ISOARDI: Okay, well, why don't we get to that, then? You leave Sam Houston and you head for L.A., right?

BRADFORD: Head for L.A.

ISOARDI: To pursue music—

BRADFORD: To pursue music.

ISOARDI: —professionally. Why L.A.?

BRADFORD: Well, my mom's here. I've got a place— They've come back now from all the trooping around back East with my stepfather.

ISOARDI: He's decided to come back to L.A.?

BRADFORD: He's come back to L.A. now and is going to run some businesses for this brother of his [Toby Walker] that's, you know, the dope dealer and all. The guy's got grocery stores, little hotels, and he's a mechanic, too. He [Walker] has sort of his own little shade tree mechanic operation next to the house, what we call a shade tree mechanic. He was a good mechanic, though. You know, people often when they say shade tree mean you don't know what you're doing. But he had a little garage, and he did— In fact, he could completely overhaul people's engines right there. He was good. But he had his own operation. He was also doing work for this brother of his, going up to Bakersfield periodically, seeing about that store that he had there and doing other stuff. But mostly mechanic work. Well, now—

ISOARDI: Where are they settled? Do you know where they're living when they come back?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Eightieth and San Pedro. I think our address was 310 East Eightieth, not far from Fremont High [School].

ISOARDI: Now, that had been a white area up until the late forties, I think.

BRADFORD: Well, that bordered a white area. Right there where we were— Actually, going westerly it was still kind of white. But from where we were going back towards Central Avenue it got blacker and blacker. There were spots of white residences all around there as you moved toward— Would that be west? Yeah, I guess. And we were only about four or five blocks north of Manchester [Avenue]. And Fremont High School—which is, you know, one of the big high schools around

town—was about two or three blocks from where we were.

So this is the period now where I'm— The first thing the stepfather says is, "Well, you've got to get a job, you know."—you know, the whole stepfather bit. And you know how that is. You could write a book about— There's your mother, stepfather. You come in unannounced, sort of. You know, all these last minute announcements: "You're living here with us, staying in the extra room. What are you going to pay?" The whole bit. Mom's kind of caught between you and him. He doesn't like me to practice the trumpet—his nerves. I can't play in the house, right? I'm looking for an opportunity to move out as fast as I can. [mutual laughter] I get this job at Bullock's [department store] during the daytime.

ISOARDI: Bullock's downtown?

BRADFORD: Stock boy, Bullock's. Now, lo and behold—

ISOARDI: This was Bullock's— Where was it located?

BRADFORD: Seventh [Street] and Hill [Street].

ISOARDI: Seventh and Hill, downtown L.A.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I practice the horn sometimes at night in the house with the mute on the horn.

ISOARDI: Where?

BRADFORD: In my room with the door closed really tight. He's out there listening to wrestling. He liked wrestling. He was just whooping—I could just hear him out there laughing, having a great time. I used to think, "What an idiot." You know that

wrestling that was popular? Gorgeous George and all that? He loved that stuff. So he couldn't hear me in there practicing with the mute, trying to keep my lip up. And I was going around town playing wherever I could. If I thought there was a jam session someplace, at Central or one of those places—

ISOARDI: How does it strike you? How does the scene strike you when you hit L.A. again?

BRADFORD: Well, I knew there was a lot going on here, but I couldn't access it at first because I didn't have a car. That's number one. I knew there was lots of good stuff going on.

ISOARDI: I guess there's still stuff on Central by '53, '54?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, there was still stuff there. There were a lot of little joints where bands were playing.

ISOARDI: This is—what?—fall of '53?

BRADFORD: This is the fall of '53, right. Wardell Gray is still in town. Art Farmer is still here, just getting ready to leave. Dexter Gordon is already gone. Dolo Coker is here, Jimmy Bunn is here, Jimmy Bond is here, Curtis Counce is here, "the Senator" is here—you know, the bass player, Eugene Wright—Gerald Wilson is here. The guy who was going to give me some private lessons, John Anderson—

ISOARDI: The arranger?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he did some arranging. A good lead trumpet player. He was here. Lots of guys here. Buddy Collette is the guy sometime during that period who's

going to break through the studios, going to be the first black guy they hire for the studio. Woodwind player, you know.

But now, lo and behold, I couldn't have been in town any more than ninety days, and I'm on the Red Car from where we lived going to downtown L.A. and who's on the car with me? Ornette Coleman.

ISOARDI: Ornette Coleman.

BRADFORD: Ornette Coleman.

ISOARDI: Did you know him?

BRADFORD: Yeah. See, I had met him in Texas. Remember I said to you that he came to Houston-Tillotson College—? Or maybe I didn't say it.

ISOARDI: No, you didn't mention that.

BRADFORD: Well, he came to Houston-Tillotson while I was still there to be the best man at the wedding of Charles Moffett.

ISOARDI: Moffett was at Houston-Tillotson?

BRADFORD: Moffett was a senior and played the— Moffett was the drummer in the big band.

ISOARDI: So you'd known him?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I knew him in college.

Well, when he decided to get married as a senior—he and Ornette go back to childhood—Ornette comes to be the best man at his wedding. Now, get this. They get married, and the wedding reception is going to be at a little place there in Austin called

the Victory Grill, which they have made a historical landmark now—same decor, same tables, same lighting, everything. They just kind of spruced it up a little, right? So they're going to have the reception for the wedding, which is a little buffet, and it's going to be a jam session. I'm sure the bride loved this.

ISOARDI: When is this? 'Fifty-two?

BRADFORD: This would be the fall of '52.

ISOARDI: Fall '52.

BRADFORD: A jam session. Now, look who's at the jam session: Ornette Coleman is invited to come to play; Leo Wright is there on alto; John Gilmore—John Gilmore is in the air force now.

ISOARDI: But what's his connection with all this?

BRADFORD: Nothing except that he's in the air force. His station is about ten miles out of town. He comes into Austin every weekend just to—

ISOARDI: Just to play.

BRADFORD: Just to play.

ISOARDI: So that's how he hooks up with some of these guys?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Well, he knew all the guys on the campus. He'd come by and sit in with the band sometimes. Because there he is in Austin, Texas—

ISOARDI: In the air force.

BRADFORD: Well, he went into the air force to keep from going into the army.

These guys get up there, man, and you've never heard such playing. Just the

saxophone. The rest of us were just sitting there looking, man. We were too afraid to even get up on the bandstand. There's Ornette Coleman, Leo Wright, John Gilmore—

ISOARDI: Wow.

BRADFORD: —and a tenor player from Austin, Texas, named Marcus Adams—bad tenor player. They're up there playing all these Sonny Stitt, Gene Ammons tunes.

ISOARDI: So Ornette's playing bebop?

BRADFORD: Playing bebop.

ISOARDI: Just straight-ahead bebop?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but slipping his stuff in there too. He already has written half the tunes that he recorded on the first album. He's already playing those.

ISOARDI: What did you think of it?

BRADFORD: Oh, I loved it. I didn't know what it was, but I thought, "This guy is bad, man." Now, when we got back to our room— See, they'd be playing rhythm changes or some standard progression, and Ornette would start superimposing some of that outside stuff of his. And some guys were going, you know, "What's that?" And some of us were saying, "Wow." Right?

ISOARDI: You were one of the guys saying "Wow."

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'm saying "Wow." I knew this guy had something. So when we got back to our room that night after the jam session, Leo and I—we're roommates—we're sitting on the bed, and Leo— Because, as I say, it was real competitive; you know, these guys had this gunfighter mentality. Who can outslim

the other guy; that's what it was about. So I remember Leo's words were—verbatim—he said— Everybody said, "Oh, Leo, Ornette Coleman wiped you out, man." Leo said to me, "I refuse to believe that the motherfucker outplayed me." Those are his words verbatim. [Isoardi laughs] "I refuse to believe the motherfucker outplayed me." Now, Leo was a hell of an alto player, man.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really!

BRADFORD: He had this Johnny Hodges kind of sound, and playing Bird licks. Beautiful player. But what Ornette was doing, you see, was outside everybody's grasp. Ornette was playing a lot of original stuff. Leo was just playing things he picked up from Charlie Parker records. But he was playing his ass off—right?—playing the changes and could get over the horn, all over the horn, nice sound. But Ornette— They were playing one thing, and Ornette whinnied like a horse right in the middle of the alto. They were all trading fours, and Ornette went [whinnies]. Scared the shit out of everybody, man. [mutual laughter] Oh, he was doing all these little things that— Superimposing all these figures against the chords that were just way harmonically outside the spectrum, but it worked for him. And it scared everybody. So that's when I met him.

Now, I didn't play that day. I wouldn't have dared taken my horn out of there with these cats, man.

ISOARDI: Did you talk to him?

BRADFORD: I talked to him. You know, everybody had heard about some guy from

Fort Worth who plays alto, wears his hair really long, which he did in those days. He was a real oddball even then. He wore his hair long. In those days, you see, if a man wore his hair beyond a regular normal cadet length, well, "He must be a sissy." You know what I mean? That's just how hard and fast the lines were drawn.

ISOARDI: Horace [Tapscott] told me once that one time when Ornette came by Jeff[erson High School, Los Angeles], Mr. [Samuel] Browne saw him in the distance coming and said, "Ah, here comes black Jesus." [mutual laughter]

BRADFORD: I've heard that expression before, too. But, see, he was wearing his hair in a way that separated him from all other black men.

ISOARDI: What was it? Dreads?

BRADFORD: No, we didn't know what dreads were. Just long and—

ISOARDI: But it wasn't a 'fro [Afro]?

BRADFORD: No, it wasn't a 'fro, but it was a long hairdo that was almost like a woman's hairdo. And it was fried [artificially straightened], you know what I mean? It was conked, but there was a lot of long hair on the top, more like curls up there, you know, kind of— Right away the guys would say— Kind of like a Little Richard hairdo.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, yeah. Like that? Okay.

BRADFORD: See, you expect somebody in show business to wear a funny hairdo. [mutual laughter] Because, you see, for our purposes all the big stars—Duke Ellington, Nat [King] Cole and all—had their hair processed. They were wearing

these conks, as we called them. Well, that was okay for a star. But here comes a guy, just a two-legged guy like the rest of us, you're walking around with your hair looking like that, you must be some little sissy. That would be first thing the guys would say.

ISOARDI: He probably got beat up a few times—

BRADFORD: I wouldn't be surprised. But Ornette was Ornette Coleman then. He didn't care what you thought about what he looked like or what he played like or anything.

ISOARDI: He was just secure in who he was.

BRADFORD: Yeah. He dressed different from everybody, man. He wore his hair like that, he played like Ornette Coleman— Here was a guy who already was really sure of who he was and his identity as a performer.

He never was a guy who worshipped Charlie Parker like the rest of us did. You'd play something by Charlie Parker, he'd go, "Yeah, that's not bad." You know what I mean? He was never a guy who was intimidated by the biggies. I remember once somebody said, "Have you heard this melody by Charlie Parker, so and so and so and so?" And Ornette says, "Yeah, Charlie has some nice lines." [mutual laughter] Kind of like that. As if "He's okay," but the next breath is "Well, I've got some stuff, too. You haven't heard it, have you?" But he didn't say it in any kind of braggadocio way; this was just Ornette Coleman. Wonderful self-confidence about what he had to say, you know.

ISOARDI: Well, to do what he was doing you needed it or you wouldn't have

survived it.

BRADFORD: That's right. You couldn't shake him. If you did he'd have let you know that you did.

ISOARDI: What did you talk about that first time that you met him? Do you remember?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he remembered me. I recognized him and went over and said, "Hey, man, remember blah blah?" He said, "Oh, yeah, man, you're a trumpet player. I know you didn't play, but I remember—"

ISOARDI: Did you talk to him at that wedding reception?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Did you talk music?

BRADFORD: Well, yeah. You know, we're all standing around there and we're all—I had my horn, but I didn't take it out. And "Little Ditty," as we called Charles Moffett—That was his nickname, Little Ditty. Well, Little Ditty's nickname was also C.M. Well, his initials actually were C.M. You see, a lot of black people name their kids just initials—you know, like L.B., L.J.—and his name was C.M. And when he got ready to go into the navy, they told him, "You have to have a name." He had spent three years in the navy before he came to college; he was older than some of the rest of the guys at college. Well, anyhow, he told us, "Well, you know, I've got to go into the navy." They said, "Well, you know, you can't come in here with C.M. You have to have a name." So he said, "I like Charles. I told them I'm Charles." And they put that

on his paperwork, so he becomes Charles Moffett. But Ornette was still calling him C.M., and so did John Carter. Sometimes they called him Little Ditty, which is a nickname.

So we talked, and [Ornette] said, "Well, you know, I'm trying to organize a band. I just moved out here, man. I just came out here to marry a lady." He married a woman here who was a poet and a cellist, who actually—

ISOARDI: Is that Jayne? Jayne Cortez?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Cortez, Jayne Cortez. I think—I may be guessing on this, but Jayne is sort of at least half or one-third Filipino.

ISOARDI: Yeah, she's a mixture of—

BRADFORD: Yeah, I think Filipino. And she had a very attractive sister. I think her sister was a nurse, as I remember it.

Anyhow, Ornette had come to town to marry her, for him to get married. She had been his ongoing girlfriend. She played the cello and she wrote poetry. And he said, "I'm trying to organize a band. Would you like to come by the house sometime and go over some of my tunes and play with me?"

ISOARDI: This was the first time you met on the Red Car, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah, on the Red Car. I said, "Oh, yeah, man, I'd love to hook up." So then I'd go to his place, and he'd show me his tunes. And he'd write them down.

ISOARDI: Where was he living?

BRADFORD: He was living at Jayne's house.

ISOARDI: Was that in Watts?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'm trying to remember. It was something like 110th [Street] or something like that. So he was getting the same pressure you'd expect a guy to get: "Now, you marry the daughter and you move in with Mom."

ISOARDI: And get a job.

BRADFORD: "And you've got to find a job." That's when I took him down to where I was working and introduced him to the guy there and got him the job at Bullock's. So we're both down there at Bullock's.

On some weekends we're going out and playing the clubs around town, and sometimes we'd go into the jam sessions together. It was at that point that I discovered that he didn't really know traditional notation. And we'd laugh about it sometimes when we were together. He might not laugh about it now, but one of the tunes on his first record that he had just finished writing—one called "Chippie"—he asked me to put down in proper notation so that other people could read it and know exactly what it was. And I remember writing that one blues tune out for him. He'd sit down, and we'd play it and play it until he'd shown it to me. And then I wrote it out and—

ISOARDI: What did his stuff look like that he was writing down?

BRADFORD: Well, see, he still writes things that you have no idea what that is, because he takes symbols from traditional notation and uses them in his own way. That would be like you taking the alphabet and you decided that "a" now is going to be "e" all the time.

ISOARDI: I heard he didn't know about transposing either.

BRADFORD: Well, he did, except that he had misunderstood what transposition meant. Because he had started off with a way—The beauty of Ornette Coleman, though, is that he had to relearn everything in music for himself. So if you said to him, "This is an E-flat alto saxophone, and it transposes," his question would be "Why?" [while] the rest of us would say, "Okay." You see? So he started off thinking that the bottom note on the alto saxophone was C when in fact if you could actually finger it and get it to come out of the horn it would be like an A down there—if it were played in the low A; most of them will only go down to the B-flat. And he didn't understand what transposition meant in the true sense of the word, like E-flat instruments and B-flat instruments and C instruments. He got off to a bad start on that. But that somehow turned out to be to his benefit in that he finally found out for himself what transposition really meant, why an instrument was pitched in E-flat, where most people just obey the rule.

ISOARDI: And not understand what's behind it.

BRADFORD: Well, see, you might ask somebody, "Well, what is it that makes a C trumpet a C trumpet and B-flat trumpet a B-flat trumpet? Why have them both?" And if you don't understand that—Most people just accept it, you see, and have no question about it.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's true.

BRADFORD: Here's a guy who has to understand—"Well, what—?" You know?

It's like telling somebody like "Pi is this little thing, and it look likes that, but it's three point so-and-so." "Well, why? Why is it just two point three whatever it is? Why? And what can you do with it?" Where the rest of us thought, "Oh, pi, man, the Egyptians," and this— You know what I mean? Here was a guy where you couldn't just tell him anything about music and not have him going— If you said to him, "You know, if you mix this and this it will create that, and it will explode," he'd say, "Let me see," and he'd pull these two things together and light it. You know, that's the kind of guy he is, that kind of mind.

ISOARDI: That first time you went down to his place to play with him, what did you think of the stuff? You were playing his originals?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. See, I'd already heard—

ISOARDI: You heard him at that jam session.

BRADFORD: I heard him play— He played a couple of his blue lines there that would later on be on that first record. Now, a lot of his stuff was still bop-like in the early days. You know, you could hear Charlie Parker in there. Like that tune I was just talking about [sings melody from "Chippie"], you will still hear Charlie Parker in there. But little by little, if you look at that stuff carefully, you can see he's slipping out of the Charlie Parker thing and it's more and more Ornette Coleman.

ISOARDI: Did you ever talk about what he was doing? Did you ever ask him about his music?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but all he could say was, " It's just emotion, it's just feeling," and

he couldn't—

ISOARDI: Feeling the way the music should sound.

BRADFORD: Yeah, should sound. He couldn't give you a technical— Now, he may have another name for that now.

ISOARDI: Well, harmolodics.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. See, I never heard the word harmolodic until after I left his band. Never heard of it. I still don't know exactly what that means. But I did finally in playing with him learn how to function in his band and what it is that he was [trying to do].

First of all, you learn what not to play with him, you see. And you have to learn how he writes. Because if Coleman gave you one of his compositions now and used his notation and gave it to a total stranger and said "Play this," you wouldn't get out of that what Ornette Coleman had played. He can show you as you look at his notation how to follow him and read it, but he can't write down— At least he couldn't then; I don't know what he does now. But if you had said to Ornette Coleman, "Write this down just like it sounds so that a student of music could just say 'one, two, three, four' and play it," at that point he couldn't have done it.

A lot of people felt like he should be defensive about that. And I used to say to him, "Well, you know—" And he was [defensive], I suppose, on one level, but he didn't seem to get it that what people liked about him and paid money to go and hear was his music. They didn't care whether he could read music or not.

ISOARDI: Truly.

BRADFORD: When you get up there to play the saxophone, nobody's interested in whether Charlie Parker could read or not except some fool— "Ah, see there? Can't even read music."

ISOARDI: Exactly.

BRADFORD: In fact, they said to Erroll Garner, "Well, you can't—" [Isoardi begins to laugh] You've heard that, haven't you? What did he say to him?

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: He said, "People can't hear you reading." You either play or— You know?

ISOARDI: There are a lot of musicians who think had he learned it would have messed it up. But he was just the purest musician.

BRADFORD: It's like anything else, you know. There's a certain point where it wouldn't do any good to go back, especially since right music notation is so imprecise. That would bother you a lot. Because the more you learn to read music the more you see that there's a certain element of it there that's stylistic, and that if you don't know the style, even the written music won't come out right. If you put a Charlie Parker piece down there and just write the eighth notes and say to some kid here from Warsaw, Poland, "Instead of classical music, play this," you won't get what Charlie Parker plays. All you'll get is a group of eighth notes in the traditional sense, you see. But that would be true about classical music, too. If somebody says, "Here, now

you're going to play the music of" some early guy, you know, Monteverdi, or somebody way back there, and then read the music of somebody like late Beethoven, those same two eighth notes on the page will sound the same if you don't know the style, you see. The same thing is true in jazz. If you look at a Count Basie chart here, and you get some kids in a high school band who just know how to read music and never heard Basie, it won't sound like Basie, you see. So to take a very sophisticated musician and then have him go back after the fact and learn how to read music I think would do him more harm than good. Because, you see, it's so imprecise. Coming up in the very beginning you understand how imprecise it is, and you can live with it, but—

ISOARDI: Was it just you two guys back then playing together?

BRADFORD: Yeah, just at his house.

ISOARDI: Then you mentioned you were playing with— You'd go out and you'd hit some clubs and jams, etc. What kind of a reaction—? Where would you go, number one?

BRADFORD: Well, okay. There was one place off Central Avenue back off a couple of blocks below Central called Armand's. Some of these guys may have mentioned it, some of the other people that you interviewed.

ISOARDI: Nobody.

BRADFORD: Mexican-owned club bar. Armand's. Seems like the name would have come up from some of these people. They had jam sessions there on Wednesday

nights.

ISOARDI: Do you remember where it was at?

BRADFORD: If you were on Central Avenue in the twenties, you went further east.

ISOARDI: East of Central.

BRADFORD: East of Central. Armand's it was called. I guess if you could go back and get a phone book from the period you might be able to get the address. But that's the first time I think I ever played in a jam session with Eric Dolphy was at Armand's.

ISOARDI: He was there?

BRADFORD: Eric had just come back out of the army. He was around town playing alto saxophone and clarinet, regular straight clarinet.

ISOARDI: What were the—? I mean, this is a different place now. These are not mainstream players.

BRADFORD: No, no, no. These are guys that are—Eric was just a bopper, though.

ISOARDI: He was playing straight bop, and that was his sound?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Eric was copying Charlie Parker records in those days "vernotem," right? That's real clear; there's no question. Eric was not doing anything like any avant garde in 1953. Ornette Coleman opened that page; there's no question about it. A lot of people said, "Well, I thought Eric Dolphy was one of the pioneers in the—" No good. With all due respect to Eric—wonderful player—it was Ornette Coleman that showed everybody you can get up there, man, and do this without following a chord pattern.

ISOARDI: Yeah, you know, the one thing about Eric—I don't think of him as that outside. He always seems to stay within—He stretched the chords as much as he could, but he stayed within it.

BRADFORD: When I hear him play I still hear a guy following a blueprint of chord progressions. Even though he's playing a lot of strange stuff against the chord, you never see—Ornette Coleman's playing was such that you never hear Ornette Coleman playing any kind of arpeggio scale kind of figure. You would expect to hear Eric play something like that—

ISOARDI: Oh, he arpeggiates—

BRADFORD: [sings a series of rapid ascending eighth notes] You're never going to hear Ornette play anything like that, because that doesn't go with his music. You're never going to hear him play like [sings a typical uptempo bebop-style phrase], you know; it's just not his music. Completely original, this guy. And more as time went by, totally cut the umbilical chord with Charlie Parker. By 1959 Ornette Coleman had already left the bebop thing.

ISOARDI: Another world. When you're playing at Armand's, what's the reaction to Ornette when he shows up?

BRADFORD: Well, first of all, when we played Armand's—You get up on the bandstand, now, you've got to play standards. You just can't come in and take over. But now, sometimes Ornette and I would go out, and we'd be playing at—I remember we played at a place down in what we called the Nickel in those days—you know,

that's around Fifth Street, that was the Nickel.

ISOARDI: Pretty seedy then, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. That's where you went if you wanted to see transvestites, see gay people or some of the gay bars down there, or buy a bag of weed or whatever.

You went down to the Nickel, as it was called. And there was one place down there called the Rose Room or the Rose Bud or the Rose Palace or something that we used to play. When it was Ornette's band we'd play "Perdido" or "I'll Remember April," and then we'd play one of his tunes, and then we'd play a bop tune—

ISOARDI: This was a regular gig, then? This wasn't a jam?

BRADFORD: Well, yeah, it wasn't a jam session; it was his band. Eddie Blackwell playing drums, a guy named Floyd Howard playing piano sometimes—a guy that I've seen over the years every now and then who finally became sort of a horse handicapper. I used to run into him every now and then out at Santa Anita or places; all he did was play the horses. He still played the piano but didn't try to make a career of it.

Ornette was playing with other people around town. He'd go to the jam sessions by himself and get run off the stage. You know, he'd try to go and sit in with Dexter when he was in town, and Curtis Counce and those guys would run him off the bandstand. The only one guy that I remember he said was kind of sympathetic to him was the Senator.

ISOARDI: Oh, Eugene.

BRADFORD: Eugene would always say to him, "Come on, man. I hear you got something there." I remember Eugene Wright, when Ornette would go to sit in where he happened to be playing, Eugene, the bass, would say, "Yeah, come on up, man. Sit in and cut in a couple of tunes." I remember him saying to Ornette a couple of times, "Now, don't forget me when you get up there."

There were places all around town on the west side that were mostly white clientele and white players coming, but we'd go.

ISOARDI: What do you mean by the west side then?

BRADFORD: I'm saying west meaning west in terms of where we lived. You'd go into Western [Avenue] and that direction, west of—

ISOARDI: Oh, okay.

BRADFORD: Like on Santa Barbara [Avenue, now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard]—

ISOARDI: Not West L.A. You're talking about—

BRADFORD: Yeah, Santa Barbara and Western.

ISOARDI: Like Normandie [Avenue], Western—

BRADFORD: Right, right, right, and then even further over into Hollywood. There was Zardi's [Jazzland] in Hollywood that had these Sunday afternoon sessions. That's the time when I got to sit in with Clifford Brown and—

ISOARDI: Art Tatum used to play at Zardi's.

BRADFORD: I guess so. But I played there with Kenny Drew, Clifford Brown,

Walter Benton—

ISOARDI: What was it like playing with Clifford Brown?

BRADFORD: Well, it was scary, you know, but it was a jam session, and everybody got a chance to get up there and play.

ISOARDI: Fabulous.

BRADFORD: He was a sweet guy, though. As soon as we got off the bandstand he introduced himself, sort of asked me, "How long have you been playing the trumpet?" And we talked, you know. He was smoking then. Oh, man, this guy was— Scared everybody in town. This was like '53, '54. It must have been late '53, early '54.

ISOARDI: So just before he launches that great band, he and Max Roach, a long time ago?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, they got that band together here. I don't know if I've mentioned that to you before, but that's the band that had—

ISOARDI: No, you hadn't mentioned it, but, yeah, that's what—

BRADFORD: When they first got here they had Sonny Stitt in the band, and they had a bass player named George Bledsoe.

ISOARDI: Oh, one of the Bledsoe brothers.

BRADFORD: I guess so.

ISOARDI: There was another one that played trombone, I think, or something.

BRADFORD: Well, anyhow, Sonny Stitt. And they had Carl Perkins playing the piano.

ISOARDI: Oh, no kidding?

BRADFORD: Sonny Stitt didn't like Carl Perkins.

ISOARDI: Because of the way he played clusters with his left forearm and elbow at the piano?

BRADFORD: I guess. And, you know, he'd do that stuff with his elbow, and he'd drool or whatever it was. Sonny didn't like it. And Sonny might not have liked the environment, because they were— He's used to being in the thing where he was like the big cheese, you know, and Clifford Brown was scaring the hell out of everybody. I'm not sure what it was, but you know how those bands— It's hard to have a guy, a young Clifford Brown up there, and kind of an older guy like Sonny Stitt trying to—

ISOARDI: Really a youngster, too.

BRADFORD: —trying to keep up with Clifford playing all those tunes that he was playing. Now, Sonny Stitt was a bad motherfucker, but I don't think he was content with that. He wanted to be in an environment where he called the tunes. And Clifford's writing all this original stuff. That means you've got to go and study these tunes.

So [Sonny Stitt] quit, and they reorganized, and they put the word out that they needed a tenor player, and all the tenor players in town auditioned, and Harold Land got the gig. And they got George Morrow from Pasadena to play the bass. And I don't know how— I guess Max knew Richie Powell, and he joined the band.

ISOARDI: Was Richie Powell out here then?

BRADFORD: No, I never saw Richie out here.

ISOARDI: They sent for him, then, kind of more or less?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I guess they sent for him. But they used to play at— What was it called? It was on Santa Barbara and Western—California Club. They had the Monday night jam sessions. Sometimes Wardell Gray would run them. You could go in, and if you were lucky they would say, "Okay, we need one trumpet and one saxophone and a guy in the rhythm section." Sometimes I'd be lucky enough to get up there, and it would be me and Frank Morgan and rhythm. And I was getting kind of a little thing around town—you know, the younger guys around town, "This is a guy who can play if you play a song that he knows." And sometimes I would be lucky enough to get up there with Wardell. Wardell and Frank, maybe. Or sometimes it might be me and some of the other younger tenors players around town, or alto players, depending on what Monday night it was. But it was also— When Clifford and those guys got here, sometimes they would run the sessions. And Max and George Bledsoe and I guess Carl Perkins would be the rhythm section; they would let the horns come up. They would always try to make sure they didn't get some guys coming up there that couldn't carry the ball.

There was a place over in Hollywood, besides Zardi's and those places, called the Big Top, which was decorated inside like a circus.

ISOARDI: Where was that at?

BRADFORD: I can't— You know how it is. I can't remember. I would say it means

we had to leave where we lived and go way over to the white part of town, so to speak, to get to this.

ISOARDI: Still was, very much.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. So I'm thinking it's over there someplace in Hollywood. There was another one called Tap City that we'd go to play. In fact, Don Friedman, the piano player—

ISOARDI: Don't know him.

BRADFORD: —who works for a lot of people in New York— He was one of the young white piano players around town that loved Ornette Coleman. He used to always show up at his gigs.

ISOARDI: It sounds like—I mean, certainly there was some hostility, right? Some people who wouldn't want to play with him, but it sounds like there were a lot of other people who wanted to check him out.

BRADFORD: Well, there were people—Most of the thing was hostility. Because he was the kind of guy that was trying to make his mark, and he'd go to whoever it was at the club and say, "I want to play." You know, guys like myself, we'd pick—We'd see Dexter Gordon up there, we wouldn't get up there. Ornette would get right up there and say to him, "What do you want to play?" Not "Can I sit in?" Ornette would say, "Well, yeah, we're just two saxophone players up here."

ISOARDI: Plus he looked so out on top of it.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. See, Ornette was prepared. Now, whatever you want to

play, you want to play "Cherokee," he'd say to Dexter Gordon, "Stomp it off," where we were just trying to get "Cherokee" kind of together. Ornette might not have it together, but he didn't give it up. He'd go, "Stomp it off." You know what I mean? But this guy had such a terrific ear and knowledge of the horn that he could play a decent solo on almost anything you'd play. You know what I mean? Scary.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's the word I was thinking of. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Yeah, scary.

Well, we were working days at Bullock's, you know, playing some weekends.

ISOARDI: You had day jobs, so you had your nights free.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. And we'd—I was going on my merry way and doing things with him, and so would he with other people too, you know. It was during this period that we both met George Newman and Don Cherry. They were younger than us, now. This kid George Newman and Don Cherry were big buddies at Jeff and both, I guess, like two years younger than me.

ISOARDI: How did you guys meet?

BRADFORD: I think somebody took me over to Jeff one day. That's where I first met George Newman and Don Cherry. They were still in high school.

ISOARDI: Was it for the big band class or—?

BRADFORD: No, just to hang out. This is a good band over here—I didn't actually play with that band, but somebody said, "Hey, man, there's another trumpet player in town from Texas, and he can play." And I knew a bunch of little solos by Fats and

Dizzy and Miles. I'd take it off records, and they were all "Oh, yeah, man," you know. And we only knew the real rudimentary stuff like "I Got Rhythm" and "I Remember April" and some blues tunes and "How High the Moon." We didn't know the full repertoire, but I could get up there on a tune that I knew and sound pretty good, you know.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

MAY 2, 2000

BRADFORD: I would go wherever there was a jam session, but I'd pick my time to jump up on the stage, now, while Ornette [Coleman] would get up with anybody anytime, no matter who you were, what level of player.

ISOARDI: So no matter what you sounded like— That was running the risk of rejection, no matter what.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. But, you see, Ornette could get up there— These guys could tell that this guy's not crazy and there's something going on here, but their idea was to reject him, because for some reason I think there was a level at which they thought “here comes another Charlie Parker kind of guy.”

ISOARDI: So he was kind of a threat.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. In fact, the guys would— Curtis Counce I remember in particular— Once he was up there and Curtis Counce and some other guys got off and left him up there playing—

ISOARDI: By himself.

BRADFORD: Got off the bandstand and left him up there, you know.

Walter Benton was around town then. He and Harold Land both were kind of ex-students of Lucky Thompson, both in that sound and that style of playing. I think Walter auditioned for the Clifford Brown band, too, and later on did make some

records with Clifford and Max [Roach] in that big— There were a couple of things—

ISOARDI: Oh, they did some big studio recordings with the big bands—

BRADFORD: Yeah, right, with Herb Geller and Walter Benton in there. And I think Walter was a contender for that job. I don't remember how it worked out, though.

ISOARDI: He had a couple of good solos on those big bands.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was a good player, man.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Now, I used to go to Walter's house, and when he heard me play he thought, "Hey, man, I like the way you play the trumpet." Everybody wants you to come and practice together, learn tunes and exchange ideas. I went to his house, and we'd go out in the garage, and he had a piano out there, and we'd play tunes. He already knew a lot of [Thelonious] Monk tunes and the right changes on a lot of stuff.

ISOARDI: Where did Benton live?

BRADFORD: He lived over somewhere near Dorsey High School.

ISOARDI: Oh, okay, out on the west side.

BRADFORD: On the west side. And, you know, blacks were just beginning to go to Dorsey. Only a few— Eric [Dolphy] went, you see. So they were over there on what we'd call, I think what originally had been, a white residential area, and blacks had begun to sort of usurp that area over there around— God, you know, I'm so disoriented about where— But you know the part of town I'm talking about.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, I guess there was a kind of Sugar Hill [as in Harlem] there for

a while, and then they started spreading out from there.

BRADFORD: Right, that's the part of the town. Eric lived over there, and so did Walter.

ISOARDI: You mentioned going by Jeff[erson High School] and meeting Don Cherry and George Newman. Did Ornette already know them? Was he introducing you to them? Or how did you guys hook up?

BRADFORD: I can't remember now, but somehow they hooked up. They either met at the jam sessions, or Ornette was making his way around, and these guys, Don and George and some of the other guys—One kid who played trumpet and valve trombone, Roy Brewster, was a part of that group too. You might have heard his name a couple of times.

ISOARDI: Well, Horace [Tapscott] told me about him. He played in the [Pan-Afrikan Peoples] Arkestra later on, and he and Horace went to junior high together, all the way through—

BRADFORD: Right, right. And he went to Jeff, also.

Now, these guys, they made all these jam sessions, too. There was a serious population of young guys trying to get it together. There were four or five young trumpet players, and one of the guys who used to play the trumpet in that group showed up at my [Los Angeles County] Museum [of Art] job about a month ago. He doesn't play anymore, but he said, "Remember me, man?" I said, "Yeah, Dewey. You still playing trumpet?" He said, "Oh, no, man, I'm in business now, and I do so and

so." But there were four or five young trumpet players, and there were eight or ten young saxophone players all trying to play like Sonny Rollins or like Sonny Stitt—right?—but real, you know, on the case. The only one of the bunch that I think made it to New York and made a name for himself, sort of, was one guy whose name was Woods.

ISOARDI: Jimmy Woods?

BRADFORD: No, not Jimmy Woods. This guy's name was Marcus, I think—played alto [saxophone]. He might have played with [Charles] Mingus for a hot minute. But there were a lot of good guys around. In Watts there was this record store that I'm sure you've heard guys talk about. I can't think of it now, but it was like on 103rd [Street], maybe. [K and H Records]

ISOARDI: Oh, the guy used to be a musician.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but he had a record store where the guys all hung out. And they'd say Ornette Coleman used to go there and get his reeds, and he was wearing the big overcoat in the hundred-degree heat in the summer. You know all of the myths. But that's where guys—

ISOARDI: That is a myth?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Well, you know the stories, how they get bigger and bigger: "It was 110 degrees, and Ornette Coleman comes in in an overcoat."

But this guy—Pete Kinnard was his name. He had the record store. He was hip, and everybody went to buy their records there, and you could hang out there. He

sold reeds, and he sold old paraphernalia. And that was the place. All the guys would run into each other there.

ISOARDI: Where was it? Where was this place?

BRADFORD: 103rd, I think.

When Ornette got married, I remember I had a— My stepfather [Augustus Walker], the mechanic, had gotten me an old beat-up Chrysler and had fixed it so it would run. And when Ornette and Jayne [Cortez] got married—they were going to move out after he got his job—I put them and all their belongings in this old Chrysler and took them to their first little garage apartment. They had a little apartment above somebody's garage. You'd take the steps outside up to it. One bedroom and a kitchen and that was it, you know. And I remember, the old Chrysler, they put all the stuff in the trunk, and the seat was full—

ISOARDI: But it all fit?

BRADFORD: Yeah, everything they had.

ISOARDI: Where was it at? Where were they living?

BRADFORD: I can't remember now, man. It seems like to me it was someplace like in the fifties near Central Avenue, like Fifty-first [Street] or somewhere in there like that maybe.

ISOARDI: A couple of people that I've talked to have mentioned George Newman, but nobody has said much about him.

BRADFORD: Terrific young alto player. Very talented, very promising.

ISOARDI: He wasn't a pianist, he was an alto player?

BRADFORD: Well, he could play the chords on the piano, but his thing was alto. He was in an auto accident of some kind and had some head injury that he never quite—

ISOARDI: Recovered from?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he never was normal again after that. Now, I don't know whatever happened to him. I think he's dead, but it wasn't because of the auto accident. It was something else.

ISOARDI: How old was he when he had the accident?

BRADFORD: Probably around nineteen, twenty, something like that. He and Don Cherry were big buddies.

ISOARDI: Fine player? Good player?

BRADFORD: Yeah, good player. Great sound. Already in high school, very mature sound, all over the horn. Big, pretty sound.

ISOARDI: Did he go to Jeff[erson High School]?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he and Don Cherry both were at Jeff.

Frank Morgan was like— Somewhere between Wardell Gray and us was a guy like Frank Morgan, who played and read very well and knew the tunes.

ISOARDI: He was still pretty young then, wasn't he?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Frank is only— He couldn't be more than a year or two older than me. He might even be the same age. But I get the feeling, just remembering Frank, that when we were— I must have been like—what?—eighteen then. Frank

seemed like he might have been nineteen or twenty.

ISOARDI: Yeah, a year or two older.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: There was another guy—I don't know if you ever came across him—

Horace told me that this guy, when he was at Jeff, was playing alto in the band, and

Horace said he was the outest of all the guys there. His name was Earl Anderza.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, Earl and I were great friends.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Earl and I played together—Listen, this Earl Anderza was this very talented, like six foot two [inches], very handsome—You know, a real rogue. Now, this is a guy [who was] in a way like Ornette except that he didn't have the talent that Ornette had as a composer or a player; but a terrific alto player, could play the hell out of the horn. Real bright, sharp, but was a kind of real delinquent. Now, this is the kind of guy he was: he was already using big drugs then.

ISOARDI: In high school?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Big guy, handsome six footer with hairy chest and the whole bit that everybody envies, right? The kind of guy that goes up to a girl and says to her—
[pauses expectantly]

ISOARDI: "Hi," and they fall down.

BRADFORD: Oh, no. He just says to her, "How about some pussy?" This is the kind of guy who would go up to her and look her right in the eye while the rest of us are

thinking— You know what I mean? [mutual laughter] The rest of us wimps, you know what I mean—? Here's a guy that would go up to a forty-year-old woman, though, and approach her.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: You know, just a grownup already.

Now, get this. We're out tripping around— He liked me for some reason; I don't know why. You know, there's always a Mutt and Jeff kind of syndrome with— [mutual laughter] He liked this little guy who played the trumpet, man. And we hung out a lot, man. So once he— Where were we going? I had this old car, and we were tripping around in this old car of mine. So now we're parked someplace, and Earl is going to drive, so he's trying to put the car in gear—it's an old Chrysler with fluid drive—and he did something wrong and backed up into a guy in back of us. Now, these were two adult white males both about fifty-five years old, one of them kind of drunk and the other one— Both had been drinking, right? I don't know where we were, but we were in a part of town where they were on their turf.

ISOARDI: On their turf. Oh, man.

BRADFORD: Earl gets out the car and he goes back there, and says to the guys, "You hit my car, and I'm going to call the police, and both of you are drunk. Now, give me fifty bucks and I won't call the police."

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: Now, Earl has backed into them—this is Anderza, right? I said, "Earl,

come on, man, you can't— Come on, man." He said, "Just wait, just wait." So he says to the guy, the driver of the car and the owner of the car, "You hit my car."

And he says, "Well, wait a minute—" And they're both kind of drunk.

And the other guy says, "You backed up into us."

And he said, "You shut up," talking to the other guy, the passenger. "I'm talking to the driver."

So he says, "Well, you shut up."

Earl says, "Hey, man, I'm talking to the driver." He says, "Now, I won't call the police, because you made just a little dent in the car." And there wasn't even any dent. He says, "Give me fifty bucks and we'll call it a night. I won't call the cops."

So the guy says, "Well, I don't think— George, what do you think?"

So this guy says, "You'd better—"

And [Earl] says "I told you to shut up, didn't I?" to this guy.

This guy comes up again, Earl just says, "Just a moment," addresses this guy, punches him. The guy hits the ground, can't even get up; he's between the drunk and the punch. Now Earl says— He's not angry, he's not upset. You get this guy? This is just a daily— He's the kind of guy that could— In other words, he wasn't mad at this guy. He's going to help him up later. "Just don't interfere, now; I'm trying to beat this guy out of this money." This is Earl, right?

So the guy says, "Well, I've only got a twenty" or something like that.

And Earl says, "Well, all right, I'll take that now." He says, "You've got to

watch your driving. You're drunk. You'd better go home."

We get in the car, and he goes, "Now let's go party." Right? This is Earl Anderza.

ISOARDI: Man, this is an accident waiting to happen. [laughs]

BRADFORD: But now, listen, this is the guy who's going to get—what do you call it?—jaundice, from somebody's needle or something. He's in the hospital. I go out there, visit him at the hospital.

ISOARDI: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Visit who at the hospital?

BRADFORD: Earl Anderza. He's in the hospital now.

ISOARDI: How long after this?

BRADFORD: Oh, I don't know how long after this, maybe a couple of months. His mom says he's in the hospital.

ISOARDI: Oh, okay. Later event, later development.

BRADFORD: He's got some kind of yellow jaundice. I think he was already using needles, drugs, taking bennies, smoking weed, just a wide-open— But this is a guy you love, you know what I mean? After we got through arguing he helps this other guy up that he hit, right?

So anyway, I go to the hospital. Now, get this. There he is in the hospital, in the ward, and I'm visiting him. It's about seven or eight o'clock, and it's time to leave. He says, "Oh, wait until the night nurse comes on. I'm screwing her every night about eleven o'clock. When the hospital quiets down, she comes in here and gets in my

bed." [mutual laughter] And I'm thinking, "Where's my part in all of this, man? What am I doing? This guy's in the hospital screwing the night nurse." Right? I said, now, "This is just incredible." You know? Now I'm thinking, "This is a real jazz musician, this Earl."

When he's finally discharged from the hospital, I go and pick him up. And I was being real careful with the car, you know, because I didn't want to hit somebody. He says, "Man, you keep touching the brake pedal. Let's go." I said, "Listen, last time you drove the car you backed into this guy." I said, "If I hit somebody in this car and I have to deal with my stepfather and my mother [Bernice Griffin Walker], it's going to be my problem. You can either ride with me like I'm driving or you can get out." And he goes, "Oh, man, come on, come on. It's okay. You go ahead and drive."

Now, get this. One of his girlfriends is this Chinese girl, right? They're not married, just living together. He gets her pregnant, and the family puts her out. They're living together—not married, though—and they've got this gorgeous baby, right? Chinese girl and Earl Anderza. Now, Earl was the complexion of somebody like—Maybe me, I guess. About my complexion, right?—mixed way back there somewhere.

ISOARDI: I've only seen a couple of photos. He could almost pass for a Latino.

BRADFORD: Yeah, except that the hair that you saw was processed. He had a gas, as we called it, right? But he could have— You know, he had the look of—I mean, he could have been lots of things. Especially after he had his hair processed and it

looked straight, he could have been.

But now, get this. Years later I'm driving someplace—Mulholland [Drive] or someplace way the hell over there in the canyon—

ISOARDI: How many years later?

BRADFORD: This is like fifteen years ago, maybe twenty years ago. And there's this kid hitchhiking late at night—

ISOARDI: No!

BRADFORD: And I give him a ride, right? And I say, "What's your name?"

And he says, "Whatever Anderza." I said, "What?"

ISOARDI: That kid?

BRADFORD: The kid. Now, I guess he took his dad's name or something, right?
And I said—I didn't let on.

He asked me, "What do you do?"

I said, "I'm a musician."

And he said, "My dad's a musician."

And I went, "Yeah? What does he play?"

He said, "Saxophone," and he went on and on. Here's Anderza's kid by this Chinese girl that I had only seen once when they lived over on Western someplace.

ISOARDI: Man. And he was playing in the seventies or the eighties? Fifteen years ago—The mid-eighties?

BRADFORD: Yeah, somebody told me. The last I heard of him, now, he was in

charge of some detox rehab program in Chicago.

ISOARDI: So he's still around?

BRADFORD: Well, now, I've also heard that he's dead now. I don't know what the story is now. But the last time I played in Chicago, which is two years ago, one guy there said to me, "You know, I'm trying to bring in people here that we've heard about for years, like these legends and all. Do you have any idea how I can get in touch with Earl Anderza?" And I said, "People have told me he's in Chicago." And now I've heard that's he dead. I don't know. There's a good possibility that he is, or he could still be around. He could be back in jail.

ISOARDI: What do you mean *back* in jail?

BRADFORD: Oh, he spent two or three stints in jail, just like Frank Morgan did, you know?

ISOARDI: Drug related charges?

BRADFORD: Yeah, drug related stuff. I'm sure Frank's been in and out of jail three or four times, maybe more.

ISOARDI: The better part of probably thirty years.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Have you done this with him yet?

ISOARDI: Yeah, when he was living with Rosalinda [Kolb] in Albuquerque.

BRADFORD: Is he still living in Albuquerque, by the way?

ISOARDI: No, they moved about a year and a half or two years ago to Hawaii.

BRADFORD: I heard he had a stroke.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he was flying on— He was going to a gig, I think in St. Louis or something. He was on the plane—

BRADFORD: And had the— I think you told me this.

ISOARDI: Maybe I told you that. This is what I heard.

BRADFORD: So has he recovered sort of now?

ISOARDI: Well, yeah, he's playing again.

BRADFORD: Thank God.

ISOARDI: Well, apparently it put the fear in him. He straightened out a lot of his act.

BRADFORD: Now—I'll probably have to take this out of the copy when it's sent to me for editing; I don't know how Frank would feel about it. But Frank was already so in love— Well, in fact, Frank has said this in the Charlie Parker video. There's no point in—

ISOARDI: What? About his usage?

BRADFORD: Yeah. He was saying, "I thought the heroin went with—" He wanted to play like Charlie Parker.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: And I remember once, now—I might have told you this— The *Quo Vadis* movie was out during this period.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, right.

BRADFORD: The hairdo of Patonius and Plutonius and all those guys, it comes straight down, and then you clip it straight across.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's like you've got bangs, short bangs.

BRADFORD: Right, except you cut them off. Now, Charlie Parker gets one. They're calling the haircut a *quo vadis*, right? "Bird" [Charlie Parker]'s in town wearing his famous black velvet coat that he was wearing everywhere. I go to the California Club one night, and Frank Morgan has just gotten his hair processed, and he's got a *quo vadis*. One day he'll read this book and he'll laugh. You get it conked—right?—and you comb it straight down, and they clip it straight across. So Frank has this *quo vadis*, and he's so fucking stoned, man. It's like when you use that heroin you turn grey, that really chalky, strange look. And he's so high, man, he's standing there with the horn like this, with just his mouth on the mouthpiece open like this, and nothing's coming out. And I thought, "God, man, now this guy is a second away from being dead. He doesn't know it," right?

ISOARDI: I saw him like that two years ago at the [Jazz] Bakery.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it's like— And you would think after all these years he'd finally let it go, but he just can't, can he?

ISOARDI: Well, I don't know what it was. I remember a couple of years ago I went to Catalina [Bar and Grill], and it was a Wednesday night, and he comes walking in, and as soon as he took two steps inside the door I thought, "Oh, man—“

BRADFORD: He's stoned out of his gourd, right?

ISOARDI: —there's something going on again."

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: And I called Rosalinda, and she said, "Well, drug man has come around again," and she was going to split. I don't know what it was. I don't know if it was heroin; it could have been something else. Who knows?

About six months later he and Horace are going to do a duo at the Bakery, and everybody goes, you know? They hadn't played together since God knows when, and they were in the Jeff band together. Everybody's pretty excited. And I think the first set he probably blew—I think about six notes came out, and the rest was all air.

BRADFORD: He was just standing there like this, just out, man.

ISOARDI: We couldn't believe it. Horace was— You know, he sat there through it, but, man, he was pissed. He didn't like that. You don't do that on the bandstand.

BRADFORD: You know what I think? Deep down someplace that's not about him just wanting to be high. There's a level of fear about whatever it is you're getting ready to do, now, that this will insulate you and you won't feel bad.

ISOARDI: Also, I figure, too, it's got to be when you spend most of your adult life like that, after thirty years you're not just going to all of a sudden become Mr. Clean.

BRADFORD: Yeah, there's a level— You feel protected somehow, whatever that is. And what it is that you're afraid of nobody knows but you.

ISOARDI: But then I think that— From what I heard, the stroke threw him for a loop, so— He's playing again. He's lucky with a stroke it didn't debilitate him.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I saw a picture in the paper where he's playing someplace in Hawaii, and George Benson was on the bandstand, and Frank was standing there, you

know. That's good. He and I played together around town at various occasions. In fact, I saw him once, and he said, "Man, I don't know why we haven't made a record in all these years."

ISOARDI: Boy, when he plays, when he's on—

BRADFORD: Oh, when he's on he's wonderful. Wardell loved him, and Wardell helped him, showed him all kinds of stuff.

Wardell Gray was sweet, man. That's the guy—I went to his place—He had a little house in back of somebody's house for low rent, and I would go by there, and he'd show me stuff. He'd say, "Here, this is the kind of thing Charlie Parker plays. You can play this against that chord and it works like this." Sweet guy.

ISOARDI: Wow. Very nice.

BRADFORD: You know, a lot of these guys had a house in back of a house where they could have a piano to play and the rent was low and they didn't have to do day jobs. John Anderson, now, who at one point I took trumpet lessons from—

ISOARDI: Oh, did you?

BRADFORD: Yeah, trying to get some range and some power out of the horn. And I took, I don't know, six months or so of private lessons from John Anderson. I wasn't studying jazz with John; I was just trying to learn how to play the trumpet better with him.

ISOARDI: You didn't get into arranging with him or anything like that?

BRADFORD: No, no. And he was a good writer. He came into a club in those days

called the Pico-Dil.

ISOARDI: Where was that?

BRADFORD: Pico and something. If you wanted to go back and look at the phone book, it was at Pico and maybe some street that intersects with it. But it was called the Pico-Dil. And I was getting my little act together. So John came in, and we were on the bandstand—me and Frank and some other guys—and we were playing something like "What Is This Thing Called Love?" Man, I played two or three of my hot choruses, and John came up—he was just stupefied—and said, "Wow, man, where'd you get all that shit you're playing? What do you mean coming over to my house taking lessons?" [mutual laughter] "I never knew you played anything like that." I said, "John, I'm still trying to learn how to play the trumpet, man. This is just playing the changes." He said, "Well, it takes a lot of shit to get those changes out of the horn, too." He said, "You've been fooling me." I could tell he was—I hadn't played any jazz for him; I was just trying to play the trumpet. In fact, he was trying to get me to play with Gerald Wilson's band—

ISOARDI: No kidding?

BRADFORD: —because Gerald was playing weekly almost at the old Oasis.

ISOARDI: Oh, on Western Avenue?

BRADFORD: Yeah. So a couple of the guys in the band were kind of unreliable, and John had set me up to play with Gerald's band. And I think I made one rehearsal with Gerald's band at the Oasis, subbing for some guy that was flaky. It's been so far back

there I can't remember. It seems to me we went there early in the afternoon, like one o'clock, and I subbed for this guy, but he showed up to play the gig that night. But, you know, that's how I first met Gerald.

ISOARDI: Let me ask you— Just to get back to Earl Anderza for a bit, I don't think he finally recorded anything until sometime in the early sixties. He did an album on Pacific Jazz [Records], which they've just rereleased now on CD.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it's called *Something Else*. Wasn't that what it was?

ISOARDI: No, that was Ornette's.

BRADFORD: No, no, but Anderza did one, too.

ISOARDI: Oh, was that called *Something Else* also?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he did a thing called *Something Else*.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I can't remember the title of it now. It escapes me.

BRADFORD: That was his first record. I know the tunes he did on it. One of his favorite tunes was "What's New." And he also liked to play another thing called "Undecided" that Benny Carter wrote. [sings opening bars] That was the kind of tune you could really stretch out on and really show your fast stuff on.

ISOARDI: Well, how would you characterize Anderza's playing when you knew him in the early fifties?

BRADFORD: A bopper. A Charlie Parker bopper.

ISOARDI: Really? He wasn't doing that much outside stuff?

BRADFORD: Nothing, nothing outside. I never heard him try to play outside. But he

respected Ornette. He knew that Ornette was a bad motherfucker. But he also felt like he was as good as Ornette.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Because, now, he was fast. I mean, you could play the tempos just lightening, man, and he could just fly all over the horn. But he was just playing those Charlie Parker things that he had rehearsed, really had them under his fingers. But he was a competitive kind of guy. He loved to play fours. He'd say, "Let's play them fours." "Let me see if I can outdo you" was his thing. And if you played an idea, he'd look at you right on and go— If you went [sings a fast eighth-note bebop phrase], he'd get on his horn and he'd go [sings a faster, higher, more complex phrase], like "What do you think of that?" And he was always really—

ISOARDI: A real gunslinger.

BRADFORD: Oh, a real gunslinger, man. And if he got really blown away on a session, he'd go home and take a bunch of benzedrines—you know, those bennies—and practice. "I've been practicing a week straight and I'm ready to sweep. I'm going to go back and get that motherfucker. He's not going to outblow me." That's the kind of guy he was, right?

ISOARDI: When did he get off the scene—get taken off the scene?

BRADFORD: I don't know. When I left and went in the army—

ISOARDI: So you guys were friends when you took off to go in the army?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. When I left to go away, man— In fact, he told me, "You

ought to try to get out of that some kind of way." I said, "What do you mean 'get out of it'? They're drafting me." So he said, "Why don't you just go down there and tell them you use drugs." [mutual laughter] I said, "Wait a minute, Earl. I'm not going down there and tell them I use drugs. One day I might regret that." And he said, "Well, I'm not going, but they know that they couldn't take me"—because he had tracks all over his arm, you know.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: But he was a sweet guy, man. I loved him. I mean, he was wild and crazy but the kind of wild and crazy guy that you really liked, man, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah. Well, do you want to—?

BRADFORD: No, that would be a good note to stop on.

ISOARDI: Break for now, yeah. Well, maybe next time we can begin with Don Cherry, then.

BRADFORD: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

MAY 9, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bob, last time I think we had got up to the point where you had met Ornette [Coleman], and we were talking about some of the different individuals you had encountered.

BRADFORD: In L.A.

ISOARDI: In L.A. during that stay—

BRADFORD: Oh, Anderza—

ISOARDI: We talked about Earl Anderza that time and George Newman, also, and I think I was about to ask you about Don Cherry when we stopped. But actually, before we get into that, there are a couple of things that occurred to me since our last meeting, so let me throw those at you, okay?

First off, when you come out here in '53, what's Watts like? What's the Watts community like? Is it predominately African American in 1953?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, it's— Well, now, there will be— Watts itself, yeah, is 99 percent black, but you see white people all the time coming into the area; you know, the guys who delivered the fresh bread and the guys who drove the trucks who brought beer and all of that were usually white. You'd see white people all the time, but the residents— It was a black community.

ISOARDI: Did the community have a center? Did it have a life of its own then? Or

was it mostly just residential by now? Was 103rd Street anything then?

BRADFORD: Well, yeah, I think you could say it had a life of its own to this extent, that it was clearly a part of Los Angeles. Now, it wasn't the same as the west side, where blacks lived in those houses that used to be owned by whites perhaps. You could tell—

ISOARDI: It was a wealthier part.

BRADFORD: Yeah, wealthier—In quotes, now, "wealthier" part. This was all working-class community, black, lots of those little storefront churches everywhere—serious church area all over the black community—small businesses, you know. At that point, now, I don't remember there being a big population of like Asian liquor stores or any such thing as that then. A lot of white-owned businesses in the area. People who sold televisions and furniture and all that, all those stores, now, were white owned.

ISOARDI: For the most part?

BRADFORD: As I remember. You got ready to go down to some store and buy a new washing machine, new bedroom suite, or television and all—There would be a lot of white-owned businesses in the area, but it's predominantly a black community after five o'clock, you know. I'm trying to remember, now, in '53—But [for] a lot of people then Watts meant a much larger area than it was technically. It was actually a part of Los Angeles that could be picked out on the map, some street bordered by some street. Well, a lot of people thought Watts meant from about the seventies and eighties

on to like 115th [Street] when it did not.

ISOARDI: Like after '65 is— Everything south of the Santa Monica Freeway people thought was Watts.

BRADFORD: Yeah. That's like a lot of people think South Central just means all black Los Angeles, you know. But it had— There was a big park there—it's still there now, it seems to me—I remember. They used to have the Watts [Summer] Festival [of Art] for a long time—

ISOARDI: Will Rogers Park?

BRADFORD: Yeah. That was a place that was always happening. There was always something going on there, one thing or another, but it wasn't a park that had anything like the Watts Festival. No high-profile city events especially, you know. If something did happen of some significance, they might have it, but it wasn't a place [where] the city of Los Angeles was doing a lot to make things happen. Nothing like the Watts Festival, you know. That was in the wake of troubled times.

ISOARDI: Did you notice Watts Towers at all?

BRADFORD: I don't remember the Watts Towers. You know, in 1953 he [Simon Rodia] may have already begun—I know he was probably living in that area then, but I don't remember having— In fact, where we used to rehearse even in the late sixties, he must have just been up I don't know how many feet off the ground there. It wasn't a real spectacle, let's say, in 1964 and '65. I don't think it was high. [responding to Isoardi] Was it?

ISOARDI: Yeah, I think so by then, because I know he started working on that maybe as early as the thirties.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's right in the thirties. But I don't remember it being a—I may be mixed up on the dates now, but maybe then it wasn't high-profile as a thing that people were pointing to as something to go see.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: It might have been something we all took for granted.

ISOARDI: Right, because I know at one time the city just wanted to tear them down.

BRADFORD: Well, at one point a lot of black people called it an eyesore until somebody said, "Well, you know, this guy was some Eastern European who lived here, and this thing says something about his experience and that he lived in the area and he was—" And then all of sudden it becomes this landmark.

ISOARDI: Actually, it was an Italian guy.

BRADFORD: Was he?

ISOARDI: Yeah. [laughs]

BRADFORD: What's his name? I can't remember—

ISOARDI: Simon Rodia.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't remember it, though, in the early sixties or mid-sixties being a high-profile place that everybody would be scurrying to go and see. Now, in the fifties I don't think I knew about it at all.

ISOARDI: What about race relations in L.A. when you come here in '53? Is there

tension with the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department]? Did you notice anything like that?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Listen, I'll tell you a story right away with us. This stepfather of mine [Augustus Walker]—you know, the guy who's the mechanic—was always getting these old beat-up cars and fixing them so I'd have some transportation. He got me this old '38 Chevy. But it ran. And out of our little group of guys I'm the only one with a car.

So we had this one job, me and Ornette and some drummer from Fort Worth whose name I can't remember who had just come to town but Ornette knew him. He was also somebody who had just gotten off an honor farm [prison farm] someplace in Texas for some trouble and had just moved to California. Anyhow, we're going to a gig that night in a sort of misting rain. I don't know what time of the year this is in, but I get the feeling now that it was like October, November, something like that. Ornette's wearing this big hairdo, of course, right? You're asking for the police to stop you.

ISOARDI: Where are you going? Do you remember?

BRADFORD: Going to a gig. There's a bass in the car. See, black men—

ISOARDI: Do you remember what part of L.A. you're driving to?

BRADFORD: Well, we must have been going to what we call the Nickel, you know, downtown. But we're coming from out where we live, out around 112th [Street], 115th [Street]—where Ornette's wife [Jayne Cortez] lived—and I picked him up and

picked up the bass player and the drummer.

The police pull us over, and it's beginning to sort of— Just the tiniest little mist of rain. One policeman comes around to one side, one comes to the other. So he knocks on the window and tells Ornette Coleman, "Roll that window down." And he's talking to one policeman on this side, and Ornette's sitting there like this looking at him and didn't respond quickly enough. He pulled his gun out and pointed right through the glass at us and said, "Open that goddamn window, motherfucker!" Right? And he started right away talking about his hair. "What the hell is that?" And Ornette was trying to be, you know, Ornette, but not get this guy upset. You were a target if you were traveling around town—any musician, in fact, but especially black. These guys, white policemen, all over the place would pull you over. I can't remember what they stopped us for. Maybe I made some kind of traffic boo-boo, or they actually just said, "Here's some black guys with a bass in the car."

So they got us out of the car, and we're leaning over the hood. They're frisking everybody, right? I don't know whether they were looking for guns or looking for drugs or whatever, but it wasn't a real thorough search. So one guy says to the other, "We ought to arrest these guys," but I can't remember what it would have been for. He said, "But we're changing shifts. We're going off now and other guys are coming on. Otherwise we'd take you to jail."

ISOARDI: Just messing with you.

BRADFORD: Just messing with us. So the drummer, unbeknownst to me,

underneath he's wearing—instead of shorts, now—a man's swimming suit, and he's got five or six little bags of heroin in there.

ISOARDI: Oh, man!

BRADFORD: You know those little plastic containers like a— That kind of paper that you put it in, right? In his swim shorts. And when these guys drove away, then he showed it to us.

ISOARDI: Oh, Jesus.

BRADFORD: So I said, "Hey, man"—to Ornette—"that's it. My stepfather and mother [Bernice Griffin Walker] would faint. They would take the car and we'd all go to jail." I said, "I'm not hauling any of these guys around anymore, now. I'm the one with the car, but I'm not going to be the sucker." We went out to that job that night, but that was the point at which I really kind of figured out I've got to look out for myself here now, man, and not be buddy-buddy to these guys. First of all, you see, I had never been arrested.

ISOARDI: And that would have been serious jail time if they had wanted to stick you.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. If they had found the drugs on me I'd still be in jail probably. In those days, man, you're carrying heroin, they'd take the car, they would have probably taken the musical instruments out, too, and just impounded the whole thing, and we'd have all been in jail. And Ornette wasn't using drugs then. I certainly was not. But this guy was, and he'd just gotten out of jail in Texas, was new in town—was a good drummer.

Oh, I do remember now. We were on our way to a club down somewhere in the red-light district there, in the kinky part of town, that was called some sort of rose, like the White Rose or the Red Rose or something, with these big old bars. They had a lot of gay people there, but not what we would call in those days a gay bar—we had some of those down there, too. But this place, this is the part of L.A. near Fifth [Street] and Main [Street], that part of downtown that black people called the Nickel. And that's where you went if you were going to go get a little penny matchbox of manicured weed, right? [shakes a matchbox] Or get a little of tin of, like— You know the Prince Albert [brand] pipe tobacco?

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, yeah.

BRADFORD: Well, that tin came at a certain price, too—manicured, with all the seeds and everything cleaned out and all. So if you were looking for something like that or looking for gay men or looking to see transvestites or anything, that's the part of town you went in L.A.

But there were gigs. And I remember this one place we played, it was some sort of flower like the White Rose or the Red Rose or the Blue Gardenia, something like that—I'm kind of fantasizing now, one of those noir movies, *The Blue Dahlia* or something. I'm tripping now; that wasn't the name of it.

I remember we went to play at that same place once, and I can remember Ornette was using this piano player that I mentioned to you once before named Floyd Howard, a guy that I used to see eight or nine years ago at the racetrack a lot. He's

kind of a self-styled handicapper at the racetracks. Good piano player, real Bud Powell kind of piano player. He never quite could figure out what Ornette Coleman was doing and actually always thought, "Hmmm, this guy, does he know what he's doing or what?"

But that's when I met Eddie Blackwell, too, in the company of Ornette Coleman.

ISOARDI: In '53?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: When you were first out here?

BRADFORD: Yeah. That's when I met Eddie Blackwell. In fact, Blackwell—I can remember taking Blackwell around hunting for drugs and driving him places where—This is before I got the Chevy, when I had a big old raggedy Chrysler that I took Ornette and his wife to their first apartment in and sitting around with the car idling with the lights on with a poor generator in the car—not alternator, now, generator—where we'd turn the ignition off and we'd come back out to leave and the car wouldn't start. And I'm the guy that gets the brunt of that: "What's the matter with this raggedy motherfucker? We've got to find this—" And we were running around looking for drugs. Blackwell was already heavily into drugs then and had not even begun to be any big star but was a hell of a drummer already.

ISOARDI: You didn't know him in Texas?

BRADFORD: No, no, he's from New Orleans.

ISOARDI: Oh, New Orleans, right.

BRADFORD: No, I met him here with Ornette. Terrific drummer. I mean, really strong musician, too, but a hell of a drummer. Ornette knew that right away, too. Blackwell precedes Billy Higgins, you know, with Ornette.

ISOARDI: So you mentioned last time that you and Ornette had started to rehearse together. Was Blackwell part of that?

BRADFORD: No, most of the time that would be just me and Ornette getting the lines down, you know, getting those heads, so that when we got together with the bass and drums we wouldn't have to spend any time holding that up, so that we could play those— Because a lot of the lines were difficult—you know, the trumpet parts. A lot of his tunes were hard to play—not any harder than a lot of Charlie Parker's stuff, but odd on some level, you know. Intervallically it was already moving into a thing now that wasn't bebop anymore. Like that thing that goes [sings opening melody to "Happy House" by Coleman]— See, that's not Charlie Parker there; that's Ornette Coleman. His stuff was hard to play, but I was so full of vinegar, man, I would just say, "Bring 'em out, man."

ISOARDI: Give you a challenge.

BRADFORD: And I was a good trumpet player, you know, in terms of being able to get over the horn. I could play the fast stuff, and he liked it. I had a good sound. I could read music. You know? And I loved to play, and I wanted to play, and that was all he wanted, you know, a guy who was— And I loved what he was doing, you see. It

was like him going around and getting disciples, man. Once he found somebody that really looked into his music and saw what he wanted, then you're hooked, you know.

ISOARDI: How would you describe—? I mean, you said that he was close to being fully formed when you met him and that he was doing a lot of material that he had already written that would establish him later.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He had already written a lot of stuff. I think at this point he was trying to clear it up in his head that he really wanted to go on and do his thing and abandon all this other stuff or try to figure some kind of way to be a new sort of bopper, you know. Because the stuff he'll finally record, you can see a lot of stuff he does is really very folk music oriented, some of those melodies. They sound like people in the fields, you know. And I think—

ISOARDI: You know, a lot of the real free guys in the sixties, people like [Albert] Ayler, they used a lot of folk material, too.

BRADFORD: Oh, sure. But, you see, what those guys were saying, Ornette had to knock the door down for them to feel free to do that, you see. I played some Albert Ayler for my students where he's yodeling on one record. He's going [mimics Ayler's wailing yodel], and they all thought, "Well, what the hell is that?" See, I think if Ornette hadn't opened the door that he did, these guys would have never gone that way. You wouldn't jump from Charlie Parker to what Albert Ayler was doing without an Ornette in between.

ISOARDI: Yeah, true. How would you characterize what he was doing? I mean, I

know he went on to call his approach harmolodic.

BRADFORD: Well, see, now, I never heard that word when I was in the band.

Anything—

ISOARDI: That's something he evolved later to explain what he was doing.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I think— Well, that's the name he came up with later. Now, whether—I could see him trying to organize a sort of theory that surrounds his music, because he was always getting asked questions, but I don't remember him ever saying to me one thing that I could use. Like with Charlie Parker, he could say, "Well, if you want to get the sound I'm getting right here you have to substitute that chord with this chord and give it that and give it that." And that was a hard, concrete thing. Ornette didn't have any of that that he could give you.

ISOARDI: Well, how would you explain what he was doing?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, when you played his tunes, that gave you some access to what to play when you were playing the improvisations. It forced you to deal with intervals in a different way. It forced you also not to settle into your regular old bebop licks, because they were just like a bad joke in church. Once you played one of his melodies you couldn't jump in there with a bebop cliché. Everybody—including yourself, first of all—would know this doesn't work. When you got through playing one of his melodies you couldn't jump in and go [sings typical medium swing bebop phrase]. Charlie Parker, it wouldn't work. And you were the first to know it. And what you knew also, besides what you were trying to figure out what to play with, you

knew what wouldn't work. In fact—

ISOARDI: Even before you knew it.

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, he said, when he was seriously researching this thing about what to do and he wasn't sure about what it was, he knew that this thing had some rules. But he didn't say it the way I'm saying it. He hadn't figured out how to formalize these rules. But he knew he'd hit up on something playing free when he realized that you could play a wrong note. See, a lot of guys think you can't play wrong notes with Ornette Coleman; you just go [sings brash, arbitrary phrase]. But you can't. When you get up on the bandstand with him, when he gets through playing one of those melodies like—oh, I can't think of something right now—[sings opening melody to "Happy House" by Coleman again] you can't jump in there with some bop lick that goes like [sings cliché bebop phrase]. You just can't do it. The language is so different. The rhythms he started to use— You see, by that time Ornette had clearly cut the umbilical cord to Charlie Parker. And by the time he did that *Free Jazz* recording of 1960, he's clearly gone—

ISOARDI: Another world.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he's totally Ornette Coleman then, without any ties to Charlie Parker that you could hear as a listener.

ISOARDI: Everyone talks about his melodic innovations.

BRADFORD: Oh, listen, he's a melodic— As a soloist and as a composer, a genius. There's no question about it.

ISOARDI: How would you characterize his music rhythmically?

BRADFORD: It ranges [over] everything, from what would seem to be classical music all the way back to the most primitive sort of field holler, like that tune that goes—"Rambling." [sings melody] It sounds like something Bob Dylan would do that he'd heard some street player do, some guy playing a tambourine and a harmonica. Then you go up to some of the other stuff that he did on Atlantic [Records], very sophisticated, with some bop thing in there a little bit but not a lot. And then that *Skies of America* stuff, you see, some of those melodies from *Skies of America*, I mean, could be clearly classical music in the sense that we mean it, you know. That stuff they did on that *Science Fiction* record there—

ISOARDI: Different stuff.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, especially that stuff where the singer [Asha Puthli] was working. Yeah, his stuff goes all the way from a field holler to symphony space.

ISOARDI: Let's see, what did I also want to ask you about from last time? Last time you talked about Armand's club.

BRADFORD: Now, this Armand's—

ISOARDI: What was it like? Describe what it looked like.

BRADFORD: It was a bar. You walk in, there's a bandstand over in the corner to your left, there's a bar over to the right that had tables sitting around, people going up to the bar getting drinks [and] sitting around listening to the band play.

ISOARDI: Maybe a hundred people, if that?

BRADFORD: Yeah, not a hundred people—you know, fifty, sixty people, seventy-five, maybe, when it's crowded. But sitting down there we were playing— This was Wednesday nights. I don't know what they did there the other days. This is at sessions on Wednesday night, [when] there was the jazz crew. Sometimes there would be more musicians than listeners there, but all kinds of guys coming from all over L.A. to play at Armand's. I guess if we could go back and get a telephone directory from that period we could get the address. But it was east of Central Avenue, not far. We were in the general area where that Coca-Cola [bottling plant] building that looks like a ship is still there, somewhere in that part of town.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's still there.

BRADFORD: Yeah, with the windows that look like portholes up there.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's—what?—around Seventeenth [Street], Eighteenth [Street], something like that?

BRADFORD: Somewhere around there. Armand's was in that general area. Mexican bar, but a lot of black people there, too.

ISOARDI: Are you doing any writing at this time?

BRADFORD: You're talking about music?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, all the time. I just finished this *Portrait Suite* that I'm trying to get somebody to record.

ISOARDI: No, I mean back then, '53.

BRADFORD: Oh, then. Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, '53, am I doing any writing then? Not much, and that that I'm doing I'm not happy with. I'm mostly trying to figure out how I want to play the trumpet. In other words, I'm not doing any writing that it's worth talking about.

ISOARDI: But is that an ambition that you have? Because you turn into such a tremendous writer.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, writing— And I say it to my students all the time. I think this is true for almost all people, especially in jazz. Almost anybody that's a soloist in jazz could be a writer, but if you don't understand that you could be a writer you never will. It's a mindset. And you have to understand the difference between a solo improvisation on the bandstand and a distilled composition, which I didn't at first. I didn't get the difference. And then finally it hits you one day what composing is as opposed to improvisation on the horn. And once that hit me, then I just started to write, just went crazy.

ISOARDI: When was that?

BRADFORD: I don't know now, to tell you the truth. I think it might have started when I was in the army, or in the air force actually it was called. Because I had a lot of time on my hands then. All we did when I was in the military— Once I went through boot camp and a few months of kind of soldiering where you do all the stuff you have to do to be in the military, once I got assigned to a band then all you do every day is play. You have lots of free time to write and practice.

In fact, you get up in the morning—and we'll come to that, because I'm getting ready to leave L.A. where we are now and go into the military—you go to breakfast, and you come back at nine o'clock, the concert band rehearses. After lunch the symphonic band or the jazz combos or the brass ensembles—That's your life. That's all you do. In the afternoon, if you're not rehearsing, they will pay for you to go into the city and take private lessons from whoever the nearest teacher is that you want to do.

ISOARDI: No kidding? They pay for that?

BRADFORD: They pay for that, transportation and everything, just to upgrade your musicianship. They do that now, in fact, in the military if you're in the bands. Let's say you're stationed up near San Francisco at one of those bases around there, they pay for you to go into San Francisco and study with the trumpet player from the San Francisco Symphony. Because they benefit from it, and you do too, of course.

Well, see, in the course of the time I'm there, I'm learning about arranging for the big band. We've got two or three staff arrangers. I'm learning how to write for little bands—you know, sextets, octets. We're reading tons of music. I get so I can read music, man, like a— You know what I mean? Reading new music every day. My reading skills are really sharp, which they hadn't been. When I went into the service I just read well enough to get in the military bands, which meant that you can play in the military band and play marches and stuff like that. But, I mean, I wasn't a sophisticated reader that could read all kinds of music literature. But it all grew in the

military.

So you're sitting around, you're playing, you're listening to records in the barracks, you're transcribing solos off records to see what these guys are playing, and then you start trying to write your own tunes. And I think that's when I really started to write, was in the military. The first tune of any significance of mine I wrote while I was in the military. And it was based on like what Charlie Parker and the guys were doing: take the chord pattern to a standard Tin Pan Alley tune and write a new melody.

ISOARDI: Do you remember the melody you took?

BRADFORD: Yeah, it was based on rhythm changes—you know, George Gershwin, "I Got Rhythm" changes. But, now, the tune itself, I can only just remember a phrase from it now, it's been so long. But that was big for the boppers, take a tune like "All the Things You Are" and then write a bebop melody over it, something like that. But that's when my writing really started to have any meaning.

ISOARDI: Well, we'll come back to that shortly. Let me ask you about another person who we haven't really touched on yet, Don Cherry.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, I met Don—I think the first time I actually met Don is I went over to Jeff[erson High School], and Don was there, and so was George Newman, but I can't remember who—I think it might have been Earl Anderza that took me by there. Because all of us in town, now, then who were the young coming boppers—L.A. was really small. We all knew each other by face. So here comes—Don was at that time, like most of us, trying to play the bop trumpet style of Fats

Navarro, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis all melted together. And I guess he must have been— Maybe he was a senior at Jeff then, he and George Newman. But I remember going by the band room one day, and whoever it was that brought me there I can't remember now. It might even have been Roy Brewster, the guy who played trumpet and trombone—

ISOARDI: You had hooked up with Roy Brewster—

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'd met him too somehow. I can't remember how. But when I got here I was running around to all the venues now trying to meet people and hang out. And once I played, everybody— You know, you're a new guy in town that can play, and everybody goes, "Hey, man." Right?

ISOARDI: "Come on by."

BRADFORD: Yeah, "come on by." So we went by Jeff one day, and when I got there Don and— George introduced him, and we played some tunes, and right away you know what you represent now to George Newman. George says, "Oh, yeah, man, another trumpet player in town." Because I was playing all the licks. So Don and I were kind of giving each other the eye, you know. Because you know how trumpet players, they're sort of— Not [just] trumpet players, but all the—

ISOARDI: All of them, that's what I was thinking. [laughs]

BRADFORD: All of the musicians, all have that gunfighter mentality; like, "There's a new guy in town that sounds pretty good, too." But there was no malicious thing between us, you know, and we exchanged conversation. I never went to his place,

now, and practiced with him or anything, but I had gone by his house several times. I remember walking by his place in Watts, because his house had the raised lawn—you know, where it's sidewalk level, and they put the dirt up here and put a brick edge around it—

ISOARDI: Oh, I got you.

BRADFORD: —and you could walk on it, and it got steeper going to the front door. And I remember one day, it was either [with] Ornette or Roy Brewster that I passed by his place and just yelled at him, and he was standing in the front looking out through the screen door. So somebody said, "Whatcha doin' these days, Don?" He said, "I'm just staying home, man, trying to get some soul." I remember that. You know, that always struck me as kind of strange for a guy to say that—you know what I mean?—to say it in that way, and that's why I never have forgotten it. And I thought, "That's not where soul comes from—you just sort of sit home and get it," I'm thinking in my head. I knew what he meant, of course—just trying to get some perspective on who he was and what his playing was like.

Now, he was clearly a very precocious kid. You know, he was already getting through the changes then. And he and George both were pretty good at the piano, playing the chords to the tunes that they wanted to play. And I was still fumbling around at the piano then, trying to figure out how to play these new chords and how to voice them at the piano [in a way] that sounded really hip. But George and Don both, now, most of the tunes that they knew they could play at the piano, play the chords to

them.

ISOARDI: Now, has he hooked up with Ornette Coleman yet? Are they playing together?

BRADFORD: No, Don is not playing— At this point, no, he's not. As I remember it now, somewhere there in late 1953, early 1954, somewhere in there, Don sort of moves into the picture, but I can't remember exactly when. But he really took off after I went into the air force, because there were only two guys around town that had either the empathy or curiosity or whatever it was to deal with Ornette Coleman, [and they were] probably me and Don Cherry. Because when we were playing around town, he obviously wouldn't have had two trumpet players. I can't ever remember being on the bandstand with Don and Ornette but lots of times on the bandstand like at Armand's or other places with Don playing trumpet and maybe another saxophone player there, maybe Earl Anderza or George Newman or some of the other guys around town. But I don't remember an occasion where Ornette was there and Don and I both were on the stand at the same time.

ISOARDI: Is he playing straight trumpet then?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. His pocket trumpet thing starts in New York. Yeah, he was playing straight trumpet. You know, he played several records where he's playing straight trumpet in New York, and when they opened at the Five Spot he was still playing the straight trumpet. My own personal assessment of that—and people ask me all the time—is that the reason Don switched to the pocket trumpet is because it was

easier to play. It didn't have anything to do with all this mystique that people put around it. It's easier to play.

You see, Don was a very gifted player, but Don had a faulty embouchure in that when he put the trumpet on his mouth the top rim of the mouthpiece was down into the pink part of his upper lip, which means that that limits your range and especially your endurance. When you're younger, you see, you can sort of endure the pain; that's the real tender part of your lip. As the years went by, playing the trumpet got more and more difficult. And people say—I never asked him this, but it was clear to me when he went to the pocket trumpet—that with the same amount of energy and effort that you put in playing the pocket trumpet that you put in playing the regular trumpet, you got more out of the pocket trumpet, and it was less fatiguing. That's what took him to that horn.

ISOARDI: Was that a problem with just not being taught when he was younger or—?

BRADFORD: Well, no, he picked— It might have been, but you pick the horn up, and once you start on a trumpet, after a year or so, once you get your real embouchure, it's too late then. That's like asking a right-handed batter to learn to be a switch hitter. It's just too late. And he never did make the change, so especially later on in his career, even before he started all the *Multi Kulti* stuff, his trumpet playing was getting really shaky. I mean, he was playing a lot of beautiful stuff, but he didn't have the range or the tone or the control of the horn. Because he had that mouthpiece, you see, in a place where it just won't work. And I'm sure every time he got up to play the horn

it was painful. But he was a very gifted musician.

ISOARDI: He showed an interest in Ornette's music, though? When you were—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, right away. Everybody in town was talking— In fact, he talks about it in his interviews in various places about [how] the first time he saw Ornette Coleman he was wearing an overcoat—

ISOARDI: Oh, right.

BRADFORD: —and it was ninety degrees, and Ornette Coleman went into Pete Kinnard's music store [K and H Records] and bought a reed that was a—

ISOARDI: Like a four and half or a five—

BRADFORD: Like as thick as a Dixie cup spoon.

ISOARDI: It was a piece of lumber.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. So you know how that myth just builds and builds and builds, and finally Ornette is just this big Gargantua guy who comes in and just blows everybody away, but—

ISOARDI: Well, did Don really like that story or what?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, what happened— People have expanded the story, you know. But what Don saw was this really very eccentric guy who was his own person very early on. It was like I said: Ornette was totally out of the loop and didn't care about what everybody else thought about his dress, his speech, his music, his anything. He just already knew who he was early on.

Don loved his music right away too, even though it went against everything

that he was studying about bebop, about the chords. Ornette's thing was this thing is about feeling, and you have to try to get to the feeling. Because at that point, you see, he hadn't formalized any kind of real concrete thing about what it was he was doing. He understood and knew what the rules were, but intuitively. See, there's nothing I've ever gotten from Ornette that said "that's a concrete rule." Like with the beboppers, you could say, "Well, this has to be a flat nine here, that has to be a sharp nine"—you know, the tritone substitution and blah blah blah. Beboppers had a lot of stuff worked out that you had access to and you could practice. See, with Ornette's music you'd have to sit down there and say, "What do I practice when I get home?" You see? And you were always tied to Ornette. I discovered right away you had difficulty playing Ornette's music without him being there. Don tried that a lot. You see, he'd have another band and try to play Ornette's tunes, and I heard him, and it didn't work. It was okay, but you never got what he got out of it unless he was there. Because for whatever reason, he couldn't share with you what it was where he was coming from, you know. But I understood that if I was going to play with him, I had to figure out a way, how to derive—The impetus for the solo had to come from just the melody of the song itself.

What you did was you took his melodies, and you had to learn his tunes really well so you knew them, so that they became the motivic base of your improvisations. And if you had a good mind for that sort of thing, you could take a tune of his and just explore it in the improvisation as opposed to following a chord sequence like a road

map, you see. But when he said that sort of stuff it made a lot of people nervous. Because, you see, it asks you to go inside yourself a little more and dig a little deeper.

ISOARDI: You don't have as much to hang onto.

BRADFORD: No, that's right, until you find out what that is. The thing is— Let's say you're playing a tune like "All the Things You Are" in the bebop tradition. Even if you play badly and you're not really a creative person, one thing is guaranteed: if you follow the chord pattern to the Jerome Kern song, you've already got something going right there. You've got something to say because you have this wonderful curvature of the harmonies, which have been constructed out of stone in a tune like that. That's a masterpiece. So if you just follow the chords and you just play some really simplistic things, nobody could say anything sucked that you played. You could say, "It wasn't very creative, man," or "It didn't do this," but it had a flow if you could follow the chords.

But with Ornette Coleman's music you didn't have this road map so clearly worked out. You had to take this raw melody of his and squeeze the daylights out of it and figure out what you could draw out of it that you could relate to, which asked you to dig more and more into yourself, because you don't have Jerome Kern now—the road map—to help you. Now, for example, if you got a bunch of beboppers together and just say "Just improvise here now. Don't follow the chords to 'All the Things You Are,' but just take the melody and expand it and distort it and chip away at it and twist it and all," you get some interesting improvisations not following the chord pattern.

What would happen right away is the bass player would say, "Well, I don't know where you're going to play. I'm going to follow you on the chords." And Ornette would say to you, "Oh, no, no, no. You're improvising the same as I am, and I don't know what you're going to play." Well, you see, that's heresy right there for the greater population. And I thought, "This is heaven," right? We're going to play in this linear thing, this bass player's up there going—we don't know where he's going—but these lines are just intersecting at various places.

ISOARDI: Well, you mentioned that you and Ornette would work on his tunes together. But what would he tell the bass player? What would he tell the drummer?

BRADFORD: Well, the drummer of course would be pretty much like you'd tell a bebop drummer: "Listen to this line, man, and make the kicks that you're going to make fit the line. In the solo, you see, you're keeping time just like a bop drummer, aren't you?" Now, see, a lot of the later avant-garde people would stop keeping time, but Ornette—

ISOARDI: They got away from that—

BRADFORD: But Ornette Coleman's band, he always kept time. I don't remember any occasion when I played with him when the drummer wasn't keeping time. Now, he might stop in the middle of the piece, slow down and stop and let the bass and the saxophone play, but when he came back in it was always timed.

ISOARDI: Yeah, you can hear Billy Higgins on all that stuff.

BRADFORD: Yeah. See, in other words, Ornette doesn't have any recordings back in

those days where the rhythm section is playing like in a Cecil Taylor band where the bass player's going [sings free, seemingly random cluster of phrases] and the drummer's going [sings drumming equivalent of the free bass sound referred to previously]. You don't have any of that. That's the next generation of free jazz players.

ISOARDI: But, I mean, did he see that as a problem with his conception of the music?

BRADFORD: Who?

ISOARDI: Ornette. Was he happy with that? I mean, it seems like a little bit of a contradiction in a way.

BRADFORD: Well, see, he still wanted to swing. You know what I'm saying? When Ornette solos, now, he's a madman for swing. Everything swings. If you're going to swing, now, you've got to have that [sings standard straight-ahead 4/4 jazz ride cymbal pattern]. I'll have to qualify that, I guess, because later on people are going to redefine what swing means. But what it meant to Ornette was now you've got to groove, and there's no thing there where he's not heading for a groove. So with a groove, the drummer has got to be playing that 4/4. See, now, you don't have any records of Ornette's where they're playing anything in 3/4, do you, or 5/4 or 7/4 or any of that? Just 4/4. And Billy, that's his domain, isn't it? Swing. As so with Blackwell.

That I liked, but I also liked what came later, that John Carter and I really explored a lot, where the bass player and drummer are just as free as you are, and you have this total improvisation, which I like, too.

ISOARDI: Well, I guess, I mean, especially when Ornette moved into funk influence and African influence stuff, the groove is so important and all.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I have some reservations about that period, now, which we'll come to later.

ISOARDI: We'll get to that, yeah.

BRADFORD: But it's still Ornette Coleman and his own distinct approach to music.

ISOARDI: Truly. How long are you in L.A. this time before you leave?

BRADFORD: I leave Los Angeles— [tape recorder off]

ISOARDI: Okay, as you were saying, Bob.

BRADFORD: I leave Los Angeles after Christmas of '54. First of all, when I come back off the road with one of these R and B [rhythm and blues] bands, the letter's waiting, and I have to go down and be examined for the army.

ISOARDI: Okay, in L.A., then.

BRADFORD: In L.A.

ISOARDI: So you leave just before New Year's Day '55?

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: Okay. Lets talk about what else you're doing in L.A. then. You just mentioned that—I mean, I guess you're playing with Ornette as much as you can.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I'm taking lessons sometimes from John Anderson. A little girl chasing and trying to figure out a way to keep—

ISOARDI: You're not a married man at this point?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. I'm just a kid, you know, nineteen [years old], something like that—'34, nineteen, right?

ISOARDI: Yeah, nineteen going on twenty.

BRADFORD: And still living with my folks and trying to deal with that, stepfather and all. And going out of town periodically with this R and B band.

ISOARDI: What band's that?

BRADFORD: King Perry is his name. And I played with some other bands around town. In fact, I played with some Latin bands, those bands where you have three trumpets dressed in those shirts with the big blousey sleeves. Three trumpets, the saxophone, and congas and timbales and all. Just gigs where you could read, because I was a good reader. Bands like that, just making gigs, you know, making money, whatever you could make, and working at this department store during the day.

ISOARDI: Bullock's.

BRADFORD: At Bullock's, Ornette and I both. Now, when I left to go into the army, I left Ornette at Bullock's.

ISOARDI: So he held that job for a while.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Is R and B big in L.A. by the mid-fifties?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: It's still going strong.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, it's still going strong. Big.

ISOARDI: What are some of the places? Do you play around town, play R and B around town?

BRADFORD: Yeah, any place you would play, now, if you weren't playing jazz. Playing these beer joints. People want you to play "Night Train" and "Red Top" and whatever the blues R and B hits were of the day. This was the period now where people like Ivory Joe Hunter was a big star. And T-Bone Walker was big, and Lowell Fulson, Lloyd Glenn, Percy Mayfield. I even played briefly with Percy Mayfield's band.

ISOARDI: "Please Send Me Someone to Love."

BRADFORD: Right. I played with his band. There was another band, a bebop band. I played in that—This was like an octet. Interesting band. And the guy who did the writing for that band, who was the leader, he's still around L.A. He used to travel in recent years, last fifteen or twenty, with B.B. King—I don't know if he's still with him—named Vernon Slater.

ISOARDI: Oh, he was a tenor saxophonist.

BRADFORD: Tenor player. Now, he had a band with a good book in it. It sounded kind of like Tadd Dameron's band. Look who's in that band, now: I'm playing trumpet, Earl Anderza's playing baritone [saxophone], Sonny Criss is playing alto [saxophone].

ISOARDI: Wow.

BRADFORD: Herb Mullins playing trombone, and Vernon Slater's wife Vivian [Slater] is playing the piano. Fine piano player. The drummer's name I can't think of now to save my life. But this was a five-horn band: trumpet, trombone, alto, tenor, and bari[tone].

ISOARDI: Gee, good players.

BRADFORD: Oh, good band. Good book. Now, I don't remember us getting but two or three gigs, but we rehearsed quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Do you remember the names of any of the places you used to play this stuff at? Did you ever play the Five Four Ballroom?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but not playing jazz, playing R and B. I think I played there with Percy Mayfield.

ISOARDI: What kind of place was that?

BRADFORD: You know they've refurbished it?

ISOARDI: Yeah, I heard some professor at Cal[ifornia] State [University], Long Beach bought it and refurbished it.

BRADFORD: Well, I didn't realize who it was. In those days it belonged to Billy Berg.

ISOARDI: Billy Berg owned the Five Four Ballroom?

BRADFORD: Right. Second floor—you can go there now—Fifty-fourth [Street] and Broadway, second story.

ISOARDI: I didn't know he had owned it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it was Billy Berg's place. Well, anyway, he put on stuff there. I'm assuming maybe he sublet the second floor. I don't know if he owned the building or not. But this is a serious black community here. I heard Charlie Parker there with Chet Baker.

ISOARDI: At the Five Four?

BRADFORD: At the Five Four. In '54, before I went in the military, somewhere between the summer and that Christmas, I saw Larance Marable, Chet Baker, Charlie Parker, Amos Trice—

ISOARDI: I know that name.

BRADFORD: —piano player, and I think Jimmy Bunn on bass. And “Bird” [Charlie Parker] was wearing his *quo vadis* hairdo and his famous velvet black coat.

ISOARDI: That wasn't too long before he died.

BRADFORD: No, it wasn't. He'll be dead by the next March.

ISOARDI: A few months, yeah.

BRADFORD: And he looked it, too, man.

ISOARDI: Really? I'll bet.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he looked bad, really bad. Frank Morgan was sort of just his little—

ISOARDI: Protégé.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Everywhere Charlie Parker went, it's like Frank was just sort of standing right there to do whatever he wanted him to do.

ISOARDI: Did he ever get up and play with Bird? Did you ever see him?

BRADFORD: I'm sure he must have, because Charlie Parker really— Frank had endeared himself somehow to Bird—you know, precocious young alto player. I don't remember seeing them on the bandstand together, but I'm sure at some point he pulled Frank up there to give him that feel.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

MAY 9, 2000

BRADFORD: Also during this period I'm going to Wardell Gray's place.

ISOARDI: Where does he live?

BRADFORD: He's living somewhere over on the black west side with a house in back of a house, very much like John Anderson had. Just going to get Wardell to show me how to play certain phrases against chords and all. Really sweet guy, man.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Very open. A great player. Would show you anything.

ISOARDI: Wow. Very nice.

BRADFORD: He used to play regularly at a place down near the Nickel downtown, but it was near— It seems like it was called the Norbo [Grill].

ISOARDI: Norbo?

BRADFORD: Something like that. There was a hotel, and this lounge was a part of the hotel, and Wardell used to play down there on weekends, and he would ask me sometimes to come down and sit in on Sundays, which I did.

ISOARDI: This was near Fifth and Central, then?

BRADFORD: Well, in that part of town, but farther— It would be somewhere like—I'm guessing now—First Street and Los Angeles [Street], somewhere right in there. There was an old hotel, an old kind of almost flophouse hotel down there. It

seems like this place was called the Norbo or something like that. And there was a piano player that he liked to use in those days. I can't remember this guy['s name], but a really good piano player who was really a prim and proper kind of guy. I would just see him sort of manicuring his nails, fixing his tie, with nice hairdo and all. Good piano player, but I can't remember his name. Good player.

ISOARDI: How did you hook up with Wardell?

BRADFORD: I think the Monday night things at the California Club was where I first met him.

ISOARDI: Just started talking?

BRADFORD: Yeah, went up and sat in one night, and he said something like, "Yeah, youngblood, sounds good." And the next thing I asked him, "Hey, man, is there any possibility I could come and take some lessons or just study with you?" He said, "Yeah, call me." And I'd go to his house sometimes during the week. We'd sit back there and he'd show me all kinds of stuff, you know.

ISOARDI: Good experience.

BRADFORD: No money involved. Of course, there would be occasions later on when I'd go down and see him play where he'd say, "Hey, you got five bucks, man, so I can get a bag?" because he was into that, you know. But a sweeter guy you'd never find.

ISOARDI: You knew him, then—I mean, that was just before he was killed, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, I heard about that after I went into the army. It wasn't long after.

ISOARDI: Do you have any idea why that happened? I mean, there are all sorts of stories, but nobody seems to—

BRADFORD: Oh, it was a drug thing, there's no question about that. But the story was that he was in this hotel room with these guys and something happened, and they freaked out and took his body out in the desert to hide it because they didn't know what to do. They finally said they thought he fell off the bed and broke his neck. Something happened where they were all shooting up and there might have been a scuffle. And Wardell was a really very thin, almost frail guy, just skin-and-bone kind of guy—not sick, but a really thin guy that could be hurt easily in some sort of tussle, you know—but, you know, into the drugs.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. Is there much intermixing with white musicians?

BRADFORD: You mean playing in the jam sessions? Yeah.

ISOARDI: In the jams?

BRADFORD: Yeah, there was no problem. There was no—I never once felt, now, any kind of racial vibe going over into Hollywood and sitting in with the white musicians. You might have trouble with the police *getting* there or something like that. But now, this was a period—And I say to my students, you know how you could be out there on Sunset [Boulevard], way deep on Sunset, and see some black guy now, clearly black, lying on one of the benches with no shirt on and no shoes, and the police

wouldn't even bother him, would they?

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: Well, in those days you couldn't. You wouldn't see anybody walking too far out on Sunset, black, late at night anywhere, just hanging out—you know what I'm saying?—in those days. So if you're black in Los Angeles in those days, you were still limited, now, to where you are and where you belong and where you're not welcome, or at least where the police would stop you, you know. You certainly wouldn't move into that area out towards Beverly Hills late at night just tripping around and wearing funny clothes and all. No good.

ISOARDI: Do you remember any of the particular musicians?

BRADFORD: Yeah. There's Don Friedman, terrific piano player. What's his name who plays the trumpet now that's a comedian and singer?

ISOARDI: Jack Sheldon?

BRADFORD: Jack Sheldon. Joe Maini—

ISOARDI: Saxophonist.

BRADFORD: Yeah, saxophonist, who had some accident playing Russian roulette or something; that's how he died. Art Mardigan, terrific drummer who had played with some big people but was around town.

ISOARDI: Chet Baker you mentioned earlier.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Now, I never actually— That was a group of guys that you didn't sort of access. They were already kind of big, and they didn't hobnob with the

next level of players. You didn't get to go sit in with Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan, because they were already kind of big.

ISOARDI: What about a cat like Art Pepper?

BRADFORD: Art Pepper, you see, was a big doper, and you always have access to people like that, because the people that often provide the dope for them were black.

You know what I mean? You had access to where they played. I remember one baritone player around town—black guy—would tell me, "Let's go sit in with Art Pepper, man." Because he was the dope guy, and Art was always glad to see him sit in, you know. But this guy was a good player. I can't remember his name right now. He didn't know a lot of tunes, but what he did know he played very well.

I'm trying to think of some other people, now, around town like—Bill Holman came to the jam sessions sometimes. I'll think of some of the other saxophone players around town who you saw at the sessions who liked to play and who—

ISOARDI: Was Bud Shank around then?

BRADFORD: Bud Shank was around. Bud was already playing with Stan Kenton during this period, and he was at that upper level, you know, and already doing studio work. So was Richie Kamuca, tenor player. Who else was around town? All these guys were young then. Jack Nimitz. Conte Condoli was in town then.

ISOARDI: Where would you meet these guys? Where would you play at?

BRADFORD: Well, there was one place called Zardi's [Jazzland]. There was another place called Tap City. Then some other places that were jam sessions that came and

went, and I can't even remember their names. But one little place that you could run into these guys was the Tip Top. This was Third [Street] and Main.

ISOARDI: Back downtown.

BRAFDORD: Yeah, back downtown, third and Main. And I played there with Walter Benton. Sometimes Teddy Edwards would show up. Eric Dolphy, Herb Geller—

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, fine alto player.

BRAFDORD: There were some guys, now, who were around town who didn't come to the sort of cheapies because they were all working and doing very well. You weren't going to see Gerry Mulligan at the Tip Top or Chet Baker. They had moved to a notch above that.

There was the Haig, a little club.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. Well, there was the Haig and the Tiffany that was close to it—wasn't it?—down on Wilshire [Boulevard]?

BRAFDORD: I can't remember exactly. I remember where the Tiffany was. I can't remember exactly where the Haig was. It was this very small room. In fact, that's where I first heard Bud Powell in person.

ISOARDI: He only played there for a couple of nights once, I think.

BRAFDORD: But I heard him there with this guy with him. I don't know how many times he played there, but he had this male nurse with him.

ISOARDI: Male nurse, really?

BRAFDORD: Yeah. The guy was standing there rubbing his shoulders and all. Now,

Bud Powell, when he was in town he came to the California Club. I remember one night he came, and I was up there on the bandstand with Frank Morgan and Wardell Gray, and Bud Powell came, and everybody acknowledged him, you know. And he just stood there in front of us— We all played— He stood about ten feet in front of the bandstand and folded his arms, just watched us play, like this.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: Then they acknowledged him and said, "Well, Bud Powell's going to play." He came up on the stage, and he sat down on the piano, and he sat there and sat there and sat there, and then he got up and walked away. Didn't play.

ISOARDI: Oh, man. Heartbreaking.

BRADFORD: Yeah. But I heard him at the Haig.

ISOARDI: What was he like there?

BRADFORD: Oh, he was crazy as a bedbug, you know. But I thought he was still playing very well—that thing that we knew as Bud Powell, you know, that beautiful line that he played. But everybody knew he was in trouble.

ISOARDI: Jeez. Did he play a full set or a couple of sets when you saw him?

BRADFORD: You know, I can't remember. I just remember sitting there watching him sit at the piano with his head down like that, man, totally immersed in what he was doing, not distracted by anything around him.

ISOARDI: Off in his world.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Off in his world, exactly. But still smoking, you know.

Sometimes Carl Perkins would come down to the Tip Top and jam.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. He was in town then.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was. He was one of the— When you thought of— You said, "Who were the black piano players in town?" There were two black piano players, man, that worked around town, and I can't remember either of their names. One guy was a very, very, very fair-skinned black guy, just almost white, who had eyes that almost had a little hint of Asian in them. But his hair was— You could tell he was a black guy with a lot of other blood. And really manicured nails, like this other guy— I can't remember either of their names. Both played beautifully.

Now, somebody like Harold Land would know these two guys. He could pull their names up right now. In fact, I met Harold Land during this period, too. Harold came down to the Tip Top some. He had just come here from San Diego. I forgot about him.

I can't think of any trombone players during this period.

ISOARDI: Was Jimmy Knepper still in town then? Or had he gone back East?

BRADFORD: If he was, I never remember seeing him at any of the sessions, no.

ISOARDI: Frank Rosolino?

BRADFORD: Frank Rosolino was in town, but he was one of the biggies, you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah, by then. Okay, so you go off on the road with King Perry?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, my last trip with him we went to Canada. Went all the way up through British Columbia and into—

ISOARDI: Up the [West] Coast?

BRADFORD: Well, we didn't go up the coast. We actually played in Utah and some other places. We didn't go up the coast route. I remember our first job from L.A. was Vernal, Utah, wherever that is. That was the first gig.

ISOARDI: Man. A town of—what?—two hundred people?

BRADFORD: Yeah, playing for whites. But this guy had a book full of music. He could play anything he wanted: "Beer Barrel Polka" or "Turkey in the Straw," or if he played for blacks, R and B. It was me on trumpet; him on alto, clarinet and violin; another guy played tenor; and a singer; piano; bass; and drums. Somebody told me he'd retired to Bakersfield. I haven't heard a word from him since. He had one little sort of semi-hit back there, but it wasn't a big national hit, a California hit called "Keep a Dollar in Your Pocket"—some R and B tune.

ISOARDI: Oh, I've heard that tune.

BRADFORD: "Keep a dollar in your pocket, your dollar is your very best friend," something like that.

ISOARDI: Yeah, yeah.

BRADFORD: We went all the way as far as Calgary in Alberta for that big [Calgary] Stampede.

Then when we came back here I had this letter waiting. I took the exam. The guy said, "Now you guys have passed the physical. You're going to get a letter in about ten days that you're going in the army. I'll tell you that now. If you have some

thoughts about going into the navy or the air force or the Marine Corps, you've got about ten days to decide." You see, they didn't draft in those days except in the army. If you went into the Marine Corps, navy, or air force, you volunteered. And the penalty you paid for it was that instead of going two years into the army you went four to the air force, navy, or the other groups.

I chose the air force, because I had already seen a couple of friends of mine who had come back from the army in that period and told me, "Oh, man, don't go in the army." So about a week after the exam I went and volunteered for the air force to keep from going into the regular—

ISOARDI: Why not the regular army? What were they telling you?

BRADFORD: Well, it's just you probably were not going to get into a band; you were going to be in the infantry or field artillery. And the trumpet, if you do get to play, it will just be some weekend thing. See, in the air force music was a career field. In the army it was just sort of what they called special services, where you were a foot soldier, but if you were a good athlete you might be over at the gym checking out ping pong paddles to guys or doing stuff. But when the shit hit the fan, you run out there, you put on your field pack, and you get your rifle out.

Well, in the air force things would have to really get bad before you'd swing up a gun once you got in the band. All we ever wore was—Put on an arm band and you're auxiliary air police. But you had to go to boot camp; you had to go through all that stuff. You had to have weaponry and all that stuff, and go into a room where they

put gas in there and you put on a gas mask and fasten it up properly—you know, the regular crap, crawling through the mud and that bit. Everybody had to do that. But once you got assigned to a band, you didn't have to do any soldiering after that. Every now and then they'd have some sort of like a fire drill. Everybody goes out, and you put on a .45 [caliber side arm] and an arm band, and you pretend that you're auxiliary air police and there's been a raid or whatever. After that you just played. So I volunteered for air force.

They sent me up to Parks [Air Force Base]. If you're going into San Francisco, the Bay Area, you see what used to be this base on your right on the freeway.

ISOARDI: Oh, Moffett Field? You mean just above San Jose, around Santa Clara?

BRADFORD: No, this is actually in— The town there is called Pleasanton.

ISOARDI: Oh, it's near Pleasanton.

BRADFORD: This was Parks. That was the name of the air force base, is what it was then. Twenty years ago or something, as soon as I came back here, I drove up there and just looked. The barracks were still there. And some of the stuff is still there. I don't know what they do there now. There's some sort of summer camp for kids or something now. But that's where I took the basic training.

ISOARDI: That wasn't a special musical thing? It was just a regular air force base?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, this is just boot camp.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I think Horace told me he went to the same place.

BRADFORD: Who?

ISOARDI: Horace Tapscott.

BRADFORD: Ah. Well, now, I was also in the— Wilber Morris was there too, the bass player.

ISOARDI: Same time you were there?

BRADFORD: Same time I was there, right, two or three barracks down from me with another unit. In fact, that's how we met. I took my trumpet with me to basic training. I wasn't supposed to, but they said just bring a little bag, like a little AWOL bag you'd call it now. You know, it's a little handbag. And bring a towel and a change of shorts and your toothbrush and all. Don't bring anything else.

Well, I had my trumpet out of the case rolled up in a big terry cloth towel at the bottom of that thing, man, and I got away with it all through the period there where you get assigned your footlocker and your bed and all. And I would go out there after we bedded down at night and got ready to check in and put the mute in my horn and play out in the toilet, because the guy said—

ISOARDI: Nobody ever heard you?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. That's how Wilber heard me. Because I knew— The guy says, "Whenever you audition for the band, man, whenever you get a chance, if your lip is down on the trumpet, man, you're going to—"

ISOARDI: Yeah, there's no way you can make it.

BRADFORD: It's down the tubes. So I said, "I'm going out here every night, and I can give this trumpet a couple of toots to keep my lip up." Are you ready for this?

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: They never caught me. I don't know how I managed to carry this thing around and keep it from getting stolen or— You know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, no kidding. Were you playing after lights out? Or just before lights out?

BRADFORD: This is after lights out.

ISOARDI: Man, I thought you would have been busted for something like that. I thought it was stricter.

BRADFORD: Oh, no. Well, you see, the thing is, after lights out the guy who's actually your drill instructor, now, he's going back to nice comfy quarters. And the only people around now are going to be like what you'd call the barracks guard, whoever's job it is from some other group to take turns so that there's somebody there all night, twenty-four hours a day. And I go out in the back there, and I'm out in the toilets and the showers, and they're all out in back. They're not connected to the barracks. So I put the mute in the horn, and I'm sitting out there in the toilet playing tunes, and Wilber heard the sound drifting in back and came over there and introduced himself. That's how we met.

ISOARDI: So what would you do? Go out there for an hour?

BRADFORD: I don't— Thirty minutes, as long as I would dare do it. Just trying to keep my lip up, you know. This would have been January 1955.

ISOARDI: You weren't tired? [laughs] I mean, basic training!

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, it was a killer. It was designed to keep you tired, but you just— The program there is to keep you awake at all odd hours, keep you disoriented, and you just sleep whenever you can and just— You know. You don't even think about the time anymore. So once in the evening there when we all— See, every night when you came back in you had this chore of washing the underwear you wore that day. You had a footlocker at the edge of your bed, at your feet, and you have seven pairs of socks, seven shorts, seven undershirts. And at any given time they expected to find five clean pair in the footlocker, one pair on your body and another pair hanging on the rail of your bed that you washed that night.

ISOARDI: Drying. [laughs]

BRADFORD: And if it wasn't in that order, the shit hits the fan, man. So when you get through with your night chores and it's time to bed down, I'd tip out there and get the old horn and—

ISOARDI: So how long did you have to go through that? Twelve weeks, something like that?

BRADFORD: As I remember it now, we were in there sixteen weeks. Some groups got fourteen, I remember, but we were in there sixteen weeks. I think what kept us an extra two weeks is we lost one drill instructor right in the middle and they brought in a new guy. And while they were looking for the new guy we were just sort of killing time, and they added that two weeks for us. I think the thing was fourteen weeks during that period for you to do all that stuff.

ISOARDI: And you didn't have a chance to do anything musically other than that half hour at night or something?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. They locked you— See, you didn't even get to— You didn't get to go listen to records or radio. They kept you isolated.

ISOARDI: Even weekends? You didn't have passes?

BRADFORD: No, no. You couldn't leave the area. You didn't get like a weekend pass to go into the city. Oh, no, you didn't get any of that until about the last, oh, man, ten days. Some guys would get a chance to get a bus and go into San Francisco.

ISOARDI: It's a good thing you did that. Fourteen weeks without—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I would have been jelly. I would have been turned into absolute Jell-O. [mutual laughter]

You know how they give you all these tests, aptitude tests? They keep a record of that. And my aptitude tests or whatever showed that I would have been potential different things, different scores. So now, when I got out of there I was going to be a candidate—and was a candidate—to go to airborne reconnaissance school, or electronic maintenance or something, depending on your scores. They give you these tests—how many little things can you put in these little peg holes so fast, or do you have any kind of dexterity with your fingers, how good is your math, you know. I came close to getting sent to language schools, but I didn't do well enough for them to— They give you these basic tests, you know.

ISOARDI: See, all that Latin paid off. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Exactly. They gave you some tests, the guy says, "Have you had any foreign language?" You fill it out "yeah," and they give you these tests. And they were sending a lot of kids to Washington [D.C.] then for Russian and Chinese. You had to get an eight on the thing to be a candidate for that, and I think I was like a six or something. In fact, I was looking through my old stuff one day looking at the scores, not knowing exactly what they mean now, but they're next to my name on the discharge, you know, what you're scoring in. So they sent me to Texas after I got through there for some of this tech training, and I didn't get into the band. I finally got to audition for the bands after I got down in Texas.

ISOARDI: Which base were you on in Texas?

BRADFORD: The first base they sent me to, now, was—I guess it must be the big one there in San Antonio. There was also a training base there, too. Lackland.

ISOARDI: Oh, Lackland Air Force Base.

BRADFORD: Is that San Antonio? I get the names mixed up. I think that's the one. It's the big one in San Antonio, which was a basic training base too, among other things. And then they sent me to one in Bryan, Texas, you know, near College Station, Texas A & M [University].

ISOARDI: What were you doing in Lackland?

BRADFORD: Well, Lackland, that's where they were going to send me to this airborne reconnaissance training thing, and I can't remember what happened there. In the military, when they say "redline," that means that wherever they had planned to

send you they either didn't have a space for you there, so you just stay where you are and you do nothing. You're not assigned to any group.

ISOARDI: You just wait for instructions.

BRADFORD: So you just sit around and go down to the service clubs and shoot pool or whatever and wait until the orders come through, but you're in kind of limbo then. And it was there that I took the band test, and then they finally sent me back to— My first actual assignment in a band was Bryan, Texas.

ISOARDI: Was the band an option? You could just walk up and give it a shot?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. The audition was. You could say—

ISOARDI: Anybody could come in and audition?

BRADFORD: Yeah, anybody could audition who was an instrumentalist. You could say, "I want to audition for the bands." You could go and audition as long as the guy didn't think you were trying to pull the wool over their eyes, you know. But you didn't get to audition at boot camp.

ISOARDI: So the audition wasn't a problem?

BRADFORD: No, no, as soon as they got through making a soldier of you, you know. Now, if I had been high on that Russian thing, that would have been too bad for the band. You see what I mean? They would have said, "Well, you can play the trumpet or whatever you want. We need some people who can assimilate this Russian or Chinese." That was getting to be big. They already, I think, could see that those were going to be the two big languages that were going to be the ones that the military

wanted people into, you know.

So I show up in Bryan with my trumpet and get assigned to this band that plays for all the activities in the air bases around that didn't have bands. You see, they had these small bases, now, all over Texas, and all the pilot training was in Texas. I guess you had the big open spaces to crash in. [mutual laughter] And then in the course of the three years and some months that I'm in there I get shipped around a lot. I get to travel with this big entertaining group called *Tops in Blue*, a big air force show that travels around entertaining troops all over the place.

ISOARDI: You mean around Texas or around the country?

BRADFORD: Oh, around the country. A couple of WAFs—is that right?—the Women's Air Force singers and a big band. All guys that were jazz players, though. You got plucked out of the band that you were in and get in this group. Big show. *Tops in Blue* it was called.

Then I got shipped from that base there to one in San Antonio, not Lackland but another little base. One of the buildings on the base was a replica of the Taj Mahal. I can't remember the name of the base. Randolph. Randolph Air Force Base. Then at one point I was temporarily at that big SAC base in Fort Worth—you know, the Strategic Air Command, real high security and all that stuff. And then finally—No, not finally. Another one in Waco, Texas. And when I got discharged I was finally back at Randolph there in San Antonio. That's where I got discharged.

And then when I left and got out of the military it was in San Antonio, and I

took the— By this time I'm married, you know.

ISOARDI: You got married while you were in the service?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I got married while I was in the service, married a girl from Dallas. Melba [Joyce Moore] was her name.

ISOARDI: How did you meet?

BRADFORD: Well, I used to go back to Dallas sometimes on weekends from these air force bases where I was stationed. One of them was only about eighty miles away from Dallas, and that's where I first met Marcus Belgrave, the trumpet player.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: He was in the military in a band, too. No, he wasn't in the band—

ISOARDI: Air force band?

BRADFORD: No, he wasn't in the band. He was in the air force, but he wasn't in the band. He was stationed at some base about eighty miles south of Dallas in Waxahachie, and I was in Waco, south of Dallas. We'd come to Dallas on weekends to play in these big jam sessions with people like James Clay and "Fathead"—David Newman—and people like that. That's how we met the first time.

When I got out of the military in San Antonio, then I thought the simplest thing for me to do now would be go back to Austin and continue my education. But I've got a wife now. And I go back to—

ISOARDI: Let me ask you. You mentioned earlier that you started writing in the air force. This is that period?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: When you really started a lot of writing?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And you learn a lot. I mean, you spend a lot of time—

BRADFORD: That's all you've got to do all day is sit down and work on your chops and write tunes. You've got guys there that can play them for you.

ISOARDI: You have the opportunity to have the guys in the band play your stuff?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. That's all they do. If you wrote a big band chart, then when the big band got together you'd say, "I want you to run through this." That's all we did.

ISOARDI: So it was pretty loose that way?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Now, a lot of the guys in there just came in the band just to do their duty and get out of the military; they had no interest in the music as a career. They just used bands to get out of being killed in the army. But a lot of us, now, had plans to be players. But most of the guys in the band now were guys who didn't play jazz. They were just people who could play instruments well enough to get in the bands, because 60 percent of our work wasn't jazz, it was playing parades and these big—

ISOARDI: Dances for officers, things like that?

BRADFORD: Dances for officers playing swing music, playing Glenn Miller stuff; and playing in a big concert band out in the garden for the officers' wives—playing with a big symphonic band, you know, playing that light classical material. That's

what we did. That's your job. Or playing for formation so that some general is going to get a new medal, or passing review, as they called it. Or if the president comes, for example. When [Dwight D.] Eisenhower came to Texas to—I can't remember whether it was flood or drought. You know, Texas gets a lot of those. We're there at the airport waiting for him to step off the plane, and we're going to play "Hail to the Chief," ruffles and flourishes and follow him wherever he goes, so when he steps out the band plays. That's what you do. Sometimes you're even flying in another plane following him around Texas. Wherever he lands at some air force base, when he steps off there we're playing [sings "Hail to the Chief"], you know, "Hail to the Chief," such stuff. That's what you did. But now, the dance thing, you did that also.

But you had a lot of people in the jazz bands, now, who were players. There were arrangers, guys showing you how, if you didn't know any stuff about arranging. Nothing to do around the barracks every day but that.

ISOARDI: It's a good learning experience.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, it was perfect, man. I have no complaints. I learned a lot, I mean, about playing the trumpet, about writing, about orchestration, you know, everything. I got my money's worth out of the military experience. And I got the GI Bill out of it, which paid for my first, second, and third homes. I got them on the GI Bill. And I didn't have a dime. You know, nothing down, nothing anything. Just sign; you're a vet.

ISOARDI: You got it.

BRADFORD: The first house I bought, man, cost all of \$16,500. Right there in Altadena, \$16,500.

ISOARDI: Really? Right here in Altadena?

BRADFORD: Right here in Altadena. The house cost \$16,500.

ISOARDI: Jeez. You can barely afford a storage locker for that now.

BRADFORD: Three-bedroom house with a garage, a great big backyard, everything.

ISOARDI: So you're still a pretty young guy when you get married?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, young and foolish.

ISOARDI: Is Melba a musician?

BRADFORD: Yeah, she's a singer. She's an active singer in New York right now.

Now, she's the mother of my two sons, Keith [Bradford] and Karl [Bradford]—who are twins, by the way—and Carmen [Bradford], my daughter.

ISOARDI: Did they start coming quickly?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Just like— Young and foolish.

ISOARDI: Man, you're still in your early twenties and you're a daddy.

BRADFORD: That's right. Exactly. When I get out of the military we come back to Austin, I find myself some kind of day job. We live in this horrible little house waiting to get a better place in a housing project, but you're on the waiting list.

ISOARDI: Why Austin?

BRADFORD: Well, see, that's where I had been in college before. I thought I would continue my education now. The university's been integrated.

ISOARDI: Oh, the University of Texas [UT].

BRADFORD: I come back, I'm going to UT now.

ISOARDI: This is 1959?

BRADFORD: Well, actually— Yeah, it's '59. Because I got out of the military in late '58, and by 1959, midterm, I'm at the University of Texas in the music department—one of three blacks in the whole music department.

ISOARDI: Going for a bachelor's [degree] in music?

BRADFORD: Right, going for a bachelor's in music. Working days.

ISOARDI: Where are you working?

BRADFORD: Oh, different kinds of jobs—

ISOARDI: Odd jobs?

BRADFORD: Yeah, odd jobs, anything you can find, and gigging on weekends, as soon as I could get there and kind of make connections again, playing in these joints on weekends.

ISOARDI: What's your ambition at this point? Does the service change it at all?

BRADFORD: Well, that's a good question, because I asked myself— If I thought about going to New York and being a bebopper, I surely didn't help anybody getting married, you know. Because getting married, you've got to deal with that. I think at that point I might have said one thing, but deep down inside I think what I wanted to do then was to graduate from school and get a job teaching someplace and continue to play and write. But I didn't have any real strong ambition at that point to go to New

York and "make it," whatever that meant. I might have said some stuff, but you can see— You know, your actions are the ones that tell you what you're really doing.

The family thing, I mean, I liked it. I'm sure I'd do the same thing again. I liked the idea of having a wife and children in my house and me being the big dad/breadwinner kind of guy, and you come home, and there's mom and the kiddies and the peas and potatoes, and you sit around the table— You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: That meant a lot to me and still does. Because I could see that you went to college and you got a decent job in a city of some size, you could play, and then you got paid every month from the job that you had teaching. And I think that's what was in the back of my mind, except that once I was in Austin and trying to go back to school the marriage thing started to get shaky. What was happening is that I'm living on— You get about \$150 a month on the GI Bill and working and trying to augment the income with that and gigging around town—

ISOARDI: Plus going to school.

BRADFORD: Plus going to school, which is really a monster, man. You know, going to school during the day and working at night, working at a bowling alley until eleven o'clock at night.

I'm trying to say this in a way, now, so I won't have to edit this when the thing comes out. My wife was just impatient, I can say, with all of that. She wanted things to get better more quickly, and things got shaky, so then—

ISOARDI: Did she have career aspirations then?

BRADFORD: At that time I don't think she did. But she had always had some feel about singing and music and dance, you know. And she's a good singer.

ISOARDI: Before that, when you're in the service, do you keep contact with any of the guys in L.A.?

BRADFORD: No, no contact at all. My mother used to write me, and it is she who wrote me and told me she had seen in the paper that Ornette had made a record in 1958, made that first thing for—

ISOARDI: Yeah, *Something Else!!!*

BRADFORD: Yeah, for what label was it?

ISOARDI: Contemporary [Records].

BRADFORD: Contemporary. And I kept track of him just through my mother. There was no contact with anybody here that was writing me at all. I was watching the magazines and all and watching what he was doing. So he sent for me to do that *Free Jazz* record date.

ISOARDI: That was in 1960, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but it was in 1959 when he contacted me. He said, "I want you to come to New York. I've got this record date, and it's going to be you and Don Cherry and me and Eric Dolphy. We're going to do this double quartet thing." And it's right in the middle of the semester. So I go to all the profs and I say, "Well, can you excuse me for—?" I said, "Can I just make this [up] when I come back and blah

blah blah?" "No, no, no, no." So I said, "I'm not going to lose this whole semester."

So he sent the ticket, and I sent it back. Now, get this. Then he—

ISOARDI: So they got Freddie Hubbard.

BRADFORD: Got Freddie Hubbard. And Freddie did a good job. Freddie's a good trumpet player, but he was not into Ornette Coleman's music.

ISOARDI: Exactly.

BRADFORD: He was still playing bop kinds of things. But he was the only trumpet player around town that was a fine trumpet player who was willing to even try.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he was playing on a lot of experimental things, though, different things.

BRADFORD: Yeah, sure, but that wasn't his thing, that free stuff. He's still just—

ISOARDI: Yeah, you hear it.

BRADFORD: Yeah. And he wasn't into what Ornette was doing.

So I said no.

So then, now, after that the thing in my house gets really critical. The wife's really giving me a hard time now about what to do, and the next semester comes around—

ISOARDI: What did she want you to do?

BRADFORD: She wanted me—I don't know what. She just was saying, "I'm tired of waiting for nicer things"—you know, better house, better furniture, better car, better house and all. It's like "do something," you know. And I'm school. I said, "Well, I am

in school, and when I get out of here I'll be able to get a decent job," but— In fact, at one point she took the kids and went back to Dallas where her mother—

ISOARDI: By then you had how many kids? You had the twins?

BRADFORD: Yeah, we've got the twins and— We've got three kids now.

ISOARDI: Carmen's around, too?

BRADFORD: Yeah, we've got three kids now. So she takes the kids and goes back to Dallas. Her mother and her grandmother and their families and working and living there, and I'm staying in Austin trying to figure out— Talking to her on the phone and trying to hook it up.

And lo and behold Ornette sends for me again. This time I said, "Man, I have nothing to lose." So then I go to New York.

ISOARDI: This is—?

BRADFORD: This is like '61 now. This is summer of '61, I think it is. Can't remember now; it's kind of muddy in there. But this time I do go. And as soon as the wife hears about this, all of a sudden things start to change now. It looks like I may be getting a foothold here or something, and then things start to heal up now.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: I don't mean to put this in a bad light, but all of a sudden we're sort of getting friendly again now.

I'm going to New York, playing with Ornette Coleman, but when I get there Ornette and Don have had this big fight over something, see. This time I'm going not

to play the double quartet, but he and Ornette have fallen out.

ISOARDI: So you're in there to take Don's place?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, they've gone to fisticuffs over something.

ISOARDI: You don't know what it was?

BRADFORD: No. Don tells one thing and Ornette tells another. But both of those guys, you see, are real high-strung kind of people in a way.

ISOARDI: Was it about the music?

BRADFORD: No, it wasn't about the music.

ISOARDI: Personality?

BRADFORD: Yeah, a personality thing. Ornette tells some story about Don and some pornography and a bunch of shit, but it wasn't about the music. Don played beautifully with Ornette.

ISOARDI: Was Ornette kind of a—? I mean, actually we haven't talked about it much. What kind of a guy was he? Was he kind of a strict guy? Was he—?

BRADFORD: No, he wasn't any of those. He wasn't strict. He never yelled or anything like that, you know. This was about some deeper stuff than that. See, Don was I think beginning to get a little play in New York beyond Ornette, doing things with other people. It might be at this point that Don might already have made a couple of things with Sonny Rollins.

ISOARDI: Ah, right.

BRADFORD: Getting bigger. So then maybe he was getting to be too big a thing to

be in the band with Ornette. I'm not sure about that.

ISOARDI: With only four pieces and not a lot of room for a couple of egos.

BRADFORD: But they have their falling out, so now I'm going to New York.

So I get there, of course, and we start to rehearse now, because he's written all this new music. We're not playing any of the old stuff.

Now get this. We're living in downtown New York, now, down near Wall Street near Beekman Hospital. Ornette's living with this artist woman, Eve Griffin—

ISOARDI: What happened to Jayne? He left her in L.A.?

BRADFORD: I don't know, but she wasn't in New York. What had happened, whatever it was, there was a— Now, I get the feeling that Ornette decided "I'm going to go to New York." Now, he's already gone to that summer thing in Massachusetts that he and Don went to that—

ISOARDI: That's right, that John Lewis had.

BRADFORD: —John Lewis had set up. Then they go on to New York. Well, Jayne's in L.A., I know that. And Ornette is now living downtown in New York in a loft with this artist Eve Griffin—beautiful, blonde, tall, Aryan looking, gorgeous, and a fine painter. And they've got this loft that she's turned into a thing that you weren't supposed to in those days but that you live in also. You know, in those days a loft, you weren't supposed to really live there.

ISOARDI: Yeah, right.

BRADFORD: But everybody got the floors fixed, put in a bath and a kitchen stove,

and they lived there. Painters liked this. This was on the third floor, and there was a broom factory on the second floor.

ISOARDI: So this is below— Down by the Battery, I guess, right?

BRADFORD: Well, as I remember it, we were like two blocks from Wall Street. And we were about a block from Beekman Hospital; I remember that very well.

We're there rehearsing one day, Ornette and I going over these new tunes of his. He's talking about how when we get the band together we're going to open at the Five Spot. Now, at this point he's still auditioning drummers. And one of the guys who comes and auditions during this period, now—I don't know if he's fallen out with Eddie Blackwell and Billy [Higgins] or what, but he's auditioning—

ISOARDI: I think Billy ran into a cabaret card problem or something, didn't he?—drugs or something—and he had to come back?

BRADFORD: Some problem there. I don't know what Eddie Blackwell's problem was. Maybe they had fallen out, too. But one of the guys who came and auditioned one day while we were rehearsing there was Pete La Roca.

ISOARDI: Pete La Roca?

BRADFORD: Yes. He came and auditioned for Ornette's band. And a couple of other drummers; I can't remember their names.

Now, one day we're sitting up there—we're on the third floor now—and I hear somebody calling from downstairs, "Ornette!" I look out the window, and it's Charles Moffett—"Little Ditty," C.M. Ornette didn't expect him either. He's there with his

wife and kid in a pink '56 Buick—right?—with a trailer on it with everything he owns in the back of the trailer.

ISOARDI: And you hadn't seen him since—

BRADFORD: College. And Ornette wasn't expecting him either. Eve says, "Who are you?" And he says, "This is Little Ditty." So she comes back and says, "Ornette, there's some guy out there that—" And she didn't get it right; she says that he's "Leettle Deety." Ornette goes to the window, and there's Moffett down there. So he comes up, we're all old home, we're all hugging, and "what are you doing in New York now?" He's been teaching in the public schools in Texas all this time.

ISOARDI: The whole time since college? He graduated and started teaching?

BRADFORD: Right. He's with, I think, his second wife now. He's got a kid with him. He's decided to leave Texas and come to New York finally.

ISOARDI: Give it a shot.

BRADFORD: Give it a shot, I think, now—and I'm not sure about this—on the heels of some problems in Texas. Getting out of Texas—some heat, I don't know what. And I won't speculate on it. But all of sudden—It's like a divine thing: Ornette needs a drummer; here's Charles Moffett. He comes in, Ornette says, "You've got your drums, man? I'm trying—" You know, blah blah blah. One thing leads to another, and there we are, the three of us rehearsing.

Now comes time we need a bass player, right? Let's see. Who was the first guy? I don't know who the first guy was to audition, but we finally wound up with

Jimmy Garrison, who had come to town at one point. I think I first heard him playing with the Mangione brothers, playing bass with them. You know, the Mangione brothers had a band once, the one that we all know that plays the trumpet and the flugelhorn—what's his name?

ISOARDI: Chuck Mangione.

BRADFORD: Well, he has a brother named Gap [Mangione] that plays the piano. They had a band, and they called the band the Soul Brothers or something [the Jazz Brothers], and their rhythm section was black. I think Roy McCurdy was playing drums—I'm guessing now—and Garrison was playing bass. So he heard Ornette, and they talked and everything, and so finally he shows up, and he's part of the rehearsal for the band.

We start to work on these tunes, and after about, I don't know, a couple of months or so we opened at the Five Spot with that band. And of course, I'm in heaven now, man. I'm in New York playing with Ornette Coleman, getting ready to open in one of the big clubs. Of course, I was scared to death, like anybody with good sense at that point. But he was playing all new music; he wasn't playing any of that old stuff then from the records. None of that. And, you know, this guy is like an unbelievable composer. He's like a faucet.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

MAY 16, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bob, last time you mentioned that when you came to New York in '61 and played with Ornette [Coleman] that he had all this new music.

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: I wonder if you could talk about that. I mean, in what way is it new? How does it compare to the stuff that you were playing with him in L.A.?

BRADFORD: Well, number one, I think what Ornette had done then— This was after he had done that *Free Jazz*—

ISOARDI: That album?

BRADFORD: —double quartet. And, you know, Ornette's early recordings are kind of— There's a lot of bop, a lot of bebop-like lines on those first couple or three albums. All great stuff, though. But by the time he had done *Free Jazz* in 1960, the bebop thing was way gone. He'd cut that cord clearly, though he wouldn't do things in the nightclubs, now, on a regular basis that were quite as experimental as that double quartet. And things still had to swing, you know. Everything had a swing with Ornette, now. No matter what tempo, it had a swing; there was always a pulse. There was never any time I remember playing Ornette Coleman's music where the time ceased to be defined by the bass and drums as with others who come to New York who will break that down, you see.

But he was beginning to write these melodies that were more sketchy, if you will, and less shape to them than those things he'd done earlier on his early records. And not key-centered at all. And not in groups of eight bars like a lot of his early stuff, where you have a bridge or an AABA form, which is very common in jazz and a lot of popular music. He wouldn't do any of that. He'd do these lines that were sometimes ten bars—

ISOARDI: Sounds like a country blues musician in a sense. You just do it as long as it took no matter what.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I think he was more concerned now with just having a thematic base that would just sort of get you going and force you to play in a certain area. And he's picking these pitches, I suppose, to— See, because after you play one of his melodies, even though you didn't have any chords to follow, it was clear to you what you couldn't do. You couldn't just run to some safe place on the horn and play one of your little ditties. You had to yield to the piece, unless you're really stupid. You know what I mean? It was obvious when you weren't into what the piece was about.

See, that was one of the things that convinced me, and convinced him too, I suppose, that he was on to something. In other words, the guidelines were not spelled out, but at a gut level you knew what you had to do. You had to deal with the song that you had just played. And he could write them just like a faucet dripping, just one after the other. So when we opened at the Five Spot we didn't play any old tunes. People were coming up and asking for some of the old favorites. Then every now and

then—

ISOARDI: And by old we're talking about one or two years old, right?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, I'm talking about stuff from— Well, yeah, that's right, because this is only '61, yeah.

BRADFORD: *The Shape of Jazz to Come* [LP] and stuff like that.

ISOARDI: *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. People always wanted to hear "Lonely Woman," "Humpty Dumpty," or— Well, you know the ones. [sings melody to "Happy House" by Coleman]

ISOARDI: Yeah, "Congeniality" or—

BRADFORD: Stuff like that. They all wanted to hear that. And there were three or four of his tunes, [like] "Una Muy Bonita," that people liked to hear that he would play.

But for the most part, every time we appeared in a new— After two weeks in the Five Spot, when we would come back in a couple or three months or two weeks more, he had all new tunes, all new tunes. And sometimes we'd be going to the gig, and we've already got six or eight new tunes that we're going to play. That's enough to make the evening, you know, because there's three tunes a set. Every tune was twenty-five minutes long, because everybody plays a long solo on every piece, you see. So every time we played there was new music. Sometimes we'd be on our way to the gig, and we'd be on the subway, and he would say, "I've got an idea about something here," and he'd start to work on it. When we got to the club he'd be writing it down. We

might play that on the last set, right? Just new music, new music.

The problem with that, of course, is Ornette's—I don't know if we talked about this, but his system of notation uses the regular symbols like the half notes and quarter notes and eighth notes and all except that he doesn't use them in the way that they were designed to be used. He has a very, very unconventional system of notation of his own doing.

ISOARDI: What? Like no bar lines or—?

BRADFORD: Well, sometimes no bar lines, but sometimes he'd have half notes on a beam with eighth notes on the beam also, which— You know, there's no reckoning that. And you'd have to learn how to read his music with him. That's why, you see, you didn't have much success playing Ornette Coleman's music without him, because you couldn't maintain what it is he wanted to do. But when you were with him it was just like he was some sort of little guru, you know. You were drawn into his philosophy and his— His everything.

There were several occasions where I'd go back to Texas to visit and be back there for a while, and the guys would say, "Oh, Bob, you're back home now. You're a big New York [City] player. Get a job here. We'll get one of the saxophone players, and you can play some of Ornette Coleman's tunes." And I would try to have a band there playing in Dallas, Texas, now—let's say on Sunday—and we had a tenor [saxophone] player and a rhythm section, we're trying to play Ornette Coleman's tunes, and I couldn't pull these guys into what it was. They were just hard boppers. And had

Ornette been there, I'm sure he could have whipped them into some kind of shape. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't get them to do what it was he did, especially not on short notice, just get up on the bandstand like— You could say to a bunch of guys, "Let's play Charlie Parker's 'Moose the Mooche,'" and we're off and running. Couldn't do it. There was definitely a part of his thing that was totally intuitive, that he controlled. And it worked for him.

ISOARDI: But also that you had to be in tune with to pick up. Otherwise—

BRADFORD: Yeah, you had to be in tune with it, and you got in tune with it.

And, see, we had these marathon rehearsals at this loft all during this time we're getting ready to go into the Five Spot after [Charles] Moffett comes to town. The rehearsals start about— You get there at about twelve [o'clock], and everybody wants to go get food and hang around and BS and all, and you start rehearsing at around two o'clock, and you play until six, seven in the evening. Rehearse, stop, go get some take-out food or something, bullshit for a while, and start again—all day, just playing these tunes getting ready for the opening or getting ready to go into another job.

ISOARDI: How would you work on a tune?

BRADFORD: Just keep playing it over.

ISOARDI: The melody?

BRADFORD: Yeah, play the melody until you had it under your fingers like he wanted it to go. And he'd play it like he wanted it to go—

ISOARDI: Right. So you'd work on that. But once you got that down—

BRADFORD: Well, then the bass player had to be able to play the head, too. The drummer had to play it, too; when he played it to him, the drummer had to play it, the rhythm of the piece. You had to know the song "vernotem," right? [mutual laughter] Then in the course of the solo you practiced every day. You played the tune just like you were in a club; you play the tunes and you blow on it. All the time you're trying to figure out, "Now, how can I get more out of this tune?" Because everything that you're going to do, now, you're drawing from the tune itself; trying to figure out how to take the melody to the tune and make it the resource or the substance of the improvisations. Because you couldn't come in there and play a bebop lick in there. You just couldn't do it. It wouldn't work.

Now, during this time—

ISOARDI: Actually, just let me ask you one quick question about the rehearsals. You mentioned also that when you got on the bandstand you'd have long solos. Did you guys ever work on playing together, almost dueting it?

BRADFORD: You're talking about kind of a poly sort of thing— Oh, yeah, we did that all the time.

ISOARDI: Because it wasn't the case where, you know, you're taking your solo and Ornette just goes off and stands to the side.

BRADFORD: Oh, no, you're into it all the time. While he's playing I might do some things back there. Sometimes when he's playing at the very— In the middle of his solo

I might just jump in with him and get carried away, and he with me. Sometimes during the bass player's solo I would play along with him. You're free to do anything up there, you see, that was a responsible musical decision. The bass player didn't have to accompany all the time. If the bass decided he wanted to play in half time in back of you or get the bow out while you're soloing, go for it—if you thought that was musical, now. You didn't do anything to be cute, you know. We often were playing sometimes where the bass and the saxophone and trumpet were all soloing at the same time, so to speak, rather than the bass just keeping time.

But somebody was always keeping time, now, because Ornette was definitely about swinging. You had to swing, that's for sure—and what we always meant by swing, you know, the groove and everything was in 4[4 time]. Now, there are places where the music obviously takes advantage of other groups—you know, rhythmic ideas that are metrically organized in three or five or seven—but the drummer's always playing in four. Yeah, we had to get a groove. There's no question about that.

ISOARDI: What are you thinking when you're preparing to play those pieces, then?

BRADFORD: What do you mean?

ISOARDI: You're not thinking like a bopper now.

BRADFORD: No, no. See, with a bopper, first of all, you have the assurance that no matter what happens you have the song and the chord map to follow.

ISOARDI: Exactly.

BRADFORD: Even if you're not inspired.

ISOARDI: Exactly. But then you're thinking of alternate chords, you're thinking of substitutes, you're thinking of different extensions—

BRADFORD: As a bopper now?

ISOARDI: Yeah. You've got a pattern to your thought. This is the way you're approaching the music. This is what you're thinking as you're running past all those landmarks, right? But what are you thinking when you're playing with Ornette?

BRADFORD: So you're thinking—The same thing is true with a bopper. Now, no bopper is standing there thinking of the chords as such, just running through the chords, but that's always back there. So you could say, "I'm trying to think of what I want to say here, and I've got to figure out now, once I start, how to make what I'm thinking fit the chords." Because you have to yield to the chord pattern, don't you, no matter what. Well, with Ornette Coleman, you're standing there as you're waiting to play. Often you're thinking about what you're going to play, and then when it comes time to play you abandon all of that. It's like a speaker: They say, "We'd like for you to have a few remarks about what you thought about the late JFK [John F. Kennedy]—

ISOARDI: [laughs] That's true—

BRADFORD: —and you're sitting there, and you get up, and you get to the microphone, and you think something, and then you just go to a completely different place. Now, see, that's always true, now, for any style, right?

ISOARDI: Yeah. I just gave a talk recently, and I had the notes in front of me— You know, I hadn't gotten partway down the first page when I—

BRADFORD: "This isn't working."

ISOARDI: [laughs] Yeah.

BRADFORD: "This isn't working," and you've got to jump off that, get rid of that, man, and move to another place. You can tell when it's not working no matter what style you're playing. If it's not working, do something quick. You have to. You've got to shift gears. You can tell when a car is getting a flat tire. Even before the tire knows it, you know you're getting a flat tire, man, you've got to do something quick.

But, see, Ornette's melodies, they were so well constructed that you had just melodic reference there. And, see, the melody might mean something totally different to you than it did to Ornette, who wrote it. That's the beauty of it, you see. You embrace his melodies based on your own strengths and limitations and your own experience. So he might have a pattern there that means one thing to him; it means something totally different to you, once he gives you those three notes. That's like you're giving somebody— You say, "Here's a line. Now write a poem about this." Or you just say, "Write a poem about the light of love." And you go, "My what?" Whatever that means to you. Ornette, he said he was always surprised at what I would do with his tunes.

ISOARDI: In what way?

BRADFORD: How the melody— See, I would restate sometimes things that he had played in a way that suited my— It's like Ornette would— Just grammatically sometimes I would correct him. He didn't like it. Grammatically sometimes he'd

make some real big monster— Terrible grammatical things. You know what I mean? And he used to say to me, "Oh, you stayed in college too long." [mutual laughter] But he'd have a melody, and we'd play it. Now, I knew how to play it like he wanted, but I might use that melody in improvisation and turn it around. And see, I would often play phrases that he thought of as upbeat phrases. I don't mean upbeat in the sense that people say it in slang like "That's a really upbeat party." I don't mean that. I mean something that when you talk about upbeat, we're talking about the weak part of the beat in music.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: And I would turn that around and play it on the downbeat. In other words, what we ordinarily think of as an opening line in a sentence, a declarative statement, I would make an interrogative out of it. See what I mean? And he used to say, "It always amazes me. I've never ceased to—" He'd have a figure that would be written like [sings eighth-note phrase with emphasis on the upbeat], and I'd play that [sings same phrase with emphasis on the downbeat] and put it right on the downbeat. Just to say like, "Four score and seven years ago," I would go "Was it four score and seven years ago? Let me see," is what I would do with that phrase. And he liked it. All that meant was just my whole background, about how I played the trumpet and how I listened to Charlie Parker and how I do everything, was different than his. Even though we grew up in similar ways and listened to the same cats, I heard something different than he heard, you see. And he would always say to guys, "Play whatever

this means to you." The bass too, you see. It was a wonderful experience.

ISOARDI: Is there something about the fact that you guys were both from—

BRADFORD: Texas?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Well, I don't think so. Except that Texas, the Dallas-Fort Worth area,

has always been a strong area—the Southwest, for that matter—for jazz musicians.

From Texas, Kansas, Missouri, that's a serious area of really— Huge population.

Especially saxophone players.

ISOARDI: Strong, individual sax players.

BRADFORD: Strong, yeah. In fact, they talk about the Texas tenor tradition: Arnett Cobb, Bud Freeman, Dewey Redman, James Clay, "Fathead"—David Newman, Billy Harper, Buster Smith, John Hardee, Illinois Jacquet. All those guys are considered Texas tenors. And there are people who play the style now, but they trace it back to a certain kind of Texas tenor saxophone sound. But for us having like a sort of kinship because we're both from Texas, I don't think so. Because I think the guys in Arkansas were listening to— Pharoah Sanders was somewhere over there in Little Rock, Arkansas, listening to the same thing, you see, coming at it from the same place.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

BRADFORD: But, you see, playing with Ornette Coleman, playing that style of music, it made an even better bopper of me.

ISOARDI: Yeah, in the sense that you were outside of it and you got to see it in a

different way.

BRADFORD: Well, you see, it helped me understand better what it was I was trying to say with the bop thing where the rules were harder and faster, so to speak. In other words, in this new music, now, if I decided to just completely reorganize what we were doing up there on stage— In other words, let's say Ornette played, and he was playing his regular style, and I decided when I came in to just do this thing that was almost theatrical. I might come in and go beep!, and wait just forever. See, you couldn't do that as a bopper.

ISOARDI: No.

BRADFORD: You've got to come in and start playing that stream of eighth notes pretty quick. With Ornette, I could just take a piece and I could make my own tone poem out of it. You see what I mean? I could just go [sings a stream of rhythmic variations on two short notes a minor third apart], just endless, that kind of thing, that minimalism even. We weren't calling it that then, but you couldn't do that as a bopper, you see. You couldn't get away with that. You've got to play [sings fast eighth-note bebop phrase], right? Yeah. But that taught me how to make the extended solo more cohesive in the bop style, you see, helped me, if you will. That doesn't mean that I thought I was a Freddie Hubbard, now, after having done that.

ISOARDI: [laughs] No, but I understand what you're saying.

So you go into the Five Spot in '61. How long are you guys there?

BRADFORD: Well, we stayed two weeks, and then we're out for a while, and we go

back.

ISOARDI: And it's enough? You're getting by in New York on that?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. Oh, it's awful. The money thing is going to be the big issue that's going to cause me to finally leave New York. Because in between jobs—

ISOARDI: But Melba [Joyce Moore] has come out and joined you in New York?

BRADFORD: Well, not right away, but pretty soon. The wife comes against my better judgment. We have a housing project, one of those units where the rent is low, in Dallas. And I'm saying to her, "Now, you stay there with the kids [Keith Bradford, Karl Bradford, and Carmen Bradford] until I get a foothold here, and then I'll send for you to come to New York." She just decided she's going to close up the place, put the furniture in storage, just come to New York—

ISOARDI: With the kids.

BRADFORD: With the kids. And tie my hands totally, right? Which she did. Not blaming her, now, for not trying to do what she thought she should have done as a wife and mother, you know. I'm sure somewhere she was saying my place is with my husband, you know, no matter what he said. [laughs] But we finally got a little place there in the East [Greenwich] Village, Avenue B and Second Street, and we were living in the building— Moffet was in the building, also, the drummer. And the bass player who's going to ultimately replace Jimmy Garrison lives in the building too, David Izenzon—

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: —who will replace Jimmy Garrison very shortly. Well, it is in this period now that Ornette Coleman is— He doesn't record this band while we're together.

ISOARDI: Why not?

BRADFORD: He's boycotting the record people, too, doesn't think he's getting his due in terms of money or records. He also, after a while now, decides he's going to start to boycott the clubs, but this doesn't come right away. In between jobs, with my family there, I'm looking around trying to find other work to do and play with other bands, and he and I get into big arguments about my working with other bands and trying to get day jobs to support my family, because he wants to have rehearsals during the day. Now, this is the part of it that—

ISOARDI: Every day?

BRADFORD: Sometimes. You see, which means that— I said, "Well, you know, I've got a wife and two kids here. We're rehearsing and not working. I'm going to have to go find some kind of job." So we would argue about that and about my being available for the rehearsals. I said, "Yeah, we're rehearsing, but there are no jobs. I've got a family to feed here." My wife's father lived in New York, lived in the Bronx, and every now and then I'm hitting him up via the family to help me keep the shit together there. And I had a few other gigs with other little bands, some Latin bands around town I would take casuals with. And for a hot minute there I was in the Quincy Jones rehearsal band, but there was no money out of that. And I played here and there,

wherever I could, you know.

In fact, I even had a little temporary job at a restaurant at one point, just kind of like a short order cook in a restaurant out in Queens. Then I had a job in Midtown Manhattan delivering flyers to the various businesses. You know how a printer will have you print up flyers? And I'm delivering around in there.

There's one story: I had one of those little carts like you take the trash out in, little cart with a bunch of those flyers taking them from the printer, and I ran into this saxophone player—I'm trying to remember his name now—Sonny Redd, an alto [saxophone] player. And he said, "Bradford, what is this, man?"

I said, "Well, I've got this job, man."

He said, "Oh, how can you do that, man? You're in New York playing with Ornette Coleman and you've got a job?"

I said, "Yeah, man. I've got a wife and three kids here with me in New York." I said, "Well, what are you doing between jobs?"

He said, "Well, I don't have any job right now, but—I'm not gigging, but I don't have any job." And he said to me, "I've already got an album out now. I couldn't be seen there with a job doing what you're doing here."

I said, "Well, you know, I don't have an album out, but I couldn't be seen either. But I can't be seen going back home to a wife and kids, man, without having any money and no food in the fridgie, and a family. Man, I'd rather be out here pushing this cart." We had a long discussion right there in the streets there one day

over that, you know.

He said, "There's no way for this to work realistically. You've got to come here and do something that imposes on somebody. You either got to find yourself a girlfriend who will let you sort of gigolo—"

ISOARDI: And flop at her place.

BRADFORD: And flop at her place And she works, and you live there, and you practice your horn, and she works, and you have this whatever relationship that is. Which never lasts, because sooner or later she's going to say, "What is your role here? Am I just your—" You know? "Am I the girlfriend of the jazz guy?" And that thing wears out rather quickly. You're not working, and you're eating a lot of food, and you're doing whatever you're doing. You come and go when you want, so you don't belong to her. And that just gets thicker and thicker, doesn't it? Right?

ISOARDI: Yeah, old story there.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it's an old story. So you go flop with somebody else and— No, no, no, no, I'm not into that. I like women and all that kind of stuff, but I said, "I'm married, man. I've got a wife and kids. I've got them here in New York, and I've got to take care of them." So Ornette and I would have these heated discussions about this. Then things would just sort of fester for a while.

During this period, we get a job— We're going to put that double quartet together again, the *Free Jazz* thing. This time we're going to go to Cincinnati with this group. Right? This is—

ISOARDI: For a concert performance? A club?

BRADFORD: No, a concert at the Taft Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio. At this time Ornette has a wonderful—a very dear friend to me over the years—Jewish woman named Mildred Fields, who was his manager, a woman who in later years will be the manager of ABBA, that Scandinavian group. She's managing Ornette now and trying to see if she can take care of the business. So we take this job in Cincinnati—me and Don Cherry on the trumpets; Eddie Blackwell and Charles Moffett on the drums; Ornette and Steve Lacy playing the saxophone parts; Jimmy Garrison and Art Davis, the two bassists. We get there, we're all set up, we see the people standing outside. The marquee says "Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz*." As it turns out, these farmers thought this was a free concert. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Oh, no!

BRADFORD: They didn't want to pay. People were lined up out front, man. And you know what happened? The people that booked the thing, when we were backstage, the manager says, "Okay, now, let's have the rest of the money before the curtain opens."

ISOARDI: Who said that?

BRADFORD: The manager of the band. The policy is when you do a job like that, they send you airfare or a deposit to get you there. When you get there, you're backstage, you get the rest of the money before the curtain opens. They didn't have the money. They were waiting for that first box office rush to get it. They said, "Well,

people are out there, they're going to finally come on in, just go ahead and start." She said, "We're not starting."

ISOARDI: That's fair.

BRADFORD: They didn't have the money; we're not going to start. So Ornette wanted to go ahead and play. She said, "Now, am I the manager? Or are you the manager? I'm telling you we're not going out there and play if the guy doesn't have the money. We're not going to start off like that." So we got all our instruments and we left. We walked out, and the people are looking at us as we walk past them with our instruments going to the taxi, going back to the hotel. We didn't play.

ISOARDI: They let you go?

BRADFORD: Well, what do you mean they let us go? We walked out. They didn't have any money. People outside didn't want to pay. They're just standing around.

ISOARDI: None of them—? Oh, they weren't in line waiting—

BRADFORD: There's a line of people standing out there, but they were saying they weren't going to pay. The sign said "free" concert.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez. [mutual laughter] So it never happened?

BRADFORD: It never happened. We went back to New York the next day.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: But anyway, during this period, now, we play here, we play there, you know. We don't do any recording. Every now and then I'll leave New York and run back to Texas for something that seems like I can run back and make some money and

come back to New York, you know.

ISOARDI: A gig?

BRADFORD: Yeah, a gig or something.

ISOARDI: Some kind of gig comes up?

BRADFORD: Yeah, some kind of gig.

So it reaches a point where finally Ornette has decided he's not going to play at all. He's not even going to go back to the Five Spot. He tells the guys who run the Five Spot, "Every time we're here the place is packed. We make such-and-such money. When we come back we should make more money." Well, these guys said, "We're not paying any more than you got last time." So Ornette said, "Well, we're not going to play." So Moffett and I cornered him one day in the house and said, "Well, listen, man, why don't we go out of town? Go to Chicago and Boston and make that regular jazz circuit and boycott these guys, make the statement in New York so we can stay alive in this thing." Ornette said, "No, we ought to just show 'em all. Show 'em all." We were showing all of them.

Now, during this time period, [John] Coltrane has been coming down to the club sitting in with us on Sunday nights.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Uh-huh. You know, Sunday's usually a slow night, and he'd come and play the last couple of sets with us, just play through the line with Ornette from the music and just play, trying to see what it is he could investigate from what Ornette

Coleman was doing. They were pretty good friends, you know. He used to come to the house sometimes for rehearsals and just sit there while we were rehearsing. That's when he was really beginning to take off, you know. He had already done *My Favorite Things* and was getting—

ISOARDI: *Giant Steps* I think he had done by then.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, *Giant Steps* was before *My Favorite Things*. *My Favorite Things* really started to make money for him.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that was a big moneymaker.

BRADFORD: Yeah. When “Trane” [John Coltrane] saw that Ornette had stopped playing and everything, he sort of wooed Jimmy Garrison away from the band, and Jimmy joined— That's when Jimmy joined John Coltrane, maybe somewhere in 1961, early 1962, right in there. And that's when Ornette brought David Izenzon into the band.

ISOARDI: What was it like with Coltrane on the bandstand? How was he adjusting to Ornette's music?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, the thing about a guy like Coltrane is he was still playing the basic way he plays except that he would just— You could still tell Trane was an arpeggio chord player, but he wasn't making his playing limited to the chord pattern of some song. He was just exploring thematic variations, which is what he would do maybe on other tunes, except that he wasn't following any chord pattern. But you could tell that he didn't play like Ornette played. But he wasn't

uncomfortable. He'd take the melody and start off playing it and just start to play variations of the melodies of the tune, then finally go into just what he liked to do, you know, his own experimentation on the horn. In fact, he did a couple of albums right after that. You know that thing *Interstellar Space*, where it's just him and Rashied Ali?

ISOARDI: Yeah, that was couple of years later.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah, but I think that's the point where he decided to jump into that totally free thing in addition to any of the other stuff that he was doing.

So Garrison went with Coltrane, and we brought Izenzon into the band. And we played some jobs while we were still in New York with Izenzon—me and Moffett and Izenzon.

ISOARDI: What was it like playing with him? Didn't he come from a more classical background?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Good bass player, technically wonderful bass player. Real adventurous spirit. He didn't have a strong background, now, in regular walking jazz bass, but he knew what Ornette was trying to do. He locked into what that was about. It worked out very well. And he was a strong soloist, you know, a guy who knew what it took to sort of improvise just based on a theme without having to use chord patterns and all. But he wasn't a strong, swinging bass player like Garrison. And that was the weak side of playing with him, was that he didn't have that walk thing, the strength of how to figure out how to make that band really swing, because he had never done any

of that.

ISOARDI: So there was a lot more pressure on Moffett, then, to carry it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's true. But it's not like when we got out to the— The band sounded good. But there was always that— You're missing sometimes the swing of the bass, which you had heard with Jimmy Garrison. But then Izenzon, you see, was a better bass player with the bow. He did a lot of bow melodic playing and improvisation. The intonation was much better because he had a lot of classical training with playing the bow.

It was during this period after some gigs around town with that particular combination that we finally got to a point where Ornette said, "We're not going to take any more jobs." So Moffett and I cornered him and said, "Well, man, we've got to do something here." And in fact, we had just come back from that thing in Cincinnati where it just seemed like this is the last straw, and we had a big conference with him, and he said, "Well, I'm not going to take any jobs right now. You guys are just going to have to do best whatever you can do." So it was at that point I decided to take the wife and kids and go back to Texas.

ISOARDI: How was he getting by?

BRADFORD: He was getting record royalties, you see.

ISOARDI: But enough to survive without working?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He also was still hooked up with this one woman that he had been with.

ISOARDI: Oh, Eve.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. And God knows what other hook or crook stuff he had going. But if he was selling records like I think he was, he was making enough money to survive. Except that he didn't have his own separate place at that point. He did finally get one small place—I forget where it was—someplace in the East Village there, too, not far from where we were. But he didn't seem to be strapped for money. But he wasn't a guy who wanted a big car or to go on the— He wasn't a— What do you call it?

ISOARDI: He didn't have a lot of material requirements, then.

BRADFORD: No, no, he didn't. He actually didn't, no. He wasn't a guy who was a spendthrift, you know, had to have a big diamond this or any of that. That wasn't his thing.

ISOARDI: He never even privately taped you guys?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, there are lots of tapes, now, of us in rehearsal, just reams and reams of tapes of us playing. In fact, any time we played he was almost always recording it.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. His house is like a packrat's, just tapes and tape players that are broken just all over the place. And he always taped what we were doing. I don't know if he's probably thrown stuff away by now, but he must have hours and hours of us in rehearsal.

ISOARDI: Well, it's a good thing that band's documented in some form.

BRADFORD: Yeah, if that stuff still can be found.

ISOARDI: Yeah, yeah.

BRADFORD: So I left and went back to Texas.

ISOARDI: When is this? Is this '62?

BRADFORD: This is 'sixty— Let's see. Let me get this right, now. 'Sixty-two or maybe early '63. Because I enrolled back in school to do my last year in college, the school year— Oh, no, no, no. It had to be '62, because I graduated from that school with a B.A. in the summer of '63.

ISOARDI: Oh, okay.

BRADFORD: So, then, I went there that last year, because the school year is '62, '63, which means that in September of '62 I'm back in college.

ISOARDI: You're in Texas now.

BRADFORD: Right, back in Texas, back in Austin. When I graduate I take the first job that I'm offered in a little town called Crockett near Houston, Texas, near Texas A & M [University].

ISOARDI: Teaching?

BRADFORD: Teaching high school band, directing the music, right. Wife and kids. We're in this little town. Little two-bedroom house near the campus.

ISOARDI: This is a big change for your wife after New York, then, too.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but not so much, in that New York was so stressful, you know.

It was— We had no social life in New York. We never went out or anything. It was just— At one point Moffett and I were sharing utilities. When I had money to have my utilities on, he'd run an extension chord out of his apartment over to my place to run the things that he needed to run. [mutual laughter] When he had money and I was out of money, we'd run an extension chord from my place over to his, under the doors.

ISOARDI: Amazing.

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: That's a musician's story.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Jeez. And he had his family with him as well, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he had his family, too. He had one kid who seemed to be about three or four or five years old, and then another one was born while we were there, in '62 I guess. I don't know if that would be Charnett [Moffett] or what.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I'm not sure.

BRADFORD: I can't remember now. That would be about right. That would make Charnett—what?—about—

ISOARDI: Well, he'd be pushing close to forty now.

BRADFORD: No, so that's not Charnett. It must be some other kid. I can't remember who it is, but Charnett must have come after that.

But I went back to Texas, I took this job. I taught in Crockett in that school there, little black high school, for one year. We packed up and came to Los Angeles

the summer—back to L.A., wife and kids—of '64 after one year of teaching down there in Texas.

ISOARDI: Why?

BRADFORD: Just couldn't hang, man, you know. Little country town.

ISOARDI: No chance to play much, I guess.

BRADFORD: No, not really. Just some R and B [rhythm and blues] gigs, you know.

ISOARDI: That's quite a change after playing with Ornette at the Five Spot.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, yeah, man. But I was so—I was relieved in a way, man, because I got paid every month, and the wife and kids were eating, and I didn't have this stress every day of "What's going to be for dinner?" and "Are the lights going to be on or off?", you know. I didn't have to deal with that. And I made the best of it, you know. My wife didn't like it. And every opportunity she got she would take the kids and go back to Dallas, which is about a hundred and fifty miles away, and spend the weekend with her parents and come back Monday, something like that.

ISOARDI: Actually, Bob, before you get too far away from it, let me just ask you about the New York experience and looking back on it. Did this affect you? How did it affect you as a player, as a musician?

BRADFORD: Do you mean the experience of playing?

ISOARDI: The experience of playing, yeah.

BRADFORD: Oh, I grew, man, like a rabbit on lettuce in New York. My playing just was growing by leaps and bounds, man. I was getting a lot of good reviews. [I was]

approached by several record companies to do—I remember one guy from Candid Records came and asked me what would happen if—In fact, one guy said, "I'd like to speak to Coltrane to see if I can get you and him to do a date playing Ornette Coleman tunes." Actually, Trane and I exchanged words about that. You know, later on he's actually going to do a record with Don Cherry.

ISOARDI: That's right, a few years later.

BRADFORD: Yeah, Trane and I had already talked about it, doing a record. The guy from Candid Records was talking to me. I wasn't particularly interested in being a leader at that point, though. I didn't jump at him and go, "Wow! Gimme!" You know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: I was getting to play with real high-caliber musicians, man. It was like a dream come true. I was getting to hear all these guys that I grew up hearing. I got a chance to go to a club and hear [Thelonious] Monk just endlessly. Kenny Dorham, Miles [Davis], and Dizzy [Gillespie]. Oh, man, and all these piano players: Barry Harris and Kenny Drew and Elmo Hope and—oh, man—the Modern Jazz Quartet. Whenever these guys played in the club in the Village, once they knew your face you could just go in and stand by the kitchen and just listen to these guys play—you didn't have to spend any money, man—for hours, you know.

ISOARDI: Who do you think made the biggest impression on you outside of Ornette?

BRADFORD: Oh, man, it's hard to say. Probably Monk, Trane, and Miles Davis.

Because Miles was at the peak of his powers then, you know. He was flying.

ISOARDI: Were you doing any writing of your own?

BRADFORD: Yeah, but Ornette wasn't interested in playing other people's music. He didn't down it in any way, but it was clear he wasn't interested in you bringing music and "Let's play some of your stuff." But I was still nibbling away at writing, you know.

ISOARDI: What kind of stuff are you trying to write?

BRADFORD: Well, I was still writing some chordal stuff, bop-like stuff, but I was trying to write free pieces, too. I didn't have a handle on that free style at first. Just like at first it took me a while to find out what writing was about, then it took me a minute to figure out, now, what it meant in this new style, you know, what Ornette did. I could hear it when he wrote a good tune that was really spectacular versus one of his that was just so-so, you know. But to turn that into your own language now took a minute.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really.

BRADFORD: And I don't think that hit me until I— When I really started to go crazy writing was in '71 when I went to England the first time. I don't know what hit me, man. Just going over on the plane, on the way over, man, I just started to get these unbelievable—I was writing stuff on the plane going there.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: I wrote— And, you know, I went to England in '72, I think it was, and stayed for a while and did some recordings with some British musicians. And while I was there, everything we did was out of new music I'd just written, and all of it was free-form. Playing there with Trevor Watts and John Stevens and an American bass player who lived over there named Kent Carter.

ISOARDI: Well, you did some recording in Paris as well, didn't you, about that time?

BRADFORD: Yeah, same band. Same band.

ISOARDI: And the English band you recorded with, New Music Ensemble, something like that—?

BRADFORD: No, that's close to— No, that was a group called the Spontaneous [Music Ensemble]; that's the SME. That was John Stevens's band.

ISOARDI: That's right.

BRADFORD: But when we played together we played my music.

ISOARDI: That was the Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

BRADFORD: Uh-huh. SME he liked to call it.

ISOARDI: Yeah, right. Right.

BRADFORD: But when I left Texas after that year of teaching in Crockett, we came back to L.A. and we stayed with my mother [Bernice Griffin Walker] and my stepfather [Augustus Walker]. Here we are again with my mother and stepfather. They've got a bigger place now.

ISOARDI: Where are they living?

BRADFORD: They're living in Pacoima [California] now.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's quite a ways away.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but a similar problem, only this time I have a wife and three kids with me. But I only stayed with them about two weeks—long enough to find a job with some kind of day gig and then get a place.

ISOARDI: How does L.A. strike you? You've been away for a while.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'd been away, but I kind of knew what to expect in L.A. Soon as I got here, man, and got some kind of day job to keep the family together, I started beating the bushes for places to play. I was going around and sitting in at all the clubs, you know, with the guys.

The first week or so I was here I went out and sat in at Shelly's Manne Hole, with some of those guys, you know. Shelly [Manne] had—God, I can't remember these guys' names now. But that little quintet that he kept at the club so often was just, you know, his house band. Russ Freeman, piano player, and some alto player that I can't remember his name but a good player. I went there one night on a slow night like a Monday or Tuesday and sat in with them.

There were little clubs all over that—This was actually now the San Fernando Valley where we were living; you know where Pacoima is, right there next to San Fernando and Panorama City and all.

ISOARDI: Right, right.

BRADFORD: And it wasn't long after we're here that the wife got a job singing at the

little club right there in Pacoima, some club called the Lazy Kitten or the Pink Kitten, something like that, singing. This is Melba.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: She got a little job singing. I had the day gig, and I'm hunting around for places to play.

ISOARDI: Where are you working?

BRADFORD: Where?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: The day gig was just some sort of job in like one of those huge discount stores.

ISOARDI: You weren't interested in teaching?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, right away I went and applied for jobs teaching, and they gave me all the regular stuff about "You have a Texas credential" and "You can't do this here" and "You've got to go back to college" and—

I got the biggest bunch of bullshit, man, downtown in Los Angeles. When we left I had gotten the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* in Texas to kind of read up on what was happening here, and the paper says, "L.A. city schools need 3,000 teachers." I said, "Well, surely I can fit into that." I go right down to the L.A. city schools, and I go up to this woman—and no disrespect to her, I just remember her as a Japanese American woman, you know—and I told her my story, and she says, "Well, you know, you have to have a credential to teach in California. The Texas credential won't work

here, and you're going to have to go back to school here to get a credential." I said, "Well, I'll be happy to do that, but can't you give me some kind of emergency credential"—now get this—"so I can teach while I'm going back to school?" She said, "Well, we don't have emergency credentials in California." And what she didn't tell is that they call them "provisional" here, but she didn't give me that information—just let it go like that, man, and sent me on my way.

ISOARDI: Unbelievable.

BRADFORD: Oh, you're right, man.

And then, finally, as I'm working on this day gig in this K-Mart sort of place, I see an ad in the paper: job open for a man, thirty-five years old, college degree, with family—Like a sales rep for some company. New York Life Insurance [Company], New York Life. And I certainly won't edit this out of our book. I go there, and the guy says, "Well, you're going to have to take a little test here and do this that or the other." I take the little, like an eighth-grade, arithmetic test, you know, what you have to do be an insurance salesman.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really.

BRADFORD: So then after I passed the test—which he didn't think I was going to pass—he said, "Well, I hate to tell you, Mr. Bradford, but we don't have any colored salesmen." This is Panorama City, 1964. Can you imagine this?

ISOARDI: Hasn't changed much.

BRADFORD: No. He says, "Well, we don't have any colored salesmen."

I said, "Well, do you sell insurance to colored people?" I was mad as a hornet.

He said, "Oh, yes, we have lots of colored clientele." He said, "This is a red letter day with you coming here."

I said, "It certainly is, for you and me. So what are we going to do?"

He said, "Well, I have to call the home office."

And I said, "Go for it."

And he says, when I come back the next time, "You have to take our psychological profile test."

ISOARDI: You're kidding?

BRADFORD: This is the one that eliminates me.

ISOARDI: Eliminates you?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. This is the test I take the next time. And one of the questions—I never shall forget it—is kind of like this: "Which is better, a strawberry milkshake or a convertible?" It's one of those kinds of tests. Are you getting this?

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO

MAY 16, 2000

BRADFORD: So this guy says to me, "I hate to tell you, but I got a letter saying 'We regret to inform you that you did not pass our psychological profile. We couldn't hire you at this time.'" And that psychological profile, of course, is that thing designed to eliminate you. Now, in case anybody ever reads this when I'm dead and buried, this is New York Life Insurance in Panorama City, 1964, whoever you are, the geezer that laid that bullshit on me.

ISOARDI: Man. Unbelievable.

BRADFORD: But in the process I'm going to downtown L.A. looking at the bulletin board in the civic center, and I'm taking every test that you can take for jobs—police, sheriff, probation officer, parole officer, all this, took all of them. I even got so far as the job interview for the sheriff's department. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: You could have been working just up the block here. [laughs]

BRADFORD: Right. And listen, I took all those tests. I even took the test for musical instrument repair. Now, finally I took one for a workman's comp[ensation] adjustor. Out of all the ones, [the one] that hired me was workman's comp, but they wanted me to move to Pomona [California]. So I took the first job, and we packed up and moved to Pomona. Then, several days later, all these jobs come together. I get a letter from the L.A. city schools repairing musical instruments, from the county

sheriff, L.A. county parole, probation, all those jobs fell in. I didn't want any of those jobs, but I wanted anything I could get now to feed these kids and my old lady. I was still determined to get into music.

Well, in the process of living in Pomona and driving to San Bernardino often, to the office in San Bernardino back and forth, I kept applying, and I got a job teaching in elementary school in 1966.

ISOARDI: Where at?

BRADFORD: Bassett Elementary School in La Puente. I wound up teaching the sixth grade in La Puente, California, yeah.

ISOARDI: You know, your story reminded me of another one I heard about. The trouble you had at L.A. Unified [School District]?

BRADFORD: Yeah?

ISOARDI: Edwin Pleasants, saxophonist-flautist, came from Houston in '63. He was an old friend of Horace Tapscott. He said when he came out here in '63 he got the same runaround at L.A. Unified.

BRADFORD: Oh, that what's she told me.

ISOARDI: He came out of there just fighting mad.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. "We don't have an emergency credential," she said to me. And they had provisionals. All you had to do was just fill it out and you go to work the next day, and you go to school to get those other units that you need. Except we don't call it "emergency" here.

ISOARDI: Man. But you got a regular full-time job in La Puente?

BRADFORD: Oh, yes. The way you get a job is you find a principal that wants to hire you, and he'll take care of all of that.

ISOARDI: The rest— [laughs]

BRADFORD: So they "needed," in quotes, a black teacher in La Puente.

ISOARDI: What do you mean "in quotes"?

BRADFORD: Well, in other words, things were still— Now, La Puente was basically Latino during that period. Now, that little elementary school where I went, all the teachers were white except one, one Hispanic teacher. And the population was about seventy percent Hispanic, and the rest between blacks, Japanese Americans, and Anglos. First of all, they needed a man sixth grade teacher. And apparently they needed a black one, too, all at once. I went and interviewed with this guy, and, man, he said, "You can start Monday." In fact, he took me in there the day that he interviewed me for the job and said, "In case you take the job, I want to introduce you to the class that you're going to take over right now so you can see who the kids are," and he took me right in the room.

I went back to work, came home, told my old lady I got a job teaching. She's, you know, "Hurrah!" It's only about twenty minutes from my house. And it pays about \$600 a month or something like that. [mutual laughter] Not much money, but there I was teaching.

ISOARDI: Back then, yeah.

BRADFORD: And I quit that state comp—workman's compensation—job I had where I was an adjustor, which was really an interesting job, [although] it wasn't in music, just regular— You know, workman's comp.

ISOARDI: What were you doing? Going out and investigating cases?

BRADFORD: Well, you do some investigation, but you mostly sit there and make sure the guy who broke his arm as a construction worker gets his check and make sure, though, that when his arm's healed his checks stop and he goes back to work. That's what you do. Sometimes you do some investigation, but most of it's just a desk job. It's that period when I started smoking cigars.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Just getting on the phone calling doctors all day and talking to nurses and physical therapists and all, I finally got to the point—a big stogie. And I was doing some playing in Pomona with some guys, but I wasn't going into L.A. then.

ISOARDI: Really? Not at all?

BRADFORD: After I got to Pomona, things kind of quieted down. The horn was under the bed, man. You know, I was trying to figure out what to do about it—really losing a grip on it at one point there, man. Not my motivation, but just trying to go out and play. And then out of the clear blue one day, John Carter called me.

ISOARDI: Now, how did you know John Carter?

BRADFORD: Well, I didn't know John Carter. We didn't know each other then. We were both from Texas; I had heard his name, he'd heard mine. He had heard from

somebody that I was in Los Angeles.

ISOARDI: How did you hear his name?

BRADFORD: You mean originally?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Well, see, the Dallas-Fort Worth area— You know, those cities are so close together that we know everybody. Everybody knows all the black musicians.

John went to college out of Texas. I think he went to a school in—oh, what's it called?

He went to Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. But all the guys knew that "Well, so-and-so went to Tennessee State, and Bob went to so-and-so, and there's this guy that plays saxophone and piano, John Carter, from Fort Worth, who plays clarinet and all, he went to—" Just a small group of guys who were going to go off to college who played jazz. I had heard his name, but I never met him.

Anyway, he found out from Ornette that I was in the Los Angeles area. He finally got my phone number, called me, and said he was interested in organizing a band. He and his wife drove out to Pomona one night, and that's how we met. He had a little red Triumph, you know, that little TR3?

ISOARDI: Snazzy car.

BRADFORD: Yeah. He was a fanatic about cars, you know, John. In fact, when he died, John had a little '62 Porsche C Coupe that he just loved. Oh, he liked to wear the black gloves and to shift it with the tachometer and all that. He really loved that, man.

ISOARDI: How did he get out here? Do you know that part of his story?

BRADFORD: Now, see, he came out early on, too, and went right back to school. John came here, I think, after teaching in the public schools in Texas. John came out here I think about 1958 or '59, something like that, went back to school. John already had an M.A., you see.

ISOARDI: In music?

BRADFORD: Yeah, from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He enrolled in school right away and took whatever those courses were that he needed and already had a teaching credential.

ISOARDI: So he was teaching then when you met him?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He was teaching full-time.

ISOARDI: High school?

BRADFORD: Well, actually, he was like an itinerant music teacher that went to four or five different schools.

ISOARDI: Oh, oh, so he was full-time, but he wasn't assigned to one particular school.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, he was full-time, but not one particular school, and actually at lower-level music, you know, like fourth through seventh grade music at two or three different campuses.

And he'd been trying to write and play and trying to get in the studio scene here and was frustrated with it all and wanted to organize a band playing this so-called free-form style of jazz. He called me, we started rehearsing here right away, man. We

auditioned half a dozen people and finally got a bass player and a drummer. And we were rehearsing at a studio right there at 103rd [Street] and Grandee [Avenue], right across the street from where the photograph was taken for us on our first album cover.

ISOARDI: Oh, *Flight for Four*?

BRADFORD: No, the very first one is called *Seeking* [by the New Art Jazz Quartet].

ISOARDI: Oh, *Seeking*.

BRADFORD: You know, that kind of sepia-toned record from Revelation Records.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, I have the CD. I haven't seen the original LP.

BRADFORD: I don't even have it here. But we were rehearsing right across the street in a little studio there.

ISOARDI: Why 103rd and Grandee? You were all the way out in Pomona. That's a long—

BRADFORD: Well, now, John lived very close to that. John lived at about Ninety-fifth [Street] and Denker [Avenue], and he'd arranged for that space. I would come in from Pomona a couple of times a week, and we would start to rehearse. We finally wound up with Tom Williamson on bass and—

ISOARDI: And then you got Bruz Freeman.

BRADFORD: Bruz Freeman on drums.

ISOARDI: Now, this is about '65, '66?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, this is after '66. This must have been '67, '68, right in there. Because '66 is when I got the job teaching. I had already been doing that workman's

comp job, '65 and '66.

ISOARDI: Okay. Then you move out to the San Gabriel Valley for a while, and then you hook up with John? You moved out to Pomona?

BRADFORD: Yeah, moved out to Pomona after I got that job—

ISOARDI: Teaching the sixth grade.

BRADFORD: Well, actually— See, I was already in Pomona doing the workman's comp job, and when I got the teaching job, that was right around the corner from where I lived in Pomona. So that still didn't bring me into L.A. That was only about thirty minutes up the road; coming back this way from Pomona, there's La Puente. I'd just get on Valley Boulevard and come west further towards L.A., come to La Puente, you see, which is right there near West Covina.

John and I hooked up—I guess it must have been '67.

ISOARDI: So for a couple of years, then, you're just maintaining your embouchure?

BRADFORD: Right, as best I could. Horn actually in the pawn shop half a dozen times.

ISOARDI: And you hadn't been in town hanging out much?

BRADFORD: No, not during that period. Nothing.

ISOARDI: Let me ask you, too, how does L.A. strike you at that time? Politically, racially, what's—?

BRADFORD: Well, it seemed to me that you had some benefits here that you didn't have in Dallas, Texas. But it was a big city; it was still racially divided. You were

always in fear of the police, especially as a musician.

Of course, I tried to renew a lot of my old acquaintances from the old days. I couldn't find Earl Anderza when I first got back. I didn't know where he was; he might have been in jail. Some of my old cronies I looked up, but we didn't get hooked up playing at all. I didn't manage to renew that circle of friends anymore, you know.

ISOARDI: Now, Watts explodes before you hook up with John, I guess?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. In fact, that studio space that we're in— What's the guy's name that played the lead on *Dallas*? Do you know the actor [Larry Hagman]?

ISOARDI: Yeah, the guy that played J.R.?

BRADFORD: Yeah, you know him? His mother was a famous musical actress.

ISOARDI: Not [Mary] Martin—

BRADFORD: Well, you know who I'm talking about.

ISOARDI: Oh, I know exactly. I don't know why I'm blanking on his name now.

BRADFORD: Well, he had decided after that, his contribution to helping this thing kind of heal was to open a little actor's workshop right across— Hager or Haglen?

ISOARDI: Oh, Larry Hagman.

BRADFORD: Right. And his mom was some big musical person.

ISOARDI: I think his mom was Mary Martin.

BRADFORD: Right, right.

ISOARDI: She was Peter Pan or something?

BRADFORD: Exactly. So he rented out a couple of little place—a little sculptor's

studio, a little acting thing. And one of those things is where we rehearsed, right across the street from 103rd and Grandee, where that platform is, where all those buildings are, those little storefronts. He had about three of those that he had made possible for actors, sculptors, painters, and artists and musicians to rehearse in.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he certainly did.

ISOARDI: And this is '66 that you go down there?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that we're doing— Well, John and I are doing this— It must be '67.

ISOARDI: In '67 you hook up with John and go down there?

BRADFORD: Yeah. This is in the wake of the riots.

ISOARDI: Right. Well, there's a lot going on at 103rd Street, isn't there, when you're down there?

BRADFORD: Yeah, sure. That's a buzzing area right in there. You can see the Watts Towers from right there, you know. This was a period now where a lot of people were— You know, the Sons of Watts poets were happening during this period.

ISOARDI: The Watts Prophets, I think, were down there, the poets.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: There was a group called the Sons of—?

BRADFORD: Yeah, the Sons of Watts or something like that they were called. That was a big thing—

ISOARDI: Yeah. I mean, that was like the cultural center, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: This was like a little renaissance here now in the wake of the riots. A lot of people were pouring money and talent into this like to help heal the wounds of the riots. A lot of people coming out of the woodwork. So Horace was active, was really buzzing during this period, too.

ISOARDI: Around down on 103rd.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right.

ISOARDI: Well, the Watts Writers Workshop was there.

BRADFORD: Yeah, all that. This is that general area. Exactly.

ISOARDI: Did you have any interaction with these other groups or anything?

BRADFORD: No, no. I'm trying to remember now when John and I first encountered Horace—I mean in terms of playing with him. Sometime during this period John and I did some—I don't know if you'd call them guest spots, but we'd go and play with the big orchestra at one of the junior highs and a couple of the churches.

ISOARDI: Oh, like at Foshay [Junior High School]?

BRADFORD: Yeah, at Foshay.

ISOARDI: Or Widney [High School].

BRADFORD: At Foshay several times. I remember when we'd go sometimes, Horace would sit down on the hood of John's Porsche. You know, John didn't like this at all. [laughs] If you were wearing Levis that had little brass studs on the pockets, he'd say, "Uh-uh, don't sit there. Don't sit there!" See, and I think what happened was that John

somehow felt a little self-conscious. This is all supposed to be like this Watts thing, and we're all supposed to be poor, and then he drives up in this little Porsche, you know. [mutual laughter] But part of that was the dynamics of this encounter, you know, but nothing was ever malicious or anything.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: John was a guy who worked hard, man, teaching in the L.A. schools. He was making a decent living. His wife was an R.N. [registered nurse].

ISOARDI: They were doing okay.

BRADFORD: Yeah, they were doing okay, man. But they had three kids, of course, and kids getting ready to go off to college not long after that. But we rehearsed like fanatics. We finally got our first little job at a place called the Century City Playhouse.

ISOARDI: How did you find the other guys?

BRADFORD: Tom and Bruz?

ISOARDI: Tom and Bruz, yeah.

BRADFORD: I think John was instrumental in getting the word out, because as I remember, when I would come in several different bass players came, and they were mostly boppers and couldn't deal with what we were doing at all. I remember maybe two or three drummers, and it seems to me John orchestrated that. John knew Henry Franklin and a lot of guys in that area because he lived on Ninety-fifth, and I didn't know any of those guys in that area. I hadn't been in that part of town since I lived there in the fifties. How the word got out I can't remember now, but it narrowed down

finally to Tom Williamson and Bruz Freeman. Bruz is one of the family of Freeman guys from Chicago.

ISOARDI: Or you're kidding. Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. He is the eldest brother of Von [Freeman], the tenor player, and George [Freeman], the guitarist.

ISOARDI: Jeez. So he's—what?—Chico [Freeman]'s uncle?

BRADFORD: He'd be Chico's uncle, right. Bruz is the eldest of the bunch. He lives in Hawaii now. We talk periodically. He called me not too long ago and says, "Man, you know, I can't believe I'm seventy-five." [mutual laughter] He says he is playing in some trio in some hotel over there but that there's nothing really happening in Hawaii.

ISOARDI: What is the music like that you and John start working on? I mean, are both of you sort of coming out of Ornette Coleman then?

BRADFORD: Well, yes and no. John had his own thing about what he thought the free style was, and you can see his composition leaned more—He had more classical music overtones. But he was a strong player, as you can see, and clearly had his own ideas about how he wanted to write.

When we got together, he liked what I was doing right away, but he and I always kind of had this thing about my writing versus his. We had to decide which one of us was going to write for the band. I didn't have any problem with that, because at the time he had—how can I say this? When we would play my music, we weren't as successful as a group playing my music as we were playing his. So I'd bring new

tunes to the band, we would lay my stuff out, and somehow it didn't jump off. But I wasn't dismayed by that.

ISOARDI: Why not?

BRADFORD: I can't remember now, but not enough to say, "Well, we're going to play 50 percent of mine and 50 percent yours." It was never an issue to me when the two of us got together about when the guy asked, "Well, which one of your names is going to go first?" He sort of made a case for his name being first, and I thought, "Well, I want us to play together." You know what I'm saying? I'm not trying to make a hero out of myself, but we had found each other like— You know, it was a marriage that I was happy to have, because it kept me alive, playing, and what it meant to me was an opportunity for us to play. So when we would play, sometimes out of five tunes it would be maybe four of his and one of mine, just like on the recordings. But I never made a case about that ever—in other words, a case over that is the beginning of a wedge between us. I needed what we were doing, and I think he did too, except that maybe he didn't address it the way I did. You know what I'm saying? I realized what it meant to us to be together. If I didn't have him, it was like me saying I don't have my wife in music. You know what I mean? I needed him, and what he did because I didn't have any other spirit around town—

ISOARDI: That was so close.

BRADFORD: —that was so close— He may not have known it, but he needed me too, because he didn't have anybody else around town either.

ISOARDI: Who had he been playing with? Anyone?

BRADFORD: Playing with bop guys around town, going and sitting in with guys playing the bop style and not making any headway at that, because he was not a super bopper, not anybody that would make the crowd stand back and go "ah!"—you know what I mean?—because he wasn't terribly interested in that. But he was a strong soloist. Alto saxophone especially was his thing.

ISOARDI: He was playing more alto than—

BRADFORD: Exactly. Oh, yeah. In fact, guys asked me, "So what about John playing the clarinet?" And I said, "Well, you know—" When John told me he was going to concentrate on the clarinet, I was kind of let down, because I loved his alto playing, but I had no idea what he was going to do on the clarinet, that he was going to take it to the place that he did. But then I found out later that was his first instrument, you see? He began on the clarinet, and he just sort of picked up the saxophone later on to play R and B jobs.

ISOARDI: I think that was true of a lot of saxophonists back then. You'd begin on clarinet, and then you'd go on to saxophone.

BRADFORD: Well, yeah. A lot of guys you'd see in school started out playing the clarinet. And he had studied clarinet especially when he was in graduate school with some serious clarinet teachers, I mean some biggies.

ISOARDI: I think it's kind of good, because clarinet takes a lot more discipline, I think.

BRADFORD: And it's easier for you to make the switch from clarinet to saxophone.

ISOARDI: Very easy.

BRADFORD: The opposite, of course, is impossible.

ISOARDI: Very hard.

BRADFORD: So who shows up at the first job I have but Wilber Morris.

ISOARDI: That was the first job you guys had?

BRADFORD: Yes. Our first public appearance was the Century City Playhouse.

ISOARDI: This is '67?

BRADFORD: It was probably '68.

ISOARDI: What was the name of the place again?

BRADFORD: Century City Playhouse. It's still there, I guess. It's a little place that will seat about sixty people or seventy, mostly theater. It is playing there and over at Occidental College, a concert over there, that John Hardy heard us. John Hardy is a biology instructor, actually an ornithologist, and jazz buff who had a small record label called Revelation. He heard us.

ISOARDI: So that's where you hook up with him.

BRADFORD: Then he takes us to a music store over here in Alhambra [California]. In the back of the music store we set up his little Revox tape recorder—they were big then, Stella Vox and Revox—and that's where we made our first record, the one called *Seeking*.

ISOARDI: That was first done for Revelation then?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Revelation. Then we did another one for Revelation called *Secrets*. They were about a year apart.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: From those two records Bob Thiele heard us, and we did two records for Bob Thiele on Flying Dutchman [Records] in '71 and—

ISOARDI: *Flight for Four* and *Self-Determination Music*?

BRADFORD: Right. It was during that period that our connection with Horace got bigger, where we could identify the territory around who does what. We were doing more things around town, and we had played with Horace's big band [Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra], but John and I still had our thing.

ISOARDI: Did you meet Horace gradually since you were both in the same area?

Was it inevitable that you would bump into him? Is he somebody you had heard of?

BRADFORD: No. I can't remember the first occasion meeting Horace. It might have been one of those occasions in that period there where we were rehearsing at the studio, but I can't remember the occasion of first meeting him. All of a sudden he is just there. I cannot remember it.

ISOARDI: What did you think with the Arkestra and everything? It's a different enterprise.

BRADFORD: You see, to me that was all hooked up to the new social changes and the new movement. That's the spirit of his orchestra, that sort of collective, even economic collective, that sharing with themselves. That music— What's spoken about

this new pride and this new sort of back to Africa and all that business, all of those overtones, that was the tenor of the times. It was everywhere—really good, really healthy. A lot of good young black poets, some of them I haven't heard of since. They've all disappeared, I guess, or many of them.

ISOARDI: Any names stick out in your mind?

BRADFORD: No. I can just remember one guy. I can't even remember his name. I remember him standing there doing this kind of stand-up poetry, kind of like the guy, the group that appears around town now—The huge brother—

ISOARDI: Oh, Kamau Daood.

BRADFORD: Like Kamau. But this was a little guy. I remember he did a piece called "Hey, Man, You Got Any Works?"—meaning needle and teaspoon and cigarette lighter and all that. Then he'd turn that thing into what that was about and why you liked it and why you shouldn't, and he was moving his body as he did it. You know? He said, "Hey, man, you got any works?" And it went on like that, and then it was [representing the rhythm of the piece] ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-ba-boom, like that. Just unbelievable stuff, man.

And there were dozens of them waiting to do theirs. You know what I mean? Kind of like those comics on one of those shows who want to come up, and there is like ten of these young Jewish comics from the Bronx, all good, and all of them have got a different slant, all got something to say, and young, just full of vinegar. It was a period where at three o'clock in the morning you were still wide awake. [It was] just so

exciting, you know what I mean, what was happening. It was really good, man.

We weren't making any money, but we had our jobs, so we weren't worried about it. Tom was doing technical writing, Bruz was a tennis coach, John and I were teaching. We were playing what we wanted to play, writing and playing and hoping that we were going to get some kind of break. We thought the thing with Flying Dutchman was a big break for us, but it wasn't.

ISOARDI: Well, how did that come about?

BRADFORD: With Bob Thiele?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Bob Thiele came to town, and I don't know how the word got out.

ISOARDI: He came into L.A. and he recorded a bunch of you guys. I mean, he did you and John; you guys did two albums for him. Horace with a quintet did one.

BRADFORD: He recorded some R and B people, too. He recorded some blues singers.

ISOARDI: He did an album with Stanley Crouch.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he did *Ain't No Ambulances for No Nigguhs Tonight*. Now, Stanley during this period, Stanley was working for L.A. county in some sort of social work or something, and he used to come to our rehearsals there on 103rd and Grandee, and he'd just sit around.

ISOARDI: Well, he was drumming at the time, wasn't he?

BRADFORD: Yeah, drumming and also writing poetry, too. He was one of those

poets, except that Stanley was probably more formally educated than a lot of those guys, but no better, I think, as a poet in terms of what was happening. Stanley was good, though. I'm just looking to see if I have *Ain't No Ambulances* here just to refresh us on it. I haven't even looked down here in so long a spider may come out of here, man. Oh, yeah, here it is.

ISOARDI: There you go.

BRADFORD: Look at Stanley. He's still got all his hair, and he's got his cigarette in his mouth like he thinks he's James Joyce there or somebody.

ISOARDI: I won't tell you how much I paid for a copy of that a while ago.

BRADFORD: He's definitely got his James Baldwin surly, pouty look here, doesn't he?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: With his beard and all. Oh, man. This was a great period, man.

[laughs] I love it.

ISOARDI: Have you heard that anytime recently?

BRADFORD: No. I don't even have a turntable. But I heard that there is an acid jazz group that has taken some things off of this and sampled it on one of their—

ISOARDI: No kidding?

BRADFORD: Yeah. I'm sure there is big money you could get for this someplace.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: But anyway, Bob Thiele came, and we met him—I'm trying to

remember now—in Wilber Morris's garage.

ISOARDI: Now, you said you had hooked up with Wilber again.

BRADFORD: Yeah, because Wilber was doing stuff with Horace and groups around town, but Wilber and I never got hooked up, connected, to this—I think it was '70, '71 before Wilber and I hook up again. So it's going to be four or five years that I won't see him at all. Wilber and I come together about the time Bob Thiele comes out here looking for West Coast musicians.

ISOARDI: Okay. You said Wilber showed up at one of your first gigs, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah. So that must have been—what?—'68? Somewhere right in there. Wilber wasn't doing a lot of playing then, as I remember. It seems to me he had been living in the San Francisco area and had just come back here or something.

But Bob Thiele came, and we played for him. In fact, I think it was just John and I and the drummer, or John and I and the bass; one of the rhythm section couldn't make it. We played these heads. We played the flashiest shit we had. Bob Thiele said, "You're on, man." We got a record date and set it up. We recorded over in Hollywood, not far from Hollywood High [School], somewhere over in there.

ISOARDI: And that was *Flight for Four*.

BRADFORD: Uh-huh. After having done that one we got these awards in Japan, record of the year, and all this stuff. We got all these five-star reviews. We never could get a tour out of it. We could never get booked in New York with any of that.

ISOARDI: Well, how were you being managed?

BRADFORD: We didn't have a manager. Bob Thiele told us both one day— We were sitting in a restaurant after we did this record. He said, "You guys are going to have to move to New York or you're not going to get anything done." John and I said, "Well, no, we've got families. Our kids go to school." He said, "Well, that's your thing, but if you were in New York you'd be going to Europe three or four times a year. You'd be making two or three records a year. But nobody is going to come out here and get you."

ISOARDI: Hard.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: But you'd already been, so you had already had a taste of it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I had a taste. John was excited by it, but not enough to pack up his family and move.

ISOARDI: No way Thiele could arrange a gig, a club date, for a month or something?

BRADFORD: Well, nothing came forward.

ISOARDI: Nothing did.

BRADFORD: And so— I'm trying to remember now what prompted me to do this. It was either '71 or '72, one of my coworkers at this elementary school where I was working said, "I listen to your records, and I have come to the club and heard you play. I can't believe you're here teaching. You ought to be doing it." We are still good friends now. She just turned eighty [years old], eighty-one, and she lives in Hawaii. She said, "Every summer I take these teachers' charters and I go on these trips to

Europe. You ought to do it, too." I said, "Well, I can't afford anything like that with a family." She said, "You can get a round-trip ticket right now, if you get on the charter, for \$380." This was the summer of 1972. "There's a teachers' charter, about sixteen of us, and we are all going, round-trip ticket \$380." I said, "What?" She said, "If you don't have the money I'll loan you the money." I said [adopts comically appalled voice], "Oh, I can't do that!" I said it for about ten seconds, and she said, "Yeah, you can pay me back whenever you can." I said, "Okay." [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: That's what got you over there then for those—

BRADFORD: That's what go me over for my first time there. I came back the next summer and hooked up with John Stevens and Trevor Watts. I made a couple of records while I was there. I had begun to write after that first trip over there. In fact, it was there that I wrote "H.M. Louis I." Louis Armstrong died while I was there. It must have been—

ISOARDI: It was '71?

BRADFORD: Whenever Louis Armstrong died I was in England, and I remember getting off the train— You know how at every stop you go get a candy bar or whatever? Every newspaper at every stop, even in France, had banner headlines: "*Louis est Mort*" it said in France, bigger than they had had for [Charles] de Gaulle, man. I mean big. You couldn't get any bigger than the banner, could you, the big letters? "Louis is Dead" it said. Can you imagine? And I thought, "Here I am in Europe, and the *New York Times*, they don't put a banner up there unless a Kennedy's

assassinated.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's it.

BRADFORD: Right? So I wrote this piece called "H.M. Louis I." I wrote another one called "Rosevita's Dance" and another one called "Comin' On" when I was over there.

ISOARDI: Oh, did you really?

BRADFORD: Uh-huh. I wrote a thing called "Love's Dream." That same band that will go to Paris in '73 that recorded at the club Le Chat qui Pêche, that band. I wrote this piece called "Love's Dream." Man, I was just going crazy writing tunes.

ISOARDI: Really!

BRADFORD: And I wrote some stuff that I don't even play anymore. I can't even remember. I wrote another one called "Room 408."

I don't know what over there got me going. My writing juices—Right now, when I get on a plane going out of the country my writing thing just starts to crank up. I don't know what the hell it is. If I get on a plane right now and I am going to some festival in Europe, all of a sudden I am a free man or something. I don't get it. I write—Shit, when I get to Europe I have the germs of at least a half dozen tunes that I don't get here on a daily basis. I don't know what the hell it is, but it never fails.

[mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Let me back you up a little bit, Bob—before we get into the European thing, which I'd like to go over in a little more detail—back to '65 when Watts

explodes. I mean, how does that affect you?

BRADFORD: Well, I think most of us had seen something like that coming. The police thing was just unbelievable. There had been episodes with policemen killing black drivers. I remember one case in Los Angeles where the police stopped this one black guy and asked him for his ID, and his wife is sitting there, and he's got his gun on him and wound up shooting the guy. I remember the phrase that is supposed to be the legal phrase that saved the policeman's life: "The car lurched forward and caused the gun to discharge." People were saying, "Well, you asked him for his driver's license about an infraction. Why is the gun pointed at him in the first place?" But they pulled that off. I remember the phrase: "I didn't intend to shoot him; the car lurched forward. The guy stepped on the gas or let off the brake and hit the gun and made me shoot him." Just shit like that.

ISOARDI: Unbelievable.

BRADFORD: They were beating up black people and killing them right and left, man. You could just tell, it was one of those hot summers.

ISOARDI: You could feel the anger.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, just everyplace. I remember once we were at that studio rehearsing, and the police were chasing a couple of black kids on a little motorcycle, and you could see the kids throwing away whatever they had, but the police ran them to the curb on the bike, right, and as they both were getting themselves up this guy grabbed one of them and started cracking him over the head with his nightstick.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

BRADFORD: But the funny part—now, watch this—then there's a bunch of black men around just getting off work, these hard hat guys, and there are just these two policemen. Pretty soon they had these guys all surrounded, the squad car and these two black guys on the ground and their motorcycle and these two cops, one is hitting him over the head, and these black men are just frozen, standing around. One of the guys runs in the car and gets the shotgun and starts [makes sound indicating a weapon being cocked] and [barks] "Get back! Get back!" I said, "Oh-oh. This is getting ready to get—" You know what I mean? This is a group of men, now, that were getting ready, if things had just been a little different, two of them are going to get shot, and the rest of them are going to kill these guys, man, right there. And there are guys out there who will say, "Well, you're just going to have to shoot the first two or three of us."

ISOARDI: Yeah, "But we'll get you."

BRADFORD: Yeah. The community is full of guys like that. "You're going to kill the first two, but we are going to kill the both of you or you are going to let these guys go." We were just standing up there on that platform looking, man, and thinking—That's how things were in '64, '65, right in there. Everybody knew that all it was going to take was one good summer spark and the thing was going to blow up. Everybody was expecting it.

I can remember coming in one time from Pomona. I got off the San

Bernardino Freeway to get gas, I had the wife and the kids with me—this is '63, right before the riots started in '64—and I get out there in some place, one of those towns like West Covina or— You know, you pull off to get gas. I pull up to the pump, look in there, and the guy's in the station, and I got my little boys up in the car jumping around—you can see a black family. He wouldn't even come out. He just stood there and looked at us like that. The kids are saying, "What is it?" This is L.A., man.

ISOARDI: What do you say to the kids?

BRADFORD: The funniest thing— This is the new mentality now. Have you met one of my older boys yet? You haven't met any of them, have you? Well, Carmen's got two older brothers.

ISOARDI: The twins, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah. We get back in the car—now, get this—and of course the subject of what happened there we were trying to soften for the kids, so I don't know how the conversation proceeds, except that we come to the word "Negro." So I say, "We don't use that word very much around the house. We make a point of it. I don't even think the boys know what that is." My wife Melba said, "Well, sure they do." I asked Keith, one of the twins, "Keith, what is a Negro?" He said, "They're real dark and they fight all the time." Television, all these big black men, policemen and dogs and firehoses, that's what he'd see on the evening news. Now, is this worth a million dollars? He says, "They're real dark and they fight all the time." We go [whistles in disbelief].

When you see those policemen with the hoses, I don't care what anybody says, the population of black people that you see out there, they aren't light-skinned blacks, are they? Never. You don't see a lot of light-skinned blacks. I don't know where they are at the time. That's not a criticism, now. I'm just saying— But whenever that happens, these are black black people, aren't they, that you're squirting with these hoses and sicing the dogs on.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: And he said, having looked at the news— How old is he now? He is—what?—six? Maybe seven or eight or something. "They're real dark and they fight all the time" is what he said. We laugh about that now. He doesn't remember it, but I and my wife do.

That's the L.A. that we were living in—bad news, man, all over. I'm surprised that it didn't happen sooner and that it did not last longer and that it wasn't more destructive. Except, and I hate to say it, it wasn't really planned like a rebellion. It was a spontaneous riot. I'd like to think that it was a rebellion.

ISOARDI: Yeah, but it was an upheaval. There wasn't a conscious direction for it.

BRADFORD: It wasn't an orchestrated rebellion so that Smith is over here in this part of town setting buildings on fire, and when the police come there Brown is in this part of town creating— You know, it wasn't one of those.

ISOARDI: It wasn't politically organized.

BRADFORD: No, and I wish it had been. It would have been a bigger statement, but

it wasn't.

ISOARDI: I assume you are in Pomona then, right?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I'm still in Pomona, still teaching in that little elementary school.

ISOARDI: But you are not going into L.A. during that week?

BRADFORD: Let's see, did I go into L.A. during that week? Once I did, in fact, but I can't remember what I was stupid enough to go into L.A. that week for. Actually, during that week I saw some white people who brought food into the area, guys who delivered bread and stuff. Some of them were still coming into the area who delivered goods. I guess they felt like "these people know me."

ISOARDI: I guess.

BRADFORD: Kind of stupid, because everybody was crazy.

ISOARDI: What about in Pomona?

BRADFORD: Nothing in Pomona except kids doing copycat stuff. Nothing really big. It's like when the sheriff's thing, you know, about the Rodney [King] thing—They had some copycat stuff in some of the smaller cities around here. In fact, Pomona had some of that then, but nothing major, just some people doing some window breaking and setting trash cans on fire, but nothing orchestrated or big. Just L.A.

ISOARDI: Well, after '65— You've talked about kind of the renaissance on 103rd Street. There is a huge artistic explosion—

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: —that follows the social one, but there is also a lot of politics in the air. I mean, the [Black] Panther [Party] emerges in '66, etc. Now, how does this affect you or things you were in the middle of?

BRADFORD: People were trying to recruit John and me both. In fact, they were trying to recruit us to join the Panthers to be sort of like ministers of song. Once we went to a fund-raiser to raise money for the Panthers, and John used to say, "Bob, you know my telephone has never been the same since that." [mutual laughter]

Guys were trying to recruit both of us to become [Nation of Islam] Muslims during that period. There were a lot of musicians, see, who had decided to become Muslims during that period. There was a lot in the air, and people were saying everybody has to be somebody, you've got to join something. You can't be just this loner out there.

ISOARDI: Well, how did you and John figure this out?

BRADFORD: I had some real soul searching to do about the idea of— So many close friends, so many people were confronting me with this thing about how can you remain— And they could put in front of you a set of facts that were undeniable, and if you were not a clear thinker it could really confuse you. Guys were saying to me, "You know, Christianity has never done anything but keep black people on their knees in America. How can you be a Christian? How can you keep the name Bradford? It is the name of some Englishman who raped your great-great-great-grandmother." Things like that, you see? If you weren't a clear thinker they could really throw you off

track. So I said to the guys during the period, "I still have some trouble with this God, this Jesus and his father in heaven, and I'm not going to trade him in for a new guy and go through the same thing again, because it's not like this Islam has a new set of papers now that are more valid. Here is another God that says his son is Mohammad and his name is Allah and he wants you to do this. Now, how is he any different than this God that you want me to get rid of now?"

ISOARDI: Well, in a sense Islam did not emerge from Africa, and it was partly imposed to a degree.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but what I was saying to them was "Whatever the case is, you're asking me to embrace a new God who is no more in physical evidence than the one I've got now, except that he is politically more appropriate in that there are Muslims of every complexion all over the world. There doesn't seem to be any color discrimination in Islam, and we got our Christianity from white people here in America, so there is a kind of stigma associated with that, but I don't connect Christianity in connection with Jesus and the whole Bible with being a product of the white people in America who introduced it to blacks. It's beyond them. And all the great religions, none of them come from Europe, do they?"

ISOARDI: No, Christianity is Middle Eastern.

BRADFORD: Everything is. All the great religions are either from Africa or from the East. Europeans just take it and do what they want with it, make Roman Catholicism out of it or whatever. But I wasn't about to give up one God and go for a new one just

because that was the climate of things. You know what I'm saying?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: And I never did and I got a lot of heat about it. Even when I was living in New York—

ISOARDI: Earlier on?

BRADFORD: Yeah, when I was there with Ornette, the Muslim thing was big there, too. I just wasn't interested in a new God. I wasn't fairing so well with the one I had, but I wasn't interested in a new one. In other words, I didn't want to get a new religion for political reasons. If I was going to get a new God— Now, I took on some new political garments; [I took] a closer look at my own identity here and what it was that might have stuck on me from being born and raised in the South and being black that I had never thought about carefully.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

MAY 28, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bob, a few things from last time, a few questions that I jotted down after listening to our tapes. [tape recorder off] First off, you mentioned that you'd played with Horace [Tapscott]'s big band [Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra] a couple of times. In what context was it? Were you a member of the trumpet section?

BRADFORD: No, John [Carter] and I were guests, sort of out front.

ISOARDI: Guest artists out front?

BRADFORD: Yeah. John and I and Arthur Blythe were kind of out front, even though Arthur was a regular member. John and I were brought in as guests. I wasn't sitting with the trumpets.

ISOARDI: What kind of music were you playing?

BRADFORD: Well, we were playing Horace's stuff, though at one point we played at this big church—I don't remember which one—and Horace was doing, among other things, these big orchestrated versions of spirituals.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Old-time spirituals?

BRADFORD: Yeah, old-time stuff like "Wade Through the Water" and— But he turned it into that sort of jazz feel where you play over kind of like a drone, you know?

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: Other occasions playing with him, like at that junior high—

ISOARDI: Widney [High School] or Foshay [Junior High School]?

BRADFORD: Foshay, I think. I remember the one occasion playing there when Horace sat on the hood of John's Porsche. [mutual laughter] We were playing Horace's regular material.

While we're talking about it, when we made this record with Bob Thiele— There is a record, I guess, that you gave me where Horace is playing the piano with me and John. Unless there is some kind of way for him to have overdubbed that, I do not remember physically being in a room playing that tune and Horace being there playing the piano. But I've listened to it, and the way the drum solo and everything works, Horace had to have been playing with us because of the interplay between the drums and the piano, unless they dubbed that whole thing and stuck it on there. But I do not physically remember being in a room recording that with Horace. And I have sat and sat and sat and tried to put that back together, and I cannot remember— Though there are lots of things that have fallen off since then.

ISOARDI: Truly. So that was "In the Vineyard."

BRADFORD: "In the Vineyard."

ISOARDI: Well, it's funny. It's almost like— When you first listen to it you hardly even notice the piano with you. It's like they sort of grafted on Horace playing at the end.

BRADFORD: Well, that's what I thought. When I listen to that it seems like that's what they did, they stuck that on there. They might have had Horace just play with the drums and spliced it in, because I cannot remember being in a room in a record studio during that period with Horace playing with us. Horace did his thing with Bob Thiele, and we did ours, and we never actually played together, unless it is something I just have totally blanked on. It worked anyhow, didn't it? It sounds really great.

ISOARDI: Yeah. [mutual laughter] I wish the rest of the two LPs were like that.

BRADFORD: While we are on recording, I did something with Horace about a year and a half ago, something that David Keller orchestrated. Some guy had some money that—I told you about that, didn't I?

ISOARDI: Was that the Catalina [Bar and Grill]?

BRADFORD: No, no, this was in a studio someplace that somebody in town, now, either a jazz buff or—

ISOARDI: Don Snowden.

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: Don Snowden was in town, and he had some cash.

BRADFORD: Right. So I don't know whatever happened to that, but it was Roberto [Miranda] and me, and [William] Roper playing tuba.

ISOARDI: It's like an octet.

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, I arranged one tune that John and I had done years ago, "Eye of the Storm," for that octet. And it had Thurman Green playing trombone. I

don't know what ever happened to those tapes, now, but—

ISOARDI: They're still—

BRADFORD: Sitting and waiting for somebody to do something.

ISOARDI: Don recorded— Dave Keller was in town, then, and I think they recorded a couple of nights at Catalina's, then they went into a studio—on a Saturday, I think.

That's right, because I was at the studio session.

BRADFORD: Were you?

ISOARDI: Yeah. I was with Dave Keller in the control room.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. The singer was there, too, wasn't he?

ISOARDI: No, there wasn't a singer there.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. He sang "Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child."

ISOARDI: Oh, Dwight [Tribble].

BRADFORD: Dwight.

ISOARDI: Okay. There must have been two days in the studio, then, because when I was in the studio they did "Akirfa," "Lumumba," and one other piece. Those three pieces.

BRADFORD: I don't even remember.

ISOARDI: Maybe it was a couple of days in the studio, then. But I heard Don has those tapes. I think they circulated them for a bit, and Verve [Records] apparently was interested, but Don still has them.

BRADFORD: Verve's not going to do anything like that, man.

ISOARDI: Doubtful.

BRADFORD: That's out of their thing.

ISOARDI: Very much so.

BRADFORD: They've got a real clear profile. It's a good company, but you know they are not going to do that.

ISOARDI: No, it's not their thing.

BRADFORD: That's going to have to be Black Saint [Records] or Soul Note [Records] or ECM [Records] or somebody like that.

ISOARDI: I think that once Horace's book [*Songs of the Unsung: The Musical and Social Journey of Horace Tapscott*] comes out there will be more interest, and maybe that will be the push that gets those tapes out. They've got a lot, because they recorded about three nights at Catalina's plus it sounds like at least two days in the studio.

BRADFORD: There is enough there for a double CD.

ISOARDI: Okay. Going back a bit, you mentioned the first time you and John played with your band was at the Century City Playhouse.

BRADFORD: Century City Playhouse, right.

ISOARDI: Describe the Century City Playhouse. What was it?

BRADFORD: It's a little theater, actually, and mostly up to that point there was theater there. Looking out there and thinking about the shoulder-to-shoulder theater seating, straight-backed theater seats that you fold down, the place probably held about sixty-five, seventy-five people; that was it. That was our first public performance.

ISOARDI: Was this just a music venue? Or did they have all sorts of things there?

BRADFORD: Well, primarily this was a theater place. This guy's idea to have music there was apparently new.

ISOARDI: What guy? Who was running this?

BRADFORD: I don't know who was running it then.

ISOARDI: Let me also ask you— This was a period of the late sixties, early seventies. Who else around L.A.—you talked about Horace and you and John—is playing new music? Who is sort of pushing the boundaries?

BRADFORD: In the early seventies? Nobody.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: There is nobody. Nobody that I know of. Unless— There is nobody in town, now, pushing so-called new music, what we were calling new music then, but me and John and Horace. Now, that doesn't count all of Horace's “children,” let's call them.

ISOARDI: Yeah, within the context of the Ark [Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra].

BRADFORD: That's all I know about. I can't remember— There were lots of guys who were doing Trane [John Coltrane] stuff, those long modal things and those things that are on fixed kind of drones, but there was nobody out there doing the so-called, for want of a better name, Ornette [Coleman]-ish sort of thing that wasn't centered on a drone or a vamp or something like that. But it didn't take long for other people to start really scurrying in. And of course, they weren't doing anything with it, but there were a

lot of people who were waiting, I guess, for a cue.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah, apparently.

ISOARDI: Who starts emerging?

BRADFORD: Well, it's not long before Vinny Golia appears.

ISOARDI: Early seventies?

BRADFORD: I think so. I'm kind of blurry on those dates in there.

Let's see. Who else around town—? It seems like a lifetime ago. Goodness gracious, man. I think by the late seventies, anyway, Nels [Cline] and Alex Cline are sticking their heads up. Who else? This is unbelievable. There were other people around by the late seventies.

ISOARDI: If you think of them later—

BRADFORD: I just can't think of anybody right now. If you think of some names you might want to say "What about this guy?" and I could kind of put them in context. I can't think of anybody right now.

ISOARDI: Okay.

BRADFORD: And we still are not playing any big numbers of jobs, you see. Arthur Blythe had come to the area by then. Stanley Crouch had this thing over in Claremont [California], that sort of thing where he had this Black Music Infinity.

ISOARDI: What was that?

BRADFORD: Stanley was teaching at Pomona College. He had this big house that he

rented, a four- or five-bedroom house with a huge den that he used for a practice area. He had a group then that he called the Black Music Infinity that included himself; Wilber Morris; me; Arthur Blythe; another bass player whose name doesn't come to me right now, who played the bass and the cello [Walter Savage]; a rather obscure but very talented trumpet player named Walter Lowe, who was like an itinerant fruit picker that passed through somehow—very talented, though. And David Murray and James Newton were sort of the peripheral, runny-nosed kids at that point.

ISOARDI: Were they in school out there?

BRADFORD: James lived in the area, because I think his father was in the military somewhere nearby, and he was living in Pomona. David was in school at Pomona College.

ISOARDI: I see.

BRADFORD: I'm trying to think of who else—

ISOARDI: And this is late sixties?

BRADFORD: No, this is over into the seventies now.

ISOARDI: Early seventies?

BRADFORD: No, this is middle seventies now I'm talking about. Walter Savage.

ISOARDI: Oh, the bass player [you mentioned].

BRADFORD: Bass player, cello player. He was in that group sometimes, too.

ISOARDI: This is a lot of talent.

BRADFORD: In one band, it sure was.

ISOARDI: What was the purpose? Just to get together and exchange ideas?

BRADFORD: Well, no. Stanley had a name for it and was trying to book the band, and we would play at Pomona College and some little things around, but it never got off the ground beyond being a super-big rehearsal band. That's the band that I think Mark Dresser—

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

BRADFORD: Mark was coming here in the summer for that Pomona College summer music camp that they used to have for classical music, and so was Diane Galas [now Diamanda Galas], and that's how they got exposed to this music.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

BRADFORD: They were still part of the runny-nosed peripheral group. Mark Dresser, Diane Galas—

ISOARDI: Pomona was attracting a lot of talented kids.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Pomona has always— It was mostly classical music at one point, but what happened with Stanley is that this black studies thing was big then. This was the big breakthrough out there for an awareness of black culture in those colleges and in that town of Claremont. It was Stanley clearly, now, who single-handedly introduced Claremont and Pomona Colleges to what black people were about culturally.

ISOARDI: When did he start there? Do you know?

BRADFORD: About '73, something like that, right in there. And he was totally

intoxicated with this new thing. Sunny Murray and the Art Ensemble [of Chicago]—This new black identity thing which that music seemed to be just locked in with totally.

We had this band, we rehearsed, and in fact some weekends we would just play the whole weekend. There was a woman artist [Monica Pecot] in the area who shared the house with Stanley and some others—not his lady but an artist, and who lives in the greater L.A. area now, who is a wonderful visual artist—who could cook this unbelievable food, man. She would put on these big restaurant-sized pots of something like gumbo or—We'd play until we were just nuts and smoke weed [marijuana] until everybody's head was coming off, then eat, and then pass out, then wake up and play some more. Sometimes for two or three days we would do this kind of stuff. It was good. More like a workshop than an actual working band.

ISOARDI: What was the music like? What were you playing? Free jazz?

BRADFORD: Yeah, all free music. We might play a Sun Ra tune or some of my tunes or some of Stanley's or some of Wilber's. Wilber was writing then, and so was I, and so was Stanley, and so was the guy who came periodically—who's dead now—to play with us on baritone, a baritone saxophone player who died in Europe three or four years ago. I can't think of his name right now, but remind me of that. [Charles Tyler] I've got a poster in my office of him. In fact, David and I did a sort of tribute to him in Paris about two and a half years ago. Oh, man, this is awful; I can't think of it now.

ISOARDI: How long did Stanley Crouch's organization last? Until he took off—?

BRADFORD: Until he left for New York, which was probably around '75, somewhere right in there. David Murray left and went to New York, James Newton went, and then Stanley went somewhat after that, about '75, '76, right in there.

But that band was mostly a rehearsal band. We'd play at what they used to call the Kahoutek Festival in Claremont every year—named after that comet. We'd play those things and sometimes at those colleges and sometimes at some benefit or something. I think maybe we even played the Watts [Summer] Festival [of Art] once—something in Watts, big thing, but it wasn't the Watts Festival, some other thing that we played where all that kind of music was a part of it.

We made one really good tape that Stanley had been trying to sell in New York for years, and he had never been able to sell it. Pretty much like this thing with Snowden, probably.

ISOARDI: Well, maybe he's not that interested in that much anymore, either.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, I ask him every now and then about it, and he says, "I'm trying to sell it, man, and I'm asking a certain price for it, and nobody wants to pay. So I'll just keep it."

ISOARDI: But he is interested in getting it out, then.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. If the tape hasn't disintegrated by now. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Hopefully he's transferred it.

Okay, what's the jazz scene in general like in L.A. in the late sixties, early seventies? Is there much going on?

BRADFORD: Yeah, there is a lot of playing around town, you know. Harold Land is playing around town. Shelly's [Manne Hole] is still in business. The new music thing still never took a real foothold here, though, except in the sort of black-based things. In other words, you weren't going to go to Hollywood and see Horace Tapscott playing in one of the Hollywood clubs with his band.

ISOARDI: You guys never played Hollywood then?

BRADFORD: No, we never played Hollywood, nor did we ever play anything like Donte's, which was a real good dyed-in-the-wool jazz club. People like Warne Marsh played there. We never played places like that. It was really limited. This thing—what we were playing, what Horace was playing—was still contained. But for that matter, I suppose in New York it was too, for the longest time, limited to certain clubs. You weren't going to see Ornette Coleman at the Blue Note or at Basin Street East.

ISOARDI: Or the Village Vanguard.

BRADFORD: Yeah, or the Half Note, right? Only at the Five Spot, Slug's, or the Jazz Gallery and some of those kinds of clubs.

ISOARDI: There really isn't a center anymore, then, right? There was Central Avenue for a long time, and then I guess in the fifties Western Avenue was the place where there were a lot of clubs. But there isn't any one area that really has a group of clubs anymore, is there?

BRADFORD: You mean now or then?

ISOARDI: Then, in the late sixties, early seventies. It's just an isolated place here and there?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In the first place, this wasn't club music either, because the pieces went on and on and on, and it obviously wasn't a thing that would function in a club. Horace would get up there, and some of the pieces were thirty-five minutes long. They went on and on and on. No break. You could see a club owner— Nobody was interested. And Horace never worked based on a forty-five minute set, [and then] you get off and take a fifteen-[minute] break. He played until he wanted to stop, and then he stopped. And I don't blame him. He didn't give what he was doing around the club scene.

ISOARDI: What about you and John? What was your performance style like?

BRADFORD: Well, we didn't work a lot. I took that year in 1973 and went to England, and while I was gone John started this thing called Rudolph's [Fine Arts Center]. There was a guy living in a building that used to be kind of a small medical-dental building.

ISOARDI: Not Rudolph Porter?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Rudolph.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: And that was on Adams and something or other. John started playing there with William Jeffrey, the drummer. You know William?

ISOARDI: Yeah, I know.

BRADFORD: And at that time Jeff was calling himself Jeff Hasaan. And he was using his second son Stanley [Carter] playing bass, who was really growing like a weed on the bass, man. Just unbelievable talent, and really going for it, the three of them. That place would seat about forty or fifty people, and they were playing on weekends. While I was in Europe, this is when John switched to clarinet and put all the saxophones and flutes and all that stuff under the bed and focused on the clarinet.

ISOARDI: I didn't know he was playing much flute.

BRADFORD: Well, he didn't play a lot of flute, but he played flute on our first two records.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right.

BRADFORD: He wasn't playing a lot of tenor [saxophone]. In fact, we both used to laugh, and he'd say, "Bob, how could I even get on a record playing tenor?" Because he didn't have the Texas tenor sound.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: In Texas, the sound that he had, I'm telling you, you wouldn't even take it out in Texas. You know what I mean? The Texas tenor sound was already a given, and if you couldn't play the tenor like that, man, you wouldn't even take it out. So on our first record [*Seeking*] he played tenor on one piece, and I think on the next one he said he wasn't going to do it anymore. He could play the horn, but he had a lovely sound on alto [saxophone], which I really loved, man. He really played the alto beautifully.

When I came back from England he had sacked all of that and was just focusing on the clarinet. He did get himself a soprano [saxophone]. I think there was so much noise over the soprano then. You know, even Sonny Rollins bought himself a soprano.

ISOARDI: Yeah, Coltrane really made a big impact.

BRADFORD: Yeah, so many people— Soprano is so much easier to play than any of the other horns—not to play in tune, but it's easier to just get up and blow it and get a sound out of it. You get a lot of people who don't play very well who make a fairly decent showing on it in a given context—you know what I mean?—playing something like "My Favorite Things." You get up there and seem to be a pretty fair saxophone player when in fact you're not. Anyhow, the pressure was on for everybody it seems to get one, so John had one too, but he didn't spend a lot of time on it. I've got a couple of reel-to-reel tapes up here with him playing the soprano.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

BRADFORD: But we'd get jobs around town playing at—I remember once we got booked at Caltech [California Institute of Technology]. Caltech used to have a series of jazz things. In fact, I think I have the reel-to-reel tapes from it. Pomona College—Because I was working out there, we got booked out there sometimes. John Hardy from Revelation Records got us booked at Occidental [College] periodically. There were no clubs in town where we played that I can remember. So John said, "If nobody is going to have a place to play, I'll make my own."

So when I got back from England we sort of hooked up again. There was no official thing like "I'm leaving, John." I just said, "I'm going to England to see if I can stir something up," because even though we had that thing together, we both were always working on our own little projects, too. When I got ready to do that first record I did with the [Bobby Bradford] Mo'tet, I was doing material I knew that John wasn't particularly interested in playing, because we would do a couple of standard chord sequence tunes on there, and he was determined during that period not to play any kind of standard material.

I still do. On my jobs I play my music, and if I feel like I want to play a Thelonious Monk tune, then I play it. People often say to me, "Well, when you grew up some guys played R and B [rhythm and blues] and some played jazz." I'd say that I don't see the distinction, and I still don't. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: On certain kinds of R and B you've still got a swing. If you play [sings] "If there ain't nobody here but us chickens," you've still got to swing. Even if you play a solo, now, that's not full of a lot of eighth notes and a lot of harmonic substitutions and all, but you've still got to swing, and you have to play something interesting, right? So when you start to play jazz you may not play a twelve-bar blues—you may play some standard thirty-two-bar tune—but the problem is still the same. If you are going to get up there and improvise, now, you've got to play something that goes somewhere, and you've got to deal with the swing. I would agree

that R and B compared to jazz as two separate subjects, now, is more simplistic.

Right?

ISOARDI: Yeah, musically, harmonically.

BRADFORD: But you can't separate them in my mind. You can't separate Louis Jordan and Charlie Parker on one level. You've got to get up there and play that line that is connected to the time. I get a lot of flak over that, but I don't care, because I don't see any separation. When you get up there and get ready to play, you decide, "This time I'm going to play a Thelonious Monk tune, and I'm going to follow the chord pattern of this song and let that guide me through this." "Now I'm going to play an Ornette Coleman tune, and I'm not going to do that." Some people would say there's a big gap there, and it is a big gap in a way, but it's not like those two things are so unimaginable.

ISOARDI: Yeah, same source.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I'm going to paint here using oils, and now I'm going to do this collage where I am going to glue things up on this board. But you still have to have some ideas, and you've got to say something.

ISOARDI: Sometimes I think people have that attitude about R and B just because of maybe the commercial aspects of it.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Because you can say the same thing about the blues.

BRADFORD: Yeah. See, but for a lot of people, I suppose, who don't listen

carefully, a lot of the R and B people weren't very good.

ISOARDI: Sure. But you can say that about almost any style.

BRADFORD: Jazz, too, you could say, couldn't you? Now, if you've got some R and B people up there that weren't any good, even though they made a record, that's one thing. But when you've got somebody up there like Louis Jordan or T-Bone Walker—

ISOARDI: Oh, tasty!

BRADFORD: Yeah. You can't get around people like that.

Going back to where we were, John and I, we weren't working a lot, but we practiced still, just fiendishly practiced. John was steadily writing new music. I opened this little club in Pasadena [California] called the Little Big Horn.

ISOARDI: When did that happen?

BRADFORD: That was about 1975.

ISOARDI: Actually, before we get up to there, Bob, there is another thing I wanted to ask you from an earlier time. When we quit last time you were talking about the changing political consciousness of the late sixties and the early seventies, and you were saying that you yourself had "taken on some new political garments"; that was your phrase. Could you talk about that a bit? How does the time affect you as a citizen?

BRADFORD: You see, what it did for me as a citizen— Somebody born in Mississippi in 1934, who grew up— Whether you realize it or not, now, the Mississippi white-black thing stamped on you— People can say what they want, but if

you lived the first ten years of your life in Mississippi, you are definitely coming out of there with some of the taint. Some of us— All of us were tainted, some more than others.

What it produced with somebody like me, who was trying to figure out a way to do what he wanted to do in this world, was—up to the point of the sixties—a kind of resignation: “White people are running this thing the way they are going to run it, and they are not going to turn it loose, and you are going to have to figure out a way to get through the cracks.” Not bust the thing open with a sledgehammer, but— In every white thing designed to keep black people locked out there is a crack, there is a way for a smart black man to get through it. That was my thought and my father [Webb Eugene Bradford, Jr.]'s too, which means go to college, get an education.

At my house, you see, as a kid there was no question of will you go to college; it was unthinkable not to go. You know what I'm saying? Unthinkable. It is just which one can you go to, which one can we afford to send you to, or which one will take you. But to be a black man growing up in the period that I'm growing up in, and my father saying "There is no place in the world now, where you're growing up, for an uneducated, weak black man"—I'm talking about somebody who just can't handle it, who will just flake out on it and hide or whatever, weak— I don't mean some killer kind of guy, now, out to shoot somebody, but I'm talking about a man who is weak in terms of his own determination and own philosophy. No place. [Nor] for an uneducated one. So you go to college. And I could see that. He said, "They're only

going to hire so many black guys here, and they're only going to hire so many black ones there. You just be one of the group." Now, some black people are going to say, "Well, you're a token, aren't you?" Well, I guess so, but my kid's not going to be. I'm going to take the token, and I'm going to turn this kid of mine into Harvard [University], and he is going to go farther into the cracks, because these white people are not going to give it up.

The sixties say that "They are going to give it up because we are going to make them give it up. Not only are we going to make them give it up with education, but we are going to make them give it up with civil disobedience." Although I was not an advocate of going out and setting Los Angeles on fire, some people were angry enough to burn Los Angeles to the ground.

So somebody's attention is coming to this, so at this point, now, it says "Look back and ask yourself 'Who are you?'" I think I was in Quincy Jones's band at one point, and some guy—I might have told this story already—asked me, "What is your name?" And I said "Bobby Bradford." And he said, "Oh, no, no, not your slave name, your real name. That's just some white guy's name from England who raped your great-great-great-grandmother." You're talking about a two-by-four on my head! Now, I knew all of that on some level, didn't I? But I never stood in the mirror and looked at myself and said, "Now, what part of England did your Bradford great-great-great-grandfather rapist come from?" Just confront that. And this is what this meant now. Then you are finally figuring out, "Who are you, now? The son or

grandson or great-great-grandson of some mulatto, some octoroon, some quadroon."

You know, when I'm teaching my classes there's something I throw in—macaroon—and only a few people laugh, you know. So then I say to the class, "Macaroon, now, that's a cookie, though, isn't it?" Then I have their attention for another three minutes, you see.

So then you start to look at who you are in terms of identity. Then the search becomes, "Who are these black people here? Where did they come from? Did they come from cultures that were a product of sovereign nations in Africa?" Then you get into words like—Dahomey and Songhai and Oleo come to your attention. You never even heard these words before, because you never had it [in school]. In the black schools in the South, you see, they're not teaching you that; they're teaching you how to get through the cracks. They're saying "That business about Africa back there, that's not going to help you here; that's just going to make white people more angry. So you've got to figure out how to do what they do as well as they do it." These new garments say that you don't have to do any of that. You can be black and you don't have to worry now about talking like white people talk; you don't have to change your speech patterns as long as the grammar is appropriate—formal versus informal, but good English.

ISOARDI: So when you were in school in Texas, you didn't have much black history, then?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. The only time I ever had it—They didn't offer it. Just like I

say right now in Pasadena to my students who over the last twenty-five years went to high school in the city of Pasadena, "Did you have any black history?" Not an ounce, unless you dug it up yourself. Well, strangely enough, I had in Texas in the eighth grade "Negro History." It wasn't aimed at being militant; what it was aimed at was pride. It wasn't thorough, but it definitely acknowledged the fact that black people were, at that point in some parts of the country, taking a look at themselves as a population that could be proud.

ISOARDI: There were some role models that you were aware of, some people who accomplished things?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. We knew when I was going to school about names like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, we knew about Booker T. Washington. We didn't know about Marcus Garvey, though, and we didn't know a lot about—

ISOARDI: W.E.B. Du Bois.

BRADFORD: —yeah, or Nat Turner. Those names didn't come up. And we didn't know about the [political activities of] people like Paul Robeson, who early on was already stirring up the waters.

ISOARDI: Yeah, in the twenties.

BRADFORD: Yeah. A lot of people we didn't know about, you see, who had done things that had said that black people need to not only get through the cracks but figure out who they are so they can address everything with pride.

For the longest time growing up in the South—and I think most black people

who did have done some thinking about this—there was a long period where we were uncomfortable about just our physical appearance, about our hair and our complexion. This period now purged all of that, if you were willing, about your hair and your complexion.

ISOARDI: Well, all the conking that used to go on, the creams and—

BRADFORD: Yeah. All that went along with black people and their willingness to resign themselves to the white ideal of beauty.

ISOARDI: Yeah, to one aesthetic.

BRADFORD: Duke Ellington and Nat King Cole and those guys were wearing these conked hairdos because that was the American ideal of what was attractive. None of them were going to wear a big bushy 'fro [Afro hair style] in 1949. Then all of a sudden all the big people, Sly and the Family Stone and all those groups, had these great big 'fros, man, that were as big as a bushel basket, because at that point they had figured out now what this was all about, and we were going back.

So that was what I meant when I said that there were some new garments for me—just internally, now—trying to regroup and get rid of those things that I was uncomfortable about: about black speech, how black people looked—In other words, a serious part of our socio-cultural life, just—Black cuisine, if you will. See, now, in 1949, if I had had you to my house for dinner I wasn't going to serve you the things that we like most, thinking “White people don't eat this and they don't like it.” So if I invited you to dinner at my house, we'd have probably had Caesar salad, which is a

joke amongst black people in the South—like white people eat things like Caesar salad that we don't. But when you figured what that was about, all that was part of the propaganda machine from whites towards blacks, trying to keep them contained.

ISOARDI: So how does all this affect you? Does it change the things you do in any way?

BRADFORD: No, I don't suppose it does, other than trying to educate myself and at every opportunity that arises now where the question of black identity [comes up] to not pass up any opportunity to spout my new identity wherever I'm working, which meant where I was teaching at Pomona College or teaching at Pasadena City College, every opportunity that arose for me now to pass on what I had discovered and had sort of worked out in my own head, to pass it on.

In other words, I was no longer *resigned*, which is a word—I don't know who used that; I didn't invent that in this context either, but it's a great word to describe black people in America up to the late fifties. [I was no longer] *resigned* that this thing is white owned and controlled. They are going to let things change here; every few years white people are going to say “Okay, we'll give you this.”

We were looking at things like [President] Harry [S] Truman and integrating the military. See, I don't think Harry Truman integrated the military because he thought black people were going to run around the country with guns if he didn't. At the end of the [Second World] War the evidence was that these black people in the war had all done their part. We were coming to a time here now where the black

population was growing, more and more black people are going to West Point [the United States Military Academy], more and more black people are going to the [United States] Naval Academy, you've got these black people coming in— This is an issue you've got to address. Now, he could have ignored it. I mean, we could have gone on with a segregated military for another twenty-five years, and black people in the military were not going to do anything about it themselves. They were going to keep going on being segregated. But Harry Truman read the writing on the wall, or somebody in his cabinet did, you see what I'm saying?

Black people look at that and say, "Well, there's another piecemeal example of what white people are going to do." Then pretty soon somebody is going to say "Okay, we are going to have some black people here, and there is going to be a black this." That could have gone on for a long time until black people all of a sudden, like here in Los Angeles— But you can see that as a product of that big explosion in Los Angeles [the Watts riots of 1965] and all of that, we didn't get a lot out of it, did we? To look back on it now, in the wake of all of that— I'm not saying it was a mistake, because there was no way to stop it.

ISOARDI: Yeah. It's just too bad it wasn't formed, it wasn't shaped. It didn't have enough of a political direction to go further.

BRADFORD: It did not achieve— In fact, the people who were most in the midst of what destruction it caused were often the ones who had no part in it, so to speak, whose houses were burned and all that sort of stuff. I'm saying that at that time there

was no way to stop it. Black people at that point, it was just a big dynamite keg, and that day, bam! I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner, especially in a city like Los Angeles with the way the police were, with the way Los Angeles was in terms of— Just jobs. I think I told this story already, about me coming here looking for a job as a teacher from Texas and being turned away just on this sort of sin of omission. You know?

ISOARDI: Truly. At times I've often thought too that the only reason that some of the changes came about, like changes in the military in the postwar period, is because the United States was worried about its image abroad. Here it's supposed to be for democracy and freedom, and other countries were starting to point to the racial situation in this country, and I think they just wanted to clean up their act in some way.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Paul Robeson already got in trouble for that, going around the world talking about it, saying that America is a wonderful land in some respects, but there is a serious problem between whites and blacks in America. That's when they took his passport, you know?

ISOARDI: He went to the Soviet Union and he did what Muhammad Ali did twenty years later when Muhammad Ali said "No Viet Cong ever called me nigger." Paul Robeson said the same thing when he went to the Soviet Union.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: They didn't like that.

BRADFORD: Oh, no. They did what they could to pay him back, didn't they?

Muhammad Ali— Of course, they had to swallow all that later, but to show you to what extent they were concerned, here they go to this guy and they take his boxing championship in addition to his conviction for refusal to be drafted in the army based on his position as a Muslim. All of that was part of one thing, though, wasn't it? In fact, during the time that it was happening, we were saying, "Well, why don't you do something to him that has something to do with the law rather than with boxing?" But he didn't break any law, did he? "Why don't you go let the air out of his tires too or something?" Surely you wouldn't look at boxing as the clean thing that you take from him, as dirty as it's been all these years. That's like saying "We will take one of your automatics." You know what I mean? Or "We'll take your Mafia connection" or something like that.

ISOARDI: Did you ever see that documentary that was done on the Ali-[George] Foreman fight in Zaire, *When We Were Kings*?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: Robeson, did you ever meet Robeson or have a chance to hear him speak?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I saw him speak and sing, but I never got close enough to actually meet him. On several occasions, once in New York, once in Washington [D.C.]— I don't know what it was. What was I doing there?

ISOARDI: In New York— Was it '61, when you were back there with Ornette?

BRADFORD: I'm trying to remember. These dates— Let me get this straight now. He was at some sort of thing— Where was this? You know, there's a building in

Washington, strange architecturally, where you—now, think of this—a building that is seven or eight stories high but inside is open, and you can look all the way up—

ISOARDI: All the way up eight stories?

BRADFORD: All the way up. Now, on either side there are railings and offices and floors, but there is a big center that goes right up through it. I think it's called the Pension Building, but it doesn't have anything to do with pensions as in retirement money. It seems to me that's the name of the building. It was just after a point that he had been accused of something or other, and I remember a guy who was asking him—it was sort of a forum—"Well, why this or why that and did you do this," and I remember him saying, "I most certainly did." I can remember him saying those words. So they are saying, "When you were out of the country you were talking about things that were happening to black people here in this country?" And he said—He was a big man, you know, huge, and he was talking to this guy, and he was sort of looking down on this little guy with the microphone, and he said, "I most certainly did, and I shall continue to do so." He had this unbelievable voice, man.

ISOARDI: Incredible.

BRADFORD: Without the microphone. I mean, just—Bass baritone I guess you'd call it. Here was a guy, you'd look at him and you'd think, "Now, there is a guy I'd like to be my uncle or grandpa, man."

I had the same feeling, although I had spent a little more time with him, with William Warfield. William Warfield never was political like him, at least not high-

profile.

ISOARDI: Great singer.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I happened to be in the same hotel with him about ten years ago in New York, and we were at the desk checking out, and we have a mutual friend. When I mentioned this person's name he collared me, took me to breakfast, and we went on and on and on. He was kind of like a Robeson too, except that he was never a high-profile figure in terms of going out of the country and having his passport taken and all that kind of stuff. But he was one of these people who was of a generation that was supposed to not be belligerent, but he was, and a terrific singer too.

ISOARDI: Oh, great voice. A great voice.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

MAY 28, 2000

ISOARDI: The changes you go through and the way you think in the late sixties, early seventies, does this affect the music at all? Because I know one of the albums you do for Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label is *Self-Determination Music*, which suggests a certain level of political consciousness.

BRADFORD: What that meant for us, of course— Even though I think Bob Thiele is the guy that sort of pushed that title of that record. I don't know whether he felt tied to what we were doing or thought that would be catchy, but it was Bob Thiele who put that title on there.

In our conversations with him, I think, Bob— In fact, I remember once we were in Hollywood after we did that record, and we were sitting in one of those little restaurants like Bob's Big Boy or a copy of Bob's Big Boy, and we were talking about what— "What are you doing to push the record and everything?" He said, "Well, I'm doing what I do for most of them." John said, "Well, we want this thing to go, man. We are getting all these reviews on the first record in Japan, and it's big and everything." So Bob Thiele is getting annoyed. And I said, "Well, Bob, we're not asking you to change our diaper." I remember saying that to him. I said, "What we want you to do now is— If you've recorded us, we don't want the record to just sit there and we get nothing out of it. We want to get some tours and everything." He

said, "Well, I'm going to tell you the truth: you're going to have to move to New York." I think I said this before.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: He said, "You're not going to get anything done here in Los Angeles. You're going to have to come to New York if you want to make more records, go to Europe on these things and be on these festivals and all. You might as well forget it staying here. The only reason I'm out here now is that this is a real special trip. I don't come out here to record people." But he had gotten a lot of people telling him that something hot was happening in Los Angeles.

That picture on *Self-Determination*— At first it looks like a beach scene, but then you can see it's a place where the water doesn't circulate. It's like a cesspool almost if you look at it carefully. There is all kinds of scum and stuff on the top, which we didn't catch at first, either. Now, I'm remembering that was Bob Thiele's idea for the photo cover and [the title] *Self-Determination*.

But we were saying to him, "We are trying to do our own music here. We are not recording standards; we're trying to make our own—" We were giving him our thing of the day, and I think he was getting that, because he at that point was still recording R and B people and all kinds of stuff. So we said to him once— He had just sent for some guy in the South to come and record, sent him the plane or train fare and the money to get there and all that, and he said, "I just sent so and so down there in Texas the money to get here. He spent all the money and didn't even come." So John

said, "You realize you're not talking to people like that now, don't you, those guys like that?" Bob Thiele said, "I'm gettin' it." John said, "We both work every day. We are both teachers. We don't live like that. That's not us. We are not denying this as our kinsman and all that stuff, but we are not part of that group, and you don't have to play games with us or try to second guess us sending us a nonrefundable Greyhound bus ticket so that we can't— You don't have to do that. That's not who we are." He said, "More and more as I talk to you guys I can see where this is coming from, and you're going to have to come to New York if you want to do what you want to do."

So that self-determination, I think, was a part of his take on us, because we both said we are not going to come to New York. I told him, "I've lived there already, and I'm satisfied that I don't want to take my family there and have them grow up there. We are going to try to make it here." He said, "I'm just telling you my thing on it. If you want to get these records pushed more, get more jobs, go to more festivals, make more records, you're going to have to come to New York." But John and I were determined not to break up our family thing to do it.

ISOARDI: Did you mind the title?

BRADFORD: Actually I didn't, because that was a buzzword at the time.

ISOARDI: Yeah, very much so.

BRADFORD: I didn't mind the title at all. The first [Flying Dutchman] record, which was *Flight for Four*, that was our little thingy. The next one, though, that was his idea. In fact, we didn't know what the cover was going to look like or what the title was

going to be on the second one. I can't remember how he got away without discussing it with us, because we were determined to look at all the photos and just be in charge of everything. We were definitely charged to determine ourselves. I remember that being his thing.

I have no complaints about Bob Thiele. There were lots of things being said. I think Stanley Crouch called him "Bob Steal" at one point, saying that people weren't getting all the money that they were supposed to be getting. But whatever you can say about him, he wasn't any worse than any of the other record people in New York. The fact that he had come out here and recorded us meant that he was better than any of the rest of them as far as I was concerned. I realized that after that record date—and he paid us whatever advance we were going to get; I think we got about \$2,500 each on that—that we were never going to get another nickel. Which we didn't, not ever.

ISOARDI: The book business is just like that now, as I've found out. Sometimes you get an advance, and then that's going to be it.

BRADFORD: That's it. In fact, what you would spend trying to check their records to see if they are cheating you would offset whatever it was you were going to get if you found anything to be true. That's why the European record labels, the small ones that you deal with, you don't get any kind of pay after the initial advance.

And I'm making sure this is on the record—I did a record for this hatART [record label], that one at the club [Catalina Bar and Grill] there, and John and I and Don Preston, Andrew Cyrille, and Richard Davis each got I think a \$1,500 advance on

that. Now, whether it has made another nickel or not is irrelevant in that I have not heard one letter of communication, any statement, any kind of fiscal on that. I have not heard a word from this guy [Werner X. Uehlinger] since.

ISOARDI: And that was when? You recorded that '87, '88?

BRADFORD: Right. John has been dead nine years. I have not gotten one letter or anything of communication from this guy at hatART since.

ISOARDI: I don't know if it is still in print now, but it was in print a long time.

BRADFORD: Right. Even to say, "Well, I haven't gotten my advance back yet, so you don't get any money, so it's zero"—nothing from this guy. Now, he knows that I'm not going to spend the money to hire a lawyer in Switzerland to run him around. All I can do is hope to ever see him again one day and sick my Rottweiler on him.

ISOARDI: Well, I know some people, too— Every once in a while a Japanese import will show up at Poo-Bah [Record Shop] or a local record store, and they didn't know a thing about it, and here somebody is putting this stuff out in Japan.

BRADFORD: And the artist doesn't know anything about it. Not a nickel.

ISOARDI: No, clueless.

BRADFORD: You see, early on, when you're new to this business, you want to record so badly and you're still so young in the business that you take any opportunity to record. You just want to get your stuff out there. Then later on you think back, "Hey, man, I should have made a harder deal and taken care of that."

ISOARDI: It's a tough call.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it is. You're young, and the first opportunity to make a record with a record company that has a name, you take it no matter what they do.

ISOARDI: You want your name out there.

BRADFORD: Yeah, you want to get out there. You want documentation of what you're doing.

ISOARDI: So would you say that your music is pretty unchanged? I mean, you're sort of focused on what your music is and what you're about, and the changes you go through thinking-wise in the late sixties and early seventies don't change your music that much, do they?

BRADFORD: No, it doesn't actually change the music in terms of the nuts and bolts of the music. No, absolutely not. All it does is make you freer to do what it is that you want to do to that extent, meaning it now keeps you from trying to make your music acceptable to somebody. It keeps you from joining some bandwagon that you don't want to join.

ISOARDI: That's important.

BRADFORD: Yeah. That doesn't give you any new notes, but it keeps you from editing what you do in a way that you thought wouldn't be appropriate or anything like that. If you want to name a tune "Jitterbug in a Pool of Blood" you go ahead. You know what I mean? You don't change that to "Waltzing in Plasma."

ISOARDI: Your trips to Europe—I think last time we talked about how you got over there for the first time, because one of your colleagues had told you about—

BRADFORD: Teachers' charter.

ISOARDI: —the teachers' charter, etc. But then you go back a couple of times, and eventually you play in Paris.

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact—

ISOARDI: I think you even have a live record come out of that.

BRADFORD: The first trip seems to be '71, and then I think I went back in the summer of '72. But it was either '72 or '73—

ISOARDI: How do you get back over there? Do you have gigs lined up?

BRADFORD: No. Just get another one of those cheap flights. But I have friends over there now, and I'm communicating with them.

ISOARDI: That you made on the first trip?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that I made on the first trip, that say, "We will have some gigs when you get here. It won't pay a lot, but there will be some gigs."

ISOARDI: Is there any problem working while you're over there with immigration and stuff like that?

BRADFORD: No, not at first. You see, it has gotten a lot worse since then, but in those days you could go in just on a—

ISOARDI: Tourist visa?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, you didn't even have to have a visa. The first time I went to London I stayed two weeks, and I didn't even have a visa for two weeks. I just walked in. They said, "What are you going to be?" I said, "I'm just a tourist." I

remember once I went in, and I had my trumpet under my arm, and the guy said, "What's the horn for?" So I said, "I'm a musician. I have to always keep in practice." So he said, "Okay, you go on."

But now, if you are going to be in town for several months, something like that— Even though I did it for several months at a time with no visa, as the years went by it finally got so if you came in and you were playing some high-profile jobs, the people who got them there have already gotten you a work permit, and when you get to the airport you can say, "Check this number and I've already got a work permit waiting." And then after going through the passport checking booth you go to another place where they can verify that that work permit is there for you. That got worse, but—

ISOARDI: I know for a while the British musicians union was pretty tough.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, if you were going over as an American in those days working, if you were a big star you'd get nailed right away, but I was relatively unknown except in the inner circles. The people at Ronnie Scott's— See, I wasn't going to be playing at Ronnie Scott's; I was going to be playing at these little funky places where— The new "free" music, you see, was just taking off there. We were playing at these little places where at the end of the night we made twenty-five bucks apiece. So the union wasn't worried about anything like that.

Then that same group of guys—myself, John Stevens, the British drummer, and Trevor Watts—we got this American bass player who lived in Paris [Kent Carter].

Then we got a big van about the British equivalent of a Dodge or Chevy van; over there it's [a] Bedford [van]. We just got the ferry over to Amsterdam, went over to Holland from England, and we took that van and we toured all around in Holland, France, and Belgium. We made these little mickey-mouse gigs. We made our way to Paris—this is in '73—and were booked in this club called Le Chat qui Pêche, and that's where I made that first—

ISOARDI: That's where you did *Love's Dream*.

BRADFORD: —*Love's Dream*. We were there for a week, and this guy had one of these good little portable recorders that were big in those days, one of those Revox or Stella Vox that were big in those days, or Wollensak. It's like saying I have a Sony or whatever today. Anyway, he recorded every night for six nights, and then we sat down and we picked the best stuff, and we put that record out. Well, that was the beginning of his record label, Emanem [Records].

ISOARDI: That's how that label started?

BRADFORD: Yeah. This is Martin Davidson. Martin and his wife Mandy [Madelaine Davidson], they were Emanem. Now, I'm not sure that this was the actual first record on his label—it may have been—but he has done lots of stuff since with British people on his record label, some Steve Lacy, some Anthony Braxton. Those guys, when they would come to town they stayed at his house, and so did I. He had this huge place in Catford and at one point in Shepherd's Bush, too; all this is London or outside London.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I know Shepherd's Bush.

BRADFORD: And he's back in the record business now. In fact, John and I have two duo CDs on the market now that—

ISOARDI: Oh, the two *Tandem* CDs.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right, that Emanem released. He went to Australia for eight or nine years, because he is a big computer programmer. That's his main livelihood.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's how he has the money, too.

BRADFORD: He stopped fooling with records for a while, and then he started Emanem back up again. He's back in England now. We communicate periodically. Martin Davidson is his name.

ISOARDI: You mentioned at one point that you were teaching at Pomona yourself. When did you leave the grammar school [Bassett Elementary School] you were at?

BRADFORD: I left the grammar school in '68 or '69 and started teaching at Cal[ifornia] State [University], Dominguez Hills.

ISOARDI: Boy, that's a change.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Stanley Crouch hooked me up with that thing at Cal State Dominguez Hills. At first I was just teaching one class there. You know, that's out at about 190th [Street]—

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's a long ways from—

BRADFORD: Yeah. While still teaching sixth grade I used to leave La Puente in the afternoon, and school is out for sixth graders at about 2:15. I'd jump on the freeway,

have to go straight through midtown Los Angeles in that traffic, and make my way to 190th for a four o'clock class.

ISOARDI: This wasn't every night. This was one day a week?

BRADFORD: Two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday. Then they added more classes there, and I finally resigned the elementary school job and was teaching at Cal State Dominguez Hills.

ISOARDI: Full-time?

BRADFORD: Not full-time, something like three-quarter, maybe. Still living in the Pasadena area now, though.

ISOARDI: You moved to Pasadena?

BRADFORD: We moved to Altadena, actually, while I was still teaching in La Puente. My first wife [Melba Joyce Moore] had friends who had lived here, and we also had friends in Pomona who had moved to Altadena. I had never heard of Altadena, and neither had she, but some friends of ours who lived near us in Pomona, one dentist friend and one other friend who lived right across the street, had found places here in Altadena, and they told us what a wonderful little community it was, right there near Pasadena and an unincorporated city, real quiet, no problems of the big city. So we had been coming over here looking for houses, and we finally found one.

I'm still in La Puente teaching, and we move to Altadena. Now I'm driving back out to La Puente, still teaching, and then in the afternoons on Tuesday and Thursday driving to—of course, you're young then, and it seems like it's okay—Cal

State Dominguez Hills.

ISOARDI: Two days a week. This is a lot of driving.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Then I finally left the job in La Puente.

ISOARDI: When was that?

BRADFORD: That must have been '69, I guess, or '70, right in there.

It was also the beginning of the breakup of this marriage. By 1970 this marriage is broken up, and my wife and the three kids—the two boys [Keith and Karl Bradford] and the daughter [Carmen Bradford]—are living in the house there in Altadena, and I move out. I'm still in the Pasadena area, but we're separated, and, of course, the divorce proceedings are in progress. I move around to different places in the area, from one apartment to the next, trying to find a better apartment, something more centrally located so that I can see the kids periodically and still not be so far away from where I'm working.

ISOARDI: Was the separation your decision?

BRADFORD: No, it wasn't, actually. It was my first wife's idea to sue me for divorce. What happened was— You know how that works: you have a house with the two of you and you make it unpleasant until somebody has to move out. I think one of us was finally going to move out or one of us was going to really do something dreadful. So I moved out.

But when you move out, now, that's the act itself that is the basis for the divorce in legal terms. It was the right thing, because I think if I had stayed one of us

would have gotten really hurt. I've got a short fuse and so does she, so I moved out.

ISOARDI: You just became incompatible?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Did she want your life to go in a different direction?

BRADFORD: Well, I think she wanted my life—like I had said earlier on—to just economically go up faster than it was going up. I think that was the basis of it. It certainly wasn't about me girl chasing or her boy chasing.

ISOARDI: Well, as a teacher you are not going to go skyrocketing economically.

BRADFORD: It seems to me that was a given when I was going to college, but it wasn't working fast enough apparently. And I don't want to use this book to beat her over the head and everything. In the years that have passed I think we both would agree we should have done it. We should have divorced much sooner, in fact. She has her life now. Since then she's a successful singer. My life since then you know. The kids were hurt by it, but the boys were already fourteen, and my daughter was about twelve. There is obviously some damage. You can't say there isn't—

ISOARDI: Sure, always. But it's not like they were five or six.

BRADFORD: But it would have been even worse if I had stayed. That's worse. In my mind a single, kind of in-control parent is better than two who fight all the time.

ISOARDI: Definitely.

BRADFORD: I mean, I'm talking about seriously fight all the time, not a day passes that there is not a fight. That's bad. That really poisons the kids.

ISOARDI: How long are you down at Cal State Dominguez, then?

BRADFORD: I stayed at Dominguez until about '72, '73, right in there. Then a student of mine whose mother is a faculty member at Pasadena City College takes my class and tells her mother about it, and her mother says, "Get him to come by here quickly. We need somebody here on campus teaching black studies related to music badly, because the people we've got now are from the old school. They are still teaching Marian Anderson."

ISOARDI: In '72, '73?

BRADFORD: Yeah. No disrespect to Marian Anderson—

ISOARDI: Oh, no, of course not, but there is a lot going on.

BRADFORD: But they were not dealing with the movement, now. So I came there and talked to the guy, and he hired me the same day I walked in. He said, "When do you want to start?"

At first I was teaching one class here in Pasadena and still one out at Dominguez Hills. Then they added a class here at Pasadena, and I started to drop off, and finally by 1972, '73 I stopped going to Cal State Dominguez Hills and started going to Pasadena City College, where I was about half-time—and still gigging around town.

ISOARDI: What courses are you teaching down at Cal State Dominguez Hills?

BRADFORD: I taught history of jazz, improvisation techniques, and then led whatever little jazz ensemble that we had.

ISOARDI: What about Pasadena, then?

BRADFORD: Pretty much the same thing. I started teaching African American music history—that was the first course—then after that added improvisation techniques, and then finally I directed one of the several jazz bands. Before I knew it I was teaching 75 percent of a load, and the next thing I knew it was full-time. They started just adding courses.

ISOARDI: It went that well.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Of course, then that found me ten minutes from work, living here in Pasadena.

ISOARDI: What about the hookup with Pomona, then? How does that happen?
Because you are out of the area.

BRADFORD: Well, see, Pomona, now, all of a sudden—I'm at Pasadena City College, right? Then Stanley and David Murray, who is playing in some bands there on campus—not in Stanley's band at this point, not at first anyway—they want somebody at Pomona College to direct a jazz band. They've got a jazz band, but it is student run at Pomona.

ISOARDI: And the students want somebody?

BRADFORD: The students want somebody. This is the period. Now, David and a couple of other black kids from band say “We can get Bobby Bradford to come here,” blah blah blah. So I come out there and talk to the chairman of the music department.

ISOARDI: How did those kids know about you?

BRADFORD: You mean David?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: David was there looking at me and Stanley and Arthur Blythe and all these guys in this Black Music Infinity, but he was just an onlooker at this point.

David was only about eighteen and had just come there as a freshman from Oakland. In fact, I kid him sometimes now, because the first time I saw him he had on his little dashiki, and he was coming around watching Stanley's rehearsals. But everybody knew David had great promise, man, because he had a lot of talent, terrific talent. But in that period David was still playing— Whatever the music was at that time. You couldn't exactly call it R and B anymore, but David was playing the pop music of the day, pop black music. He wasn't really into jazz as such. It was being there at Pomona College that turned him onto jazz via Stanley Crouch and the rest of us playing there.

ISOARDI: That's how you get pulled into Pomona, then?

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: But how do you hook up with Stanley out there before that?

BRADFORD: How I met Stanley originally?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Stanley used to come to our rehearsals, John's and mine, there on 103rd [Street] and Grandee [Avenue]. Stanley used to come and sit through our rehearsals. During that period Stanley was some kind of social worker for the county of Los Angeles, as I remember, but already writing poetry.

ISOARDI: Is he drumming much then?

BRADFORD: He may have been, I don't know. Because I remember him saying that the first set of beat-up drums he got, Denardo [Coleman], Ornette's son, gave them to him. So I don't know if he was playing drums there in '69 or not. At least I didn't hear him. He never played with us. But he would sit around watching Bruz Freeman play drums with us and talk. He sort of presented himself. He looked much like he looked on that—

ISOARDI: On the cover of that album?

BRADFORD: —the cover of that album with Bob Thiele [*Ain't No Ambulances for No Nigguhs Tonight*].

ISOARDI: So then, when he started this thing going out in Pomona—

BRADFORD: He just pulled the rest of us in to come out there and play with him in this Black Music Infinity. Tyler— That's the baritone saxophone player's name, Charles Tyler.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: That's the guy who played out there for a hot minute with us, who finally moved to Paris and married a Frenchwoman and died there four or five years ago.

ISOARDI: Charles Tyler. Wasn't he in New York in the early sixties?

BRADFORD: Yes.

ISOARDI: He did some of those—

BRADFORD: *Wildflowers* [New York “loft jazz” recording compilations], I think. He may even be on some of those.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I think even before then with that ESP [Disk] label. Some of that early stuff in the sixties, I think he was on. A couple of albums as leader, I think.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: I think he played alto too, didn't he?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he did. He's on that big tape that we did with Stanley that Stanley has been trying to sell for years.

ISOARDI: I hope he has some success. It would be nice to hear that.

BRADFORD: I don't know exactly when it was he moved to France, but I think he spent the last ten years of his life over there. In fact, he is buried in France. The woman he was married to buried him in her family's cemetery.

ISOARDI: So you start teaching at Pomona, then, by the mid-seventies.

BRADFORD: Right. Just one class, about '74.

ISOARDI: Just the jazz band?

BRADFORD: Yeah, just the jazz band. Then after a couple of semesters of that I'm invited to teach the history of jazz.

ISOARDI: At Pomona also? In addition to the other class?

BRADFORD: In addition to the band. That's Tuesday and Thursday in the late afternoon, which didn't interfere with anything else I was doing at Pasadena City College. I would go out there at like four o'clock in the afternoon on Tuesday and

Thursday.

ISOARDI: So by the mid-seventies you're set for—what?—the last twenty-five years?

BRADFORD: Right, exactly.

ISOARDI: And that's been your routine.

BRADFORD: That's been my routine for the last twenty-five years: Pasadena City College, Pomona College, Tuesdays and Thursdays. With that in mind, finding ways to have my classes covered at Pasadena City College when I would leave and go out of town.

John and I would go to Europe, see, because John, now— After my first year in England I came back and told John what I saw as a possibility for us going over there and playing, not monetarily but to make records and kind of get a name for ourselves. John came over I think in '74.

ISOARDI: Oh, you both went over—

BRADFORD: We went together. John decided to go by himself. I gave him Martin Davidson's name and address, and they welcomed him and gave him a place to stay while he was in England. He used to say to me, "Bob, how did you manage to go over here and meet these people and endear yourself to them like this and then send me off to them and they welcome me and take me into their home and all this stuff?" I said, "It beats the hell out of me, John, but just go ahead and take it." He stayed with them while he was in England.

He said that he just took his horn with him and went to the big jazz festivals as

a tourist and was just going around trying to see if he could find some things to do, and in a couple of places he got to sit in with some guys who were already playing there. He was still playing saxophone, it seems to me, the first summer he went over there, but by '74 he had put all of those saxophones down and was focused on the clarinet.

ISOARDI: You mentioned that earlier. Why the clarinet?

BRADFORD: Well, that was his first instrument. He originally was a clarinet player. He wasn't a saxophone player from the beginning.

ISOARDI: So he felt more comfortable with that sound?

BRADFORD: Well, I'm not so sure. I think he decided at that point that he needed to find— For an identity for himself, he needed to find an instrument that was going to be his voice and which separated him from everybody else. In the same way I think of Steve Lacy, who was a tenor player and decided to focus just on the soprano. Some people who doubled on certain instruments, like the flute was a double, would decide to just make that their instrument.

ISOARDI: Well, he succeeded.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He really found a place for himself on the clarinet, man, that nobody else—

ISOARDI: The things he would do, the sounds he could get out of that.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He just decided, I think, to take the clarinet and "I'm just going to make music of whatever this little devilish thing wants to do." If it likes to

squeak, well, we'll just find out how much it can squeak. We'll make it squeak and see if we can make the squeaking behave.

ISOARDI: Wasn't it in the seventies that you guys also do a film? Or you are filmed?

BRADFORD: Yeah. I don't even remember the dates for that film, but this guy who was a student filmmaker came to us and said—

ISOARDI: A student at Pasadena?

BRADFORD: No, no, he was at UCLA, as I remember. There were two of them.

One of them was named Peter Bull, and the other guy's name I can't remember right now. But we filmed it at UCLA. At first it was just going to be a student film, and there was not going to be any commercial aspect to it at all.

ISOARDI: You mean something done to meet a course requirement or something like that?

BRADFORD: Something like that. But it wasn't intended to be a commercial film. Then later on he decided to go commercial with it. He approached us about it, and we agreed to some sort of contract, that if he could sell the film we would get a certain portion of it. Nothing happened.

ISOARDI: Nothing happened?

BRADFORD: I mean, there's no money, ever. We never got any money out of it.

ISOARDI: But that thing's been out.

BRADFORD: Yeah, for a long time. Then all of a sudden when videos— Videos weren't really big then; in fact, I don't think I knew about a video. But when videos

popped up, they're on the video market, and we don't know anything about it. The guy gets pissed off because I get pissed off and say, "Well, man, you didn't even tell us that you put this thing on video. You just go ahead and do that and we are not even involved." He said, "Well, I haven't made any money," etc. I said, "Yeah, but I'm not even talking about that. We're just talking about you telling us that the thing is now marketed on video." I don't think we have spoken more than two words since then. Apparently, the last time we got a letter from them the thing had not recouped the money they had invested in making it—you know, the regular story.

ISOARDI: But that's such BS, because if this was done as a school project in the first place, it's not— That's absurd.

BRADFORD: It was some kind of project that was definitely not intended to be commercial.

ISOARDI: Initially.

BRADFORD: Yeah, initially. And even if it had or had not, the issue was that if it's going to go commercial, then we will sit down and talk about it, right? So we did talk about it being a commercial film, which a lot of people weren't going to buy, a reel-to-reel film. But then, when it went video—

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's a different ball game.

BRADFORD: —and it's in his video catalogs now. Now, what it has sold I don't know, but—

ISOARDI: It was available for a while, and as recently as a couple of years ago I saw

it in Poo-Bah's.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I've seen it in the catalogs for a long time. I've bought it for both campuses where I work. I'm sure that's the end of it, man, unless I really get to detectiving around on it.

ISOARDI: What did you think of the film? I guess it's called *John Carter and Bobby Bradford: The New Music*.

BRADFORD: I thought it was pretty good. We got a chance to say a couple of things in there, but the playing was really good in there, as I remember. We were both talking about how we felt about the— There is one place in there where I'm really spouting off a bunch of stuff.

ISOARDI: I think John sets you up. He defers to you as the historian.

BRADFORD: Yeah, something like that. [with affectionate exasperation] John!

See, at that point I was doing a lot of research and trying to not assume that because you play jazz that you know all about it. If I want to teach the history of jazz I've got to do a lot of reading, now, because you can't just get up there and say, "Well, I play jazz, so I know." I was doing a lot of reading. Any good book on the subject—or bad, by that time—I had read. We'd be talking about jazz, and sometimes the guys would be talking and I would correct people with stuff. They would say, "So and so, so and so," and I would say, "No, no, that's a bunch of bullshit. So-and-so didn't do that; this guy did that. They weren't doing that then." And they would all go [mocked impressed], "Ooh!" I said, "Well, you can say 'ooh' all you want, but you're just

talking a bunch of rumor barbershop shit that you've heard, and I have looked this stuff up." One guy said, "So-and-so was in Carnegie Hall in 1938, and Count Basie and Duke Ellington didn't get to do it." I'd say, "Wait a minute. Yes, they did." You can complain, now, but you've got to be accurate. You can tell when John kind of said [prissily] "The historian," and they're like [prissily] "Well!" Because at that point I was— Anytime somebody would start talking about the history of jazz and who did what and when it was and who was with Duke Ellington when and when Charlie Parker made the first bop record and was there anybody playing bebop, you start just making up stuff. You know how people just start making up shit and taking stuff for granted about when Charlie Parker first went to New York and when the first record was that he made and were there any people playing anything like that.

That's when I started finding out about Buster Smith in the real way rather than just this guy that I knew. I listen to Buster Smith play, and I say, "You don't think Buster Smith is copying Charlie Parker, do you? Because Buster Smith is playing the Southwest saxophone style that Charlie Parker heard and took and made something more of. But it's not like he came up out of the ground, you know?"

Well, anyway, in the video itself I think the playing is good, but I was spouting off about how record people weren't paying us anything, and a woman friend of mine in New York said, "Hmm. There you are with your Tiffany watch talking about how money is not being made." No, no that was Lisa [Tefo Bradford], I think, my wife, who said, "There you are talking in the film about how hard things are, and everybody

can see your big Tiffany watch." [Isoardi laughs] Well, it wasn't a Tiffany watch; it was just one of those big old navigator-looking Seikos. But surely I wasn't impoverished at that point. We were just saying that these people want you to make a record for five hundred dollars, and then they go make a lot of money on it, and you never see another nickel. I was saying that we've got to stop doing it.

But the music on it is very representative of what he and I did, especially in duo setting. We played—I remember once John and I played at the North Sea [Jazz] Festival. We played a duo.

ISOARDI: When was that?

BRADFORD: This was probably about '85. At that point people were still not getting up on stage playing duos with cornet and clarinet, especially for a large audience of six or seven hundred people. But we had gotten our duo thing down to a razor in terms of rehearsals, and it was really good. The guys said, "How do you want to play? You can come as a duo if you want, bring a trio or a quartet or whatever." In fact, I think that's where I finally got the name Mo'tet from. When people would say to me, "What format will you bring?" And I'd say, "Well, whatever kind of -tet you want you can get. The mo' money you have, the mo' 'tet you get." [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Is that where it comes from?

BRADFORD: Yeah. That's where it comes from. Even though I never shared that name with John—People would say, "Well, are you coming as duo or trio or quartet?" I'd say, "Well, what is it you want?" They'd say, "We'd like a quartet or a quintet."

And I'd always say, "Well, the mo' money you got the mo' 'tet you get." That's where that name comes from.

ISOARDI: I've even heard people at one time in the past say, "Bradford's from Detroit. That's where he gets it. It's short for Motor City." [laughs]

BRADFORD: Well, you know, I actually spent a year of my childhood in Detroit, though I don't claim Detroit on any level.

ISOARDI: That's good. I like that.

BRADFORD: One of the teachers out at Pomona College said once, "Bradford, when your band comes here, we don't want people thinking when they see [the name of the group] that they are going to hear some sixteenth-century polyphonic vocal music." I said, "Well, I'll spell this in a way that anybody who's got any brains knows that we are not talking about the lower case motet."

ISOARDI: When you do your history of jazz classes, how do you set those classes up? How do you present the history of the music?

BRADFORD: What I do first of all— In the very introductory part of the course I say that jazz is now a world music that is played well by people all over the world, but we are going to look at it conceptually and historically as a Negro music. That kind of sets the stage so they can see where we're coming from. I go back far enough, now, so that we can clearly be in a class—especially people like students at Pomona, predominately white students, maybe with one [black] student in the class— So right away we have to define for them what we mean by Negro music. So we're not talking

about the word Negro now outside the continental U.S. For them Negro spiritual and gospel don't have a lot of meaning other than words they've heard or they may have known—[sings tunelessly] "Swing low, sweet chariot." But they don't know the difference between the Negro spiritual and gospel or some field holler that's got "Oh, Lord, I'm a-comin' home" in it. So what I do is get them to see what we mean by Negro music in the U.S., and you can see that jazz is clearly a product of all of that; it's got all of that in it, so what that means is what these slaves here created for themselves out of their past and what they assimilated from whites. It's not African anymore, and it's not European either; it's American. That's the fix in the beginning, and then I don't have any problem after that for them to see what it is we are talking about.

We finally come to a point where the word "white" has some meaning in jazz. We come to somebody like Bix Beiderbecke, who's got the talent to play the music, and say that this music can be learned if you have a lot of talent and you're willing to work at it. You can play jazz without being a Negro. You can play jazz without living the Negro experience if you want to, if you've got the talent. You can, which means now it's on its way to becoming an American music and not just an American Negro music. Like blues for the longest remained and still is a Negro music because—The white artists, the few who have managed to conquer it, so to speak, like Janis Joplin maybe, or the guitar player who just died in the plane crash here—

ISOARDI: Oh, Stevie Ray Vaughan.

BRADFORD: —yeah, somebody like that who really went the full route to capture

the music, with the exceptions of people like that, it is still a Negro music. Too black.

ISOARDI: Tied to the experience.

BRADFORD: Yeah, more closely tied to the experience and less accessible. In other words, as jazz uses more and more European elements, and even if they're used in a black way, it is still more accessible to an ear outside the culture. So if you start playing jazz more and more using the piano— See, you can't hide Negro music on the piano. You can't do these subtle things of Negro vocal music on the piano.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I think jazz in the beginning is more instrumental, and that's easily—

BRADFORD: Well, see, what happens is that it's really a vocal music originally, but jazz takes up the instrumental end of it. In other words, all early Negro music is vocal. Even if you are trying to play it on the harmonica or the guitar, it is still a vocal music. The Negro spiritual is a vocal music. Blues is a vocal music conceptually. So when you get to the guitar, you're trying to do what these singers do. See, you can't do that on the piano, so your approximation on the piano is more accessible to somebody from Munich than it would be on that harmonica, because you don't know the subtleties of black speech. You can't say "uh-huh" on the piano, but you can on the harmonica or the guitar. You see?

So I don't have any trouble after setting the stage for what— So people won't think they're coming at them with some racist thing. If I thought that jazz was a music, now, that only black people could play, I would say it, but I don't.

ISOARDI: Are you familiar with this book that came out about a year and a half ago by Richard Sudhalter—

BRADFORD: No.

ISOARDI: —called *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945?*

BRADFORD: I've seen that book.

ISOARDI: It's a massive book. It's just under a thousand pages.

BRADFORD: I haven't read it, though.

ISOARDI: I just skimmed a little bit of it. It's very weird. On the one hand, he goes out of his way to show that there have been a lot of white jazz musicians. Who could dispute that?

BRADFORD: And good ones.

ISOARDI: Yeah, no question. On the other hand, he assumes that because there were whites playing jazz music early on, therefore jazz really is a multicultural art form and that it wasn't initially black.

BRADFORD: Just because white people were there playing it.

ISOARDI: Yeah. He's not a sociologist or a historian. He doesn't look at the social context, nothing. He just looks at the fact that—I just skimmed this part of it, and it sort of put me off reading the whole thing. He just says, it seems to me, that because he can name all these people who were playing the music early on, therefore the music is a creation of everybody.

BRADFORD: But he has no way of going back to the germ, does he? Just the idea—

ISOARDI: He doesn't have any sense of that.

BRADFORD: He doesn't even know what the word "swing" means, probably.

ISOARDI: Probably.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

MAY 28, 2000

ISOARDI: Teaching jazz. Let me ask you a little bit more about that.

BRADFORD: Now, you're talking about instrumentally to performers?

ISOARDI: Well, actually, both: teaching the history of it and teaching performance.

What are your reflections on a jazz musician as teacher?

BRADFORD: The first thing—and a lot of people ask me—I like teaching. When I went off to college in 1952 to this little black college in Austin, Texas, Sam Houston [College], the only program offered to a student in a little college like that was music ed[ucation]. They didn't offer a performance degree or composition or theory. You were just going to graduate with a degree and then hopefully get a job as a band director in some little town. Music ed. So my training is music ed. I come at it from the educator's point of view. And I like it. I like teaching students instrumental techniques. I like teaching the history of jazz.

Some people have said that I'm a scholar, but I don't think of myself as a scholar—people who consistently, now, are doing research and writing papers about various topics. I have done a lot of research. A couple of summers I have gotten National Endowment [for the Arts], NEA, grants to do jazz research, but I only did it to make my teaching stronger. A scholar, I think, just does stuff for the sake of having the information or to write books or write papers. I want to share the information with

students and classes, and I want to do something where, as best I can, it's accurate and it makes some sense in terms of the development of the music.

When I first started teaching at Pasadena City College, the course was called Afro-American Music. So with that in mind I didn't touch on things like Marian Anderson and William Grant Still, because, you see, that's African American musicians, but their music is traditionally European music. The course was supposed to be about black music, and when you talk about black music we don't talk about classical music. Of course, now, in quotes—I'm saying this on tape—there is no real important movement in America— [tape recorder off]

When I'm teaching— Like the students who want to learn improvisation techniques. I get a kid who maybe plays an instrument pretty well, an intermediate or advanced student, who can't play jazz and who wants to learn how to get up there and really play jazz. I try to clear it up in the beginning that all I'm going to teach you, now, is sort of the nuts and bolts. I can't teach you about who you are and about finding your own sound and all that stuff; that's a problem you're going to have to figure out for yourself. I can teach you what it is you are doing up there—here is the chord progression, what your options are—but I can't teach you how to be somebody in jazz. I can't teach you, now, how to be like a John Coltrane or a Charlie Parker or whatever. That's going to be your problem. You're going to have to find it. But I can teach you the things that we have learned about Charlie Parker and all these people that are accessible, nuts and bolts. “Here's what Charlie Parker does to a minor

seventh chord on these various occasions," blah blah blah, and those are things we work on. But expression, that is something you are going to have to learn for yourself.

ISOARDI: Do kids ever say, "Well, how am I going to get that?"

BRADFORD: Yeah, some do, and I say, "You're going to have to listen to people who play. You're going to have to keep working to find out if you have anything to say. It's definitely not something I can teach you. I can't teach you how to have something to say." If you take a course in creative writing, all they can teach you is the nuts and bolts; they can't teach you how to be creative—in my mind, anyway.

A guy can get up and be a competent jazz player and not be creative. You can be just a journeyman player that knows all the clichés, knows all the stuff that has already been done, and can piece together and fabricate a decent solo, but that's not really creative. In my mind that's competent. There are thousands of people out there who are just competent players. They are just warming over meatloaf that has already been baked by somebody twenty years ago, and they can keep changing the meatloaf, put a little Tabasco [sauce] on it this time and a little Parmesan [cheese] on it another time and put some olives on it, but it is still somebody else's meatloaf.

On one level, some people would say, "I'd be happy being that." We can sit here now and name a dozen good Charlie Parker clones, can't we?

ISOARDI: Yeah, with no trouble.

BRADFORD: Who are not very creative but who do a good job of getting up there and warming over all of Charlie Parker's stuff. I can teach you how to do that.

ISOARDI: You've got bands that make their reputation just writing out and arranging Charlie Parker solos.

BRADFORD: That's right. We can do that. But the creative thing, to find out who you are, you're going to have to find out who you are.

So in the history of jazz classes, I approach it in a way to this extent: I say to the people in the class that you may end this thing not liking jazz. Maybe at this point you are just curious, but one thing I'd like for you to find out in the course is what it is that they are trying to do up there. So you can begin by not trying to measure jazz with a yardstick that you would use measuring a string quartet, a Mozart or Beethoven string quartet. They have two clearly different objectives, and they both have a set of aesthetic standards that say whether that was good or bad. So a good jazz performance says this and a good performance of a classical string quartet says that.

We have these arguments all the time with people who have this constant fight about jazz musicians—and I won't mention any names here now—but 'SC [University of Southern California] just hired, or UCLA, X local black instrumentalist to teach jazz. Some of the guys, especially the white guys, say, "This guy can't teach trombone like Y over here who can teach trombone because he knows about techniques in trombone." I say, "Well, Y over here, you see, plays just sort of competent jazz. This trombone player plays jazz. And he doesn't know how to teach classical trombone or classical saxophone, but he does know how to teach and play jazz in terms of how to get the sounds out of the horn that you need for expression. So now you are going to

have to take one or the other. You can get this guy over here who teaches classical saxophone or trombone, who plays okay jazz but who cannot teach a kid about this side of jazz on the instrument—about tone color and articulation, that sort of stuff—or you can get this guy over here who plays saxophone in the jazz way, who doesn't know how to teach a kid the proper embouchure on the saxophone or the proper whatever, but he does know the other half of jazz. So now you have to choose, or hire both of them."

You see, people don't seem to realize that the bottom line in jazz is not the extent of how well you play the instrument in classical terms but if you play it well enough to say what it is that you are trying to say. That would be like saying to Vincent van Gogh, if you look at his early work, "Man, you can't draw. Unless you can draw like da Vinci and those guys who draw almost like a camera, you might as well quit." If that were true, then van Gogh should have quit way back there. And his answer of course would have been, "I'm a painter. I'm drawing it just to keep me in touch about where to put the paint down, and if I'm in a hurry I don't draw at all. I'm a painter, and I'm trying to say something with this paint and this color. So you are going to stop me now because you say I can't draw like Leonardo da Vinci?"

So you would say to somebody like Louis Armstrong—I don't care what anybody says, Armstrong was a great trumpet player. But, now, you wouldn't expect him to play orchestral music. Or who would want him to? Who would want him to?

But the fight that goes on endlessly about that is for people, now, who have

some problem with jazz on some level other than the purity of the music. I think the problem goes back to who it is that makes it. A lot of people are bothered by just the population of people— If you say in America, now, these people that we connect with the gangs and with the caps on backwards and the hip-hop music and the drugs—even though that's awfully ignorant, to connect black people with drugs in America—when the people who are making the big money on the drugs aren't black who bring them into the country in bushels and baskets. The image that the news and all these things give us of black people, if you see these other sons and daughters of these slaves, now, and then you give them this noble label of jazz music— These are the people who created this in the midst of all that was going on in America, bad and good. Out comes this really wonderful expression, now, that doesn't show any hostility to anybody.

Louis Armstrong's music doesn't say anything about being black in America and white people giving him a bad time, not at least in terms of saying, "You really made us suffer, and I'm going to show you how badly we suffered." Where do you find more joy of being just alive and in the world and being a human being and exchange with others than in Louis Armstrong's music or Duke Ellington's? Or Charlie Parker's? In fact, except for the labels on the music in the sixties about "black warrior" [the movement] and all of that, that music in itself is not about black people saying we really hate having been here and living through slavery and all. It's about us finding ourselves, but it doesn't say, "Oh, we've got to pay all these guys back now that

gave us a bad time." It says "renew," doesn't it? It doesn't say go back and kill anybody. It just says "Be yourself. Find out who you are."

So a lot of people who have the problem, I can see they have not outgrown looking at black people on one level and saying, "How could they have come up in the midst of all this with this rose of a music?" For the people who do have those little residues of guilt about the thing, they have to wrestle with that, because—I certainly do not.

In fact, strangely enough, over the years at Pomona College my history of jazz class—The black population in the Claremont Colleges is small. Out of let's say six thousand students in all of the five colleges, including the graduate school, there are probably never more than 150 to 200 black kids. And I don't have a real good representation of *them* in my history of jazz class. Out of twenty-five students I have never had more than two black kids in the class at any one time. So I'm talking to white kids.

Often at Pasadena City College over the years, in the jazz improvisation classes and the techniques classes the black representation has been rather small. Even though there are lots of talented black kids on campus in music, they tend to be moving towards popular music, where they can see the possibility I suppose of making a good living at it. There have always been black kids there, but just in general the population of black kids overall in the college has been small in a local area where the black population is rather thick. The black community is poorly represented at Pasadena

City College in terms of enrollment.

In my classes now, the big population of students in the jazz bands and in my classes learning improvisation now is Latino and has been now for the last four or five years. I clearly am not somebody saying that I'm not going to teach this music now based on there being not available enough black kids, because we can see what's happening in this country now. We are coming to a point here now, for whatever reason, [where] the [non-African American] people in the L.A. basin playing jazz in terms of just organized bands will outnumber the blacks playing jazz. We have this big thing now about Latin jazz.

ISOARDI: Well, L.A. is going to be a predominately Latino city soon.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Clearly now there is a residual of Latin music. They have Cuban and Puerto Rican, but it's a lot of jazz now. American Negro music has made its way into this Latin music or vice versa, and I see it as a positive. Some people may not. It's a positive musically, and it's a positive culturally, too.

ISOARDI: Well, a lot of it reflects Caribbean influences, and that reflects early African influences.

BRADFORD: It's like saying if you did them with Cuban music now— Although a lot of the students don't seem to realize that Cuba has a serious black population, and when we say Afro-Cuban, that's not some sort of little joke there. We are talking about this part of Cuba that is still a reflection of the slaves.

ISOARDI: Let me ask you, also— Probably one of the biggest changes in jazz

teaching—from the forties or the fifties, maybe, when you were a kid, compared to today—is there are more and more ways of learning at least the building blocks within schools. We've got jazz institutes, most big universities have jazz programs, we've got all this stuff going on now, whereas before you learned maybe some basics in high school, but then it was what you played with friends and in the clubs and just playing out there all the time.

BRAFDORD: You had nothing but the records and hearing the guys in the clubs if you were old enough to go.

ISOARDI: And as soon as you were old enough or could sneak in you'd try to play and get on the bandstand, and you would learn it in front of an audience and with other guys trying to learn it, too.

BRAFDORD: And playing R and B [rhythm and blues] and blues all mixed in with the jazz all the time.

ISOARDI: Now that's disappeared; so much of that is gone now. It's more in the schools.

BRAFDORD: All of that's gone now.

ISOARDI: Is this good or bad? Or how is this going to change the music?

BRAFDORD: Well, see, the kids are not going to get into the clubs at all.

ISOARDI: Yeah. There is no opportunity. Where do they have an opportunity to get up and—?

BRAFDORD: Yeah, and the thing is monitored more closely now about kids playing

in the clubs. What the kids do now is have what they call a garage band, don't they, for the ones who really push it. They say to me all the time, "Mr. Bradford, we're trying to organize this garage band, but we can't get a bass and drum that will come regularly. We all get there and show up, and the drummer doesn't come." I say, "Well, you're just going to have to keep after it, because that's all you've got."

The thing is that they do have the classrooms to kind of guide them.

ISOARDI: Is that the same, though, as before?

BRADFORD: No, it's not the same. First of all, what we can give them in a classroom now, they may spend triple that time trying to get it going around listening in the clubs or listening on the records, because— Well, of course, now you have these tape recorders that will take the solo down an octave and slow it up, which makes everything more accessible. But what it creates, now, is a kid who also wants this all served to him on a platter. Now, this [is what] separates the sheep from the goats. In the old days, only the guys who really wanted to get it were going to get it, because you had to sit down with a 78 [rpm record] and put that needle down and just go back and forth [repeats short rhythmic phrase] over and over until you could hear it and get your horn and copy it. There were no books, none whatsoever. There were no courses in the colleges. It will be I don't know how late before somebody like John Mehegan puts out a piano book, maybe the late fifties or something like that.

They had those little books that piano players could keep in their vest pocket called "Black's Books." Here was a little book, now, that came in about the size of a

checkbook and had an index of popular songs—but no melody, just the chord changes in the book. They would be yellow, blue, black, and grey, I think, but they were called "Black's Books." The piano players kept them. All it would have in a thirty-two bar song—Ordinarily, see, you have eight bars, you repeat the eight bars, and you have a bridge, then you have the eight bars again—what we call AABA [form]. Well, this book would have the A section and a bridge. You were supposed to know that it's AABA. This book would have about 150 songs in it and only about ten pages, maybe. You could see that it was originally manuscript that had been photocopied—not photocopied, but whatever you did in those days to print it—and you bought these books, and you kept them in your vest pocket. They would have the chords to these standards. All of us knew the melodies, but the only guy who really needed to know the chords was the piano player. We were barely learning to play by chords, but the piano player had to have the chords, you see. So you had these "Black's Books," as they were called.

There were no play along records. There were no books that taught you about jazz harmony. There were no classes in the universities. There were no improvisation techniques classes. You bought the records and you copied the records until you could figure out the connection between what the records were playing and what the possibilities were. So if you weren't willing to bite the bullet, you weren't going to get it. Now I have kids who are of mediocre talent who are playing very well because we have served this all to them on a platter.

ISOARDI: Is it too easy?

BRADFORD: In a way it is. It leaves them, now, at a point where when they do have to start really to work, when you get to a point where it's got to be just you, now, a lot of them bail out. I don't have a lot of them now that know what I mean by bite the bullet. Because we have given them everything. I'll say to this kid, "Now, we've given you everything we can give you. Now you are going to have to sit down and figure out how this thing works for you, what you like and don't like. There's no book on this and there is no class of mine." Now they start bailing out, where before you bailed out much earlier, because there was just work, work, work. Now it's like a dinner, we've served them so much. We've shown you what I had to figure out—what the chords were originally to a twelve-bar blues—by ear from a record. Here we start with showing you that right away, and all the variations on it. You get that right away. That's just part of the meal. Or what the chord progressions and the substitute chords [are that] Charlie Parker uses on "I Got Rhythm." We serve you that now. We had to figure all that out. I mean serious, hard work. So now these guys—There is a longer period of being served. Then you come to the point where serving is over. Now you're going to have to go for yourself. Then they start bailing out in droves, because we've been serving the meal.

ISOARDI: Is there a danger that people get too hung up on technique?

BRADFORD: It could be, because that's big now. All these new guys have serious chops.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I remember going to see some guys at Catalina [Bar and Grill] who had just come out of Berklee [School of Music], and I felt like I was in a classroom. They were showing me just how many different things they could do.

BRADFORD: It's scary.

ISOARDI: And I say, "Okay, you could do all of that, but you haven't moved me at all yet." You feel you want to take notes while they're playing.

BRADFORD: You see, now, for a lot of people, they get to that point and they are satisfied with that. Because that is overwhelming at first.

ISOARDI: It can be.

BRADFORD: Sure. You hear a guy playing the horn, he is playing all the right notes. They're not his, but they are all right, and they are all shiny. Then you turn right around to that guy and say, "Just play a simple twelve-bar blues now." [sings] "Going to Kansas City, sorry I can't take you." Well, you're under the microscope now, or a big magnifying glass. Then he is in lots of trouble, because he has nothing to say, and it's more exposed. You say to this guy, "Well, don't play all those notes for me. Just play me a little simple [sings] 'Frankie and Johnny were lovers—' Play that for me."

[Bradford mimics an alarmed gasp and Isoardi laughs] See, "I don't have the ammunition for that. 'Giant Steps,' I do. John Coltrane. I know about twenty-five or thirty hot choruses I can play on 'Giant Steps,' and by the time I finish those you've had enough, and I've had enough, too. And I can leave here with you thinking that I've said something—right?—when in fact I have nothing to say yet."

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: That goes a long way. And all the young cats now, the Young Lions as they are being called, or the Young Turks, they all play the hell of out these horns, man. They play the horn and they scare the daylights out of you. They read. They transpose. But you can say something very simple like "Just play 'Happy Birthday' here for me right now and just kind of embellish that for me. Just you." "Oh, uh, um—" They're in a lot of trouble.

We get to a point now, I suppose, where I think—for me, anyway, most of these people who are trying to do something now—that if you're trying to be creative, and if you don't have anything of your own to say by going forward, then you go back, don't you, and dig up Louis Armstrong or dig up Miles Davis from the sixties and cook him up again, warm him over and put the Tabasco on it.

Or you may want to go outside the culture and mix in some Tibetan throat singers [mimics ritual chanting] and then add to that a ukulele and then add to that a Caribbean street song and add to that an elephant shrieking—you see what I mean?—and call that multicultural if you want and throw that on us. That throws the listener for a loss, at first. It disarms you, and you think "Oh!" and you hear [mimics a disjointed cacophony of tones and sounds], and you finally think, "This is a bunch of bullshit here."

See, well, now, I can't go forward because I don't have any ideas, so I either go back or I go outside, and that's what we're getting, isn't it? Go back and do what Miles

Davis did not as well as he did it. See. Miles Davis wasn't as good a trumpet player as Wynton Marsalis is—I'm just picking these two now—

ISOARDI: In terms of technique and—

BRADFORD: —yeah, just the trumpet. But, see, that's not a real consideration at this point, is it? When you say play "Summertime" on a trumpet for me and say something—

ISOARDI: Yeah, who would you rather hear?

BRADFORD: We don't need to know if you know how to double-tongue now or triple-tongue, do we? Because that's not relevant. Are we saying, now, that complete mastery of the instrument is not important in jazz? In this context, true. But we're saying complete mastery of yourself is. You might say to a guy that Yo-Yo Ma is a complete master of the cello but not doing something outside of what's already written for the cello. Are you a master of yourself, in your own senses? Maybe not. And I don't mean that Yo-Yo is not super bad at what he does. But are you in control of who you are? Maybe I'm not. Maybe I don't know who I am other than through Bach's music. Jazz says, "You can't lean on Louis Armstrong now. Who are you?"

I say to students often, "If a guy comes up and says, 'I'm really good at the piano; I play classical music,' [and] another guy comes up and says, 'I'm a bad motherfucker on piano; I play jazz,' how do we find out? Well, for the classical guy we put a piece of classical music in front him, like a Chopin, some monster piece by Scriabin. "Play that."

ISOARDI: [laughs] I was just thinking Scriabin.

BRADFORD: "Play the Scriabin." "I can't play it." "Well, you're not good." This is what we say to the [classical] piano guy. I say to my students, "What would you say to the jazz guy?" Some guy says, "Put a piece of Duke Ellington music in front of him." I say, "You want him to *read* Duke Ellington?" And then they're getting it. So now I say to you, "Say something to us and tell us who you are with the piano as your instrument. Maybe tomorrow we'll give you a shovel, but today we're giving you the piano. Say something to us now." All of sudden the lights come on, man. It's a different view of the world. Classical music says that we are talking to you about who we are and the world we live in in *these* terms. Jazz says that we are talking to you about who we are and the world we live in in *these* terms.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE

JUNE 5, 2000

ISOARDI: Okay, Bobby, let's begin with going back to talk a little bit about Rudolph [Porter]'s performance space [Rudolph's Fine Arts Center].

BRADFORD: Well, I'm not sure of the exact date on Rudolph's place, but John started that while I was in England.

ISOARDI: John Carter started it?

BRADFORD: Yeah, John Carter started it with Rudolph. When I say started, I mean Rudolph was this bassoonist who had this place, and this place at one point had been a doctor/dental office, a small one.

ISOARDI: Located where?

BRADFORD: Around the Fifties and Adams [Boulevard]. No, not Adams. Where would that be? Crenshaw [Boulevard], maybe. I'm so bad now with all these locations, but somewhere around the Fifties and one of the big streets in the west side, maybe Crenshaw or— But that doesn't sound right.

ISOARDI: Western [Avenue], Normandie [Avenue], Figueroa [Street], Vermont [Avenue]?

BRADFORD: Yeah, somewhere in there. [Crenshaw] Anyway, so Rudolph was thinking of on Sunday to have these concerts there, and he had been trying to do some stuff with his woodwind ensemble, with him playing bassoon and some other

people playing classical music—which is his main thing, playing classical music. So he and John hooked up somehow, and John started a Sunday series there with him and William Jeffrey playing drums and John's second son Stanley [Carter] playing upright bass. When I got back they were going every Sunday starting at about one or two o'clock and going to about five or six or after. I would go there and play, and John brought other people in.

It was during this same period, now, that we were all looking for a place to play, because we didn't have anyplace to keep doing our thing. We weren't interested in making money—of course, we didn't mind making money—but we all wanted a place to play. So I thought, "Well, why don't I do something in Pasadena?" Because I didn't want to get up every Sunday and go all the way over there.

ISOARDI: How long did Rudolph's last?

BRADFORD: Rudolph's place lasted until I guess maybe '75, something like that.

ISOARDI: Maybe four years or so?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And you played regularly there?

BRADFORD: John did. This was called John's trio. I would go and play periodically, but it wasn't us as a quartet.

ISOARDI: Were there people showing up to jam or anything?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Stanley played there once with a group of his, I remember, while he was still playing drums.

ISOARDI: Stanley Crouch?

BRADFORD: Uh-huh. John would bring in other people. It seems to me I remember John brought Oliver Lake there once to do his thing, back in the days when Oliver would be doing solo stuff, ringing bells and reciting poetry and playing the alto [saxophone], too, all together. That was big during that period.

So I found a place here in Pasadena on Mentor [Avenue] right in the area where the Ice House is, in that same block. The rent was only about \$175 a month. It was just a storefront and restroom in the back. I got a guy who was sort of a student of mine [Harold Moore] trying to learn how to play jazz trumpet, who worked for the gas company of all places, and I said, "Let's split the rent on this, man, and we can use it however you want to use it. I'll do what I want and you do what you want, and sometimes we'll let it out on weekends, whatever."

So we got in there, and we painted the ceiling black and built a little riser in there for the bandstand to be up about eight inches off the floor and cleaned up the rest room—you know, fixed it up. So then we started playing on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I would let the place out. On Friday night, if I didn't want to play there some other group might play, because most of the time I played on Sunday. It would be me and John sometimes, sometimes me and Glenn Ferris. On occasion James Newton played there, sometimes Henry Franklin. There was a drummer in town then named John Goldsmith, a black drummer with an unusual name for a black man. You know, this is before Whoopi Goldberg. I had lots of people coming through there. Some

local guys played there, and sometimes I would let it out for rehearsals for people in the area who played pop stuff. I kept that place for about three and a half years, so it went from about '73, '74 to about '78, something like that.

ISOARDI: That's a good run.

BRADFORD: Yeah, and we kept it going. We didn't make any money. Then the guy moved the rent up to about \$300, and we still managed to do it. That was nothing, actually. My friend and I, we split that \$150 each. We made that up mostly, and if we didn't, whatever I paid I wrote off as studio space on my taxes.

When I finally decided to let the place go—I'm not sure; it was a combination of things—I let a guy in the area who was interested in being like a promoter of jazz and all this stuff take it over. I won't mention this guy's name, because I don't want to— But he apparently just didn't get it. He had gotten a couple of grants from somebody to promote concerts in the area—he wasn't a musician, just a producer kind of guy—and I said, "Listen, I'll just transfer all this to you, because if I close up, the way Pasadena is, if you go to this guy to rent, the rent is going up, because that's the way the law works here. So I'll just transfer it, and you just keep paying the \$300, and it would be your thing. Right? We don't have to close me out and then start up a new agreement with the owner, because that means that he is free to raise the rent."

I went by there about two weeks later. The place was boarded up and new lock and everything. So I told the guy, "What the hell happened, man?" He said, "Well, you know, I wrote the landlord a letter and told him that I had applied for a grant and I

was gonna get the money." I said, "Are you fucking crazy, man? You were 'gonna'? 'Gonna'?" I said, "This guy, as soon as you failed to pay the rent, ten days later he'd change the lock, and now we've lost it." And when the guy did open it up again, do you know what the rent was? It was \$700. So we lost that. The Ice House [comedy club] finally took it over and used it as a dressing room or that sort of thing. I won't call this guy's name, but if he ever reads it he'll know what I'm talking about. He's just a royal fuck-up. "I wrote the guy a letter and I told him I had applied." I said, "Oh, man, are you kidding? The perfect location, \$300 a month, which was a joke, and you fucked this up. I can't believe this."

Anyhow, that petered out, and so did the thing with John and Rudolph.

ISOARDI: About the same time? In about '75?

BRADFORD: About the same time. Rudolph's thing petered out in that the guys who owned the place were pressuring Rudolph to move anyhow, because they wanted to sell it and do something else with it, renovate it. Rudolph had been kind of holding on, and they were undecided about what they wanted to do, so in the interim they were letting Rudolph stay there for kind of low rent just to keep the place from being empty and having it get vandalized and all. Finally Rudolph lost his place too, but he knew it was just a matter of time before these people who owned it, these doctors/dentists, were finally going to do something with the building. They just hadn't figured out what to do.

ISOARDI: During the time at your club, do you have a regular band you are working

with or just getting together with?

BRADFORD: Well, more often than not, now, I had John Goldsmith playing drums, sometimes there was a local bass player named Richard—it's kind of a Germanic last name—[Reywald], a Pasadena bass player, good bass player— He was playing with me, sometimes Henry Franklin would pop in, but I didn't have a unit of mine that I could call my band at that time. I'd play with whatever rhythm section I could put together.

ISOARDI: For you it was just a way to stay in front of an audience—

BRADFORD: Keep playing.

ISOARDI: Keep playing, maybe play some of your new stuff?

BRADFORD: Yeah, and to keep having a reason to keep working, because if you have no gigs— I'm not the kind of guy that can sit up without doing anything and just write music and not play. If I didn't have a place to go and play, see, I would have just turned to jelly.

ISOARDI: And there wasn't enough in L.A. then?

BRADFORD: Oh, there was nothing around town where we could do anything regularly. All the clubs, man, when we'd go in there— It was during that same period that John and I went to Warner Brothers way out there in—

ISOARDI: Burbank?

BRADFORD: No, it wasn't Burbank. This was someplace further out, further west. I don't remember where we were. We went and auditioned for the guy and then brought

him tapes and everything, and I remember this guy saying, "Oh, man, that's great stuff, but people ain't ready for that." That was the word.

ISOARDI: This was a club?

BRADFORD: No, this was Warner Brothers Records. We tried to do some records after the Bob Thiele thing had already—

ISOARDI: He was gone.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was gone, and that had petered out. We would go and audition at these clubs and nobody would hire us at these clubs. I'm not bad-mouthing the guys. We went to the Lighthouse guy, what was his name?

ISOARDI: Yeah, Howard Rumsey.

BRADFORD: Howard Rumsey now was at that other place, Concerts by the Sea. We went and auditioned for him, and he said, "Man, I know you guys are good musicians, and that's damn good music you're playing, but nobody is going to come here and hear that."

ISOARDI: But he had some "out" musicians play down there?

BRADFORD: Not at Concerts by the Sea.

ISOARDI: Oh, no?

BRADFORD: Not during that period, man. No. He was still a bop, cool jazz kind of— The farthest thing out he would have there would be something like maybe Pharoah Sanders. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: And I don't even remember Pharoah playing there, but he definitely wasn't going for what we were doing. The next thing, even if he did like what we were doing, he was going to have to get somebody with a big name doing that, like an Ornette Coleman. But he was right. Not enough people were going to come out and hear me and John at Concerts by the Sea to pay the rent and pay us.

ISOARDI: Who was coming to your club? What kind of audiences were you getting?

BRADFORD: Well, here it was local people. Nobody came from L.A. to the Little Big Horn that I can remember, just local people. Some musicians, local—you could say—hipsters, and there was a population of people there who were insiders.

ISOARDI: You must have had a following from school as well.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, a lot of students would come, but there were a lot of people in the area, now, who just liked modern jazz. John and I also during this period at one point had one place here in Pasadena that we used to play with our regular band, with Bruz [Freeman] and Tom Williamson. There was a place here right across from old Green Hotel. There was a liquor store on the corner, and part of that building had a couple of storefronts. One was called the Tower, and it stayed open all the time, kids would sit around, just a hippie kind of thing, and read poetry, and other people were painting—

ISOARDI: Was this on Fair Oaks [Avenue]?

BRADFORD: Yeah, this is on Fair Oaks. You know, there's a building there where you pull up, and you can see up the side of it is a quote from some writer about “pick

up your dinner and your fork," and that building—

ISOARDI: T. E. Lawrence.

BRADFORD: At one point that building was full, [but] after one earthquake part of that building fell off. But at that corner, going further south, there was an Asian-owned liquor store, and right next to it was a room called the Tower. John and I and Bruz used to play there periodically. But it would have rock on some nights, these guys playing that real serious rock of the period, mostly white musicians. Some nights there were people in there doing pottery, young people sitting around. It was kind of one of those little hippie hangouts. There was a super-duper hippie bookstore on the corner of Fair Oaks and Colorado [Boulevard] during that period. It finally went out of business. I can't think of it, but it was on the northeast corner of Colorado and Fair Oaks. They had all this "How to Grow Your Own" and "How to Make a Bomb," all that kind of stuff. It was a great bookstore where all the hip people hung out. There was a following around town for people trying to do what we were doing—I mean not a big one, but whenever we'd play there on Sundays or Saturdays we always had an audience of sixty or seventy people.

ISOARDI: What kind of people were coming? I mean, is there any character to the audience? Or was it a mixed bag of people?

BRADFORD: A mixed bag, I think. You couldn't say there were a lot of young people there, because there definitely weren't a lot of teenagers. The youngest person in the crowd would be twenty-five. There weren't any kids coming.

ISOARDI: How did you get the name the Little Big Horn?

BRADFORD: I just wanted a name. Like I'm fooling around in my head—I'm going to start my own record label now, and my wife [Lisa Tefo Bradford] and I have been going back and forth on names that we think are catchy. But the Little Big Horn—I don't know what made me think of that at the time, but I had always been fascinated by that story about the big battle there and all that business. I thought, "This would be great, man." And you know how you are tripping around, sitting around thinking about names for a club, and you don't want to copy anybody.

ISOARDI: It was a good name for the times, too. People were more politically aware.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Everybody thought, "Oh, man, that's so hip. Where'd you get that?" Everybody knows that story *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*, and go fight at Little Big Horn and all of that. You know how that kind of thing just falls together.

ISOARDI: You mentioned Tom and Bruz. How long do you guys hold together as a quartet?

BRADFORD: We stayed together I guess until about '76, '77, something like that, and we kind of broke up sort of—John had his own special interests, and Bruz and Tom—Tom was more of a technical writer; that's how he made his living. In fact, he lives up in Palmdale in what they call the Skunk Works, one of these major companies that build aircraft, and he does technical writing. I used to kid him all the time and say, "Tom, technical writer, you're the guy that makes out the sheet on how to assemble the toys Christmas Eve. I ought to shoot you." "Put canopy B with bolt C," and there's no

fucking canopy in the package, and there is no bolt, and it doesn't fit on like in the picture. You've got it upside down. We used to laugh about that all the time.
[laughter].

ISOARDI: That's the guy.

BRADFORD: I said, "Tom, I'm gonna shoot you and all the rest of them, man." In fact, he still does that now.

ISOARDI: Did he just stop playing?

BRADFORD: He still plays and still works for aircraft manufacturing in Palmdale. There wasn't any official thing. We just kind of drifted apart.

ISOARDI: Well, in the seventies you don't record much, do you? You do the album in Paris. It comes in '73, I guess, the live album. But then there is—

BRADFORD: In that same period I came back from England— Whatever year it was that Ornette Coleman did *Science Fiction*, I had been in England that summer, too.

ISOARDI: That was your first trip to England, right?

BRADFORD: The first one was just as a teacher or tourist for two weeks. I didn't do any playing that time; I just met some people. Then I went back the following summer, and that must have been '71, '72— Whatever summer it was that we did *Science Fiction* with Ornette, it was the year before that I had gone to England on the tourist trip. When I came back with him that time I had already been over there and made a record [*Bobby Bradford with Spontaneous Music Ensemble.*]. That first record I made with John Stevens, this one here, because that was before the thing in Paris.

ISOARDI: That was before *Love's Dream*.

BRADFORD: This is London, July 9, 1971. This is before *Love's Dream*.

ISOARDI: That's about two years before, I guess.

BRADFORD: Something like that.

ISOARDI: Well, '71, then, you also do the *Science Fiction* sessions.

BRADFORD: I come back home, and about a week after I get back home I get this call from James Jordan, who was Ornette's manager at the time. James Jordan is a guy who was a saxophone player who was also at this little college where I went when Ornette came down. I said that he came to play for Charles Moffett's wedding—Well, James Jordan, who is a cousin of Ornette's, was a baritone saxophone player in the college dance band, too. Now, he was a well-trained musician. He was never a strong jazz player in the sense that we generally mean it, but he was a good section saxophone player. He had a beautiful sound on the baritone. When he got ready to go to New York—I don't think he went to New York to play the saxophone, even though he'd be at Ornette's place rehearsing some of the songs—Ornette invited him to sort of manage him so that he would have somebody else that he could trust. He was a cousin of his. He was doing all the phone calling. When I got home I got a phone call, and he said, "Hey, man, Ornette wants you to come to New York. He is fixing to do this date, man, and it's going to be big. You missed that other one; don't miss this one."

ISOARDI: *Free Jazz*?

BRADFORD: Yeah, *Free Jazz*. So I said "Where is the ticket, man?" And he said

that it would be there in a couple of days. So I turned right back and went to New York. We rehearsed three or four days on all those tunes that are on that, and then we went into a club called Slug's. I can't remember where Slug's was, but it was in kind of a rough neighborhood.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it was in the lower East Village.

BRADFORD: There were burned-out cars right across the street. We played a week in Slug's, playing that material, so that when we got to go into the studio we were really conversant with the material. We weren't going in there just reading.

ISOARDI: Who is in the band?

BRADFORD: Dewey Redman, Don Cherry, myself, Charlie [Haden], and Eddie Blackwell and Billy Higgins alternating. They were both playing at Slug's. We got that record date. We'd do some things, and it would be me and Ornette and Charlie and Blackwell, or it would be him and Dewey and Blackwell and Charlie, different combinations. Sometimes the three horns, me and him and Dewey, on some of the tracks. Charlie played the bass all of the time and [the drum chair] going back and forth between Blackwell and Billy Higgins, as I remember it.

ISOARDI: It had been a while since you played with Ornette?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Ten years almost.

BRADFORD: It had been a long time, eight years. I left him in '63.

ISOARDI: Now, you hadn't seen him since then?

BRADFORD: Hadn't seen him, hadn't said a word.

ISOARDI: He obviously hadn't been recording much?

BRADFORD: No. In fact, he was still into that boycott business after I left, making no records. He made no records while I was in the band. You asked me once about tapes. He taped a lot of the rehearsals and—

ISOARDI: But nothing was out there. So you didn't know what he was up to when you flew to New York, did you?

BRADFORD: No, no. I didn't know he was going to have this baby crying on the record and this guy [David Henderson] reading poetry and all. At that point everyone thought that for a jazz record this— And it was [*Down Beat* magazine's] jazz record of the year, that *Science Fiction!*! But I knew what he was going to be doing, because he hadn't changed. Even now. What he plays on the saxophone and the melodies he writes, it's the same. In fact, the last time we had kind of a rough-edge conversation I said, "Man, you're playing the same stuff you have always played. I don't mean that you're not playing new ideas, but this is the same Ornette, and you have this Prime Time funk thing underneath it. I don't get it."

ISOARDI: You didn't like it?

BRADFORD: No, I didn't like it. He said, "Well, Bob, I get off on that, what they are doing back there." I thought, "Christ, man, come on." That's the way we were talking at the time, you know. But he said to me, "Aw, you're getting old, man, you're getting old." I said, "Maybe so." But I definitely didn't like it. First of all, it was so loud—I

didn't like it—that I couldn't hear what I was playing. Everything was miked up. I didn't like it, but, I mean, who am I? Coleman's a genius, there is no question about that—composer, saxophonist.

ISOARDI: So when you got there and you saw the stuff you were going to do, it wasn't much of a surprise other than these additional things, the voices, etc.?

BRADFORD: That's why he called me. He said, "Who can I use on this date?" He knew that I could come in and do what he wanted because—He certainly didn't call me out of any love, now. You know what I'm saying? It's not like, "Well, where's Bob? I need to help him." It wasn't about that.

ISOARDI: Well, why did he call?

BRADFORD: He wanted another trumpet player on the date. He wanted it to work out just like it did. He wanted some tracks to be me and him and Dewey Redman and others to be him and Dewey and Don. He didn't do it, now, because he felt like I'm off someplace struggling, trying to do something, and he should do me a big favor. I'm not knocking him, but it was about—And that's the way an artist should be, now. It's not about any buddy-buddy shit. Like Miles Davis said, you can't do that. You may have a guy up there on the bandstand that you literally hate, but if he can play your music, you've got to get over that. You know what I mean? I'm so amazed at what Duke Ellington endured all those years, man. You know, there is a lot about Duke Ellington—now, I'm talking about his personal side—that I don't like either, but to work as a leader and deal with Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Paul Gonsalves, and

all those guys, and manage to get what you have to do done, you have to give it to him. He had to do a lot of strange stuff.

ISOARDI: Well, it's to the power of his music. Those guys wanted to play that music.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, that's right. And I loved Ornette Coleman's music. I still do. But the only way I'd be interested in playing with him would be in a context where I was playing the music of his that I know and in the context that I know it. He did this one thing, man, we did up in San Francisco—I don't know what year, now—he wrote a piece called the *Sun Suite* for a large string ensemble. We played it at [the University of California,] Berkeley, in the outdoor theater at Berkeley.

ISOARDI: The Greek Theater?

BRADFORD: Yeah. And he had about thirty-five or forty musicians from the San Francisco Symphony plus me, Dewey, Charlie, and Billy—I can't remember. But I've seen it written someplace that he said that he wrote that for me. I got a lot of features on that, but I never knew that he wrote this thing for me.

ISOARDI: He never said anything to you?

BRADFORD: Well, I've seen in print that "Ornette wrote this piece for Bobby Bradford." I never got that, but you never know how this stuff is, man. As years go by and you tell these things they get different.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's a nice story.

BRADFORD: Yeah. But anyhow, I had a lot of play on this, man. I can remember getting there—

ISOARDI: You hadn't seen the music before you got there?

BRADFORD: Oh, no, we had been rehearsing it. We had rehearsed some of it here, and then he went to San Francisco, and I was either teaching or taking classes at Cal[ifornia] State [University], L.A., but I was flying up to San Francisco three or four times a week to make the rehearsals to get ready for the big event. He was flying me back and forth. It was a great piece, man, wonderful. He has always said that he was going to sell it, too, but I'm sure the price tag on it, nobody would pay that for it. It's a great piece, a lot of strings. It's sort of the forerunner, I think, of that thing he'd do later on *Skies of America*, with all that sort of Stravinsky-like string writing. Some good stuff. [tape recorder off]

I didn't play on *Skies of America*; I think Ornette is the only soloist on that. But what I felt about *Skies of America* was that the *Sun Suite* was sort of a preparation for that, because it is very similar, especially the string writing. When he got to London to record it with the London [Symphony] Orchestra, there was some union complication about the Brits, about him not being a classical musician or some such crap, and he had to quickly write a classical piece to qualify for *Skies of America*, and later on Eddie Blackwell had to overdub the tympani parts on the tracks.

ISOARDI: Because they weren't very good?

BRADFORD: Well, you mean the tympani player there?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Well, the part that Ornette wanted wasn't written. You couldn't write

that shit.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really.

BRADFORD: In fact, the notation problem with Ornette still existed, but he'd gotten a little better at it.

ISOARDI: I wonder what the musicians thought when they saw the score, then.

BRADFORD: First of all, I think Ornette came here once somewhere in that period before that and did that piece at UCLA and had John Carter conduct it. Ornette had written the score in such a way that it wasn't vertical, so that you could look down on the score and see everybody's part straight down. It overlapped, which meant he didn't even understand the scoring process. John struggled through that here, and they played it at UCLA, but apparently there were a lot of problems. Orchestra people who see something like that, they figure right away that if you don't know notation—

ISOARDI: You must be terrible.

BRADFORD: In fact, somebody says to me—and this is too bad—that Ornette did one of his big pieces last year with Kurt Mazur and the New York [Philharmonic] orchestra, and there were people in the audience—

ISOARDI: They did *Skies of America* again.

BRADFORD: Was that the piece?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: This friend of mine said that he was in the front row and said people in the orchestra were back there laughing and making faces. Very unprofessional. Part

of the same thing about the notation in places, where Ornette would play something like he wanted them to play it and it wasn't quite like that on the page. Well, those people tend to say, "I'm just reading what you have here, sir."

ISOARDI: Well, it's because that's all they can do for the most part.

BRADFORD: That's right. But they'll turn it around, because if you ask them to play some music out of their hearts, that makes them very uncomfortable.

ISOARDI: Completely.

BRADFORD: So Ornette would say— In fact, when we were up in San Francisco Ornette got an idea at the very end of one piece. He said, "I'm going start this sort of snake figure, and I want everybody to take whatever is in your last measure, and I'm going to start right over here to the right with the string players, and we're going straight across, and when we get to the end we'll come back and make a U-turn. And you play as fast as you can when the guy next to you finishes your last phrase." It should have gone like this: [sings a succession of clusters of rapidly played notes] They couldn't quite get it together, and one cello player got up and walked out. Ornette says, "I'm just asking you to leave the music page now, and let's just make music with me." This guy stamps his foot, put his bow in the little case, and got his cello and walked out. The rest of the people hung in there. You see, what happens in a thing like that is people feel like their whole identity is on the line.

ISOARDI: I can imagine the egos. And then to ask them to do a stretch like that, the chance of falling down an elevator shaft is pretty great.

BRADFORD: But it seems to me a guy who knows he is a good orchestral player can say, "Well, I'll do the best I can."

ISOARDI: Yeah, or give it a chance.

BRADFORD: "It's not going to be on the record, my name, right?" But some of them weren't willing to do it. Others were anxious to try it: "Let's do it!"

But anyhow, it's a great piece. I don't think it's ever been played quite like he wants it, number one, because I don't think it's ever been notated exactly like he wants it played, and he doesn't have enough people now who are interested to be able to get people together to really work on it, with the kind of budget it would take to pull that off. But again, the guy is a genius in terms of composition, a musical genius. But there are a lot of things about doing orchestral work that you can't get around, the score writing, etc. When you've got eighty people up there—

ISOARDI: Yeah, if you're working with a big orchestra.

BRADFORD: —you've got to know how to do that. There are too many people up there to ask them to do a lot of stuff that is not on the page.

ISOARDI: Especially with people who make their living by doing things on a page.

BRADFORD: You can't expect them to be reliable or even relaxed.

ISOARDI: For your *Science Fiction* sessions, is there anything surprising to you that comes out of those sessions? Anything different compared to your previous experiences with Ornette?

BRADFORD: No, he was just doing what he had always done. He just got all new

music— Nothing like those early records, now; this wasn't bebop anymore.

ISOARDI: This is like the stuff you guys were doing when you were playing in New York in the early sixties?

BRADFORD: Right. And all these tunes were new. I'd never heard any of that stuff before, and neither had Don. Don had been in Europe someplace. Don had come in, too.

ISOARDI: Did the music present any new challenges to you?

BRADFORD: No, not in the sense I think you mean, because we had that week in the club, you see, to kind of get to it. Some of the melodies were difficult to play. You had to take them home and work on your part, because you couldn't play that stuff in just a second like that, just go [mimics the sound of a perfectly executed rapid phrase]. Some of his melodies are terrible to play, man. You've got to really work at it, because he does his stuff right off the saxophone. He doesn't sit down at the piano and work it out; he picks up the saxophone, and he puts it down and writes, he picks it up again and writes. Where he is coming from is the saxophone. Sometimes it lays on the trumpet beautifully; sometimes it's a nightmare.

ISOARDI: He is writing for an E-flat instrument, then?

BRADFORD: Right. He is also writing for an instrument where the fingering system is like a keyboard turned up like this. It's not about a trumpet. Sometimes it is wonderful for a trumpet, sometimes it's horrible. But he writes some things that don't seem to go well on the saxophone either, you see?

ISOARDI: Well, when you are getting something from him it's not written in concert key, either, is it?

BRADFORD: Well, he'd always give you your part transposed.

ISOARDI: He would.

BRADFORD: Yeah. He wouldn't sit there having you try to transpose your part. You could say that I'm a good transposer. That's okay if you need to do that, but why make it an added problem if you don't have to do that? Orchestral trumpet players often have to transpose an old A trumpet part, or if you only have a B-flat trumpet to transpose a C part. But most guys have those trumpets in the case; they have a C trumpet and a B-flat trumpet. But often you have to transpose, but there is no point in doing it if you don't have to; that's just an added problem.

But it was a wonderful experience, man.

ISOARDI: You were satisfied with it?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I loved it, man. I was a little surprised—but I liked it, too—when the baby started crying, the sound they put on there. He put that in later; he didn't have the baby in the studio. But the poet was there in the studio, the one who was reading that poetry. He was there. We did it in like two or three days, something like that. Then when the record came out, a lot of the tunes we had rehearsed didn't come out. It was a couple of years later before *Broken Shadows*, the outtakes, came out.

But *Science Fiction* was the jazz record of the year. I remember when I first

saw that cover with what looked like primeval forest or something on the cover, I thought, "Oh, man, this is bad." I was playing it in my classes for my students and all; you know; I was really excited about it. I loved it. It made me get this big swell about going back to New York, man, because that kind of energy and stuff that's in New York you don't have here in L.A. But at that moment I was like a visitor. I was living at one point at his place, at another point staying with friends, being paid well, going to great restaurants. Everything was great. Taxis.

But now, going back to New York would be the same old thing again, because after he did that he went back to doing his thing, and what do you do then? Like the day after that's over you are back on your own in New York. See what I mean? He might not call you again for six months, but then he expects for you to respond, though, whatever you're doing. And that's the way it is. It's terrible and it's wonderful, too.

That's what makes people break a lot of rules, break a lot of hearts, break a lot of everything. For a lot of people, you see—and I respect people like that—their art is bigger than anything in their lives. They'll sacrifice anything to do this thing that they do. Music to me is a real serious part of my life, but it doesn't eclipse everything else. It's not everything, where I can say to my family, "I'm sorry guys, but I'm going on to be a star now. You guys are just going to have to do whatever you can." I was never willing to do that, then nor now. I just don't see the world like that.

ISOARDI: So how long were you back there? A couple of weeks?

BRADFORD: About ten days. We did what we did in a week at Slug's and about three days in the studio. As soon as we were done I was getting out of there, because as soon as that's done then you start spending your own money. You're in New York, and pretty soon you will spend every dime you made.

ISOARDI: I always thought that when I was in New York it was like going to Las Vegas: the money just comes out of your pocket, and you don't even think about it. You're always reaching for money.

BRADFORD: That's right, unless you know how to get in there and just sort of dig in and eat a certain way. But I wasn't thinking about things like that. I was getting taxis. I didn't have time for the trains, nor was I familiar anymore with the train routes like I used to know them. Also, I was very leery about getting mugged, because there was a lot of that then. You're traveling around town with a couple of horn cases in your hand, expensive stuff—I didn't have time for that kind of nonsense.

ISOARDI: You hook up with a couple of people—I mean, you're back there, and you're playing with a couple of people who were originally from L.A., Don Cherry and Billy Higgins, and you are playing with Eddie Blackwell again. You're going to play with all these guys again in the future outside of the context with Ornette.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I don't know if I mentioned it before, but Dewey Redman and I met when I came to Austin, Texas, after getting out of the military in 1958. I'm in Austin going to the University of Texas, and Dewey Redman is teaching industrial education in a little town about thirty miles outside of Austin called Bastrop.

ISOARDI: Is that high school?

BRADFORD: Yeah. You know, where you make the owl bookends for your mother. I kid him about that now. That's what he was teaching, industrial ed.; that was his major in college. We would play on weekends in Austin.

There was another terrific tenor [saxophone] player in the town at the same time who was from Bryan, Texas, a guy named Fred Smith, who played with Ray Charles for years and also played with Smokey Robinson. He was a very, very talented young saxophone player—I mean probably five years younger than me, and Dewey is like two or three years older than I am. This kid was there in Austin. He had graduated from college, and he was teaching in Texas at what they called the D, B, and O schools—deaf, blind and orphan. They had those schools, and he was the band director, music teacher, at one. We played around Austin on weekends together. And Dewey was playing beautifully then, but we weren't playing any free music, though we were playing standards around town—the stuff Miles was playing, which everybody wanted to play, and all that stuff, Horace Silver. It is from Austin that I went to New York in '61; I left Austin to go to New York then. I don't know when Dewey went to New York, but it was after I was gone.

ISOARDI: So when you came back to do *Science Fiction*, you hadn't seen him in a while.

BRADFORD: I hadn't seen Dewey since like 1961. He was living in Brooklyn and working with Ornette and doing some other stuff around town. I think he might have

even been doing some part-time teaching.

ISOARDI: Have you had a chance to play with him much since?

BRADFORD: No. The only time I have played with him since that *Science Fiction* date was last summer in Oakland at that Eddie Moore Festival, me and Dewey and Billy Higgins and Charnet Moffett.

ISOARDI: Oh, my goodness. That's a reunion band.

BRADFORD: Oh, I'll say. I hadn't seen Charnet since he was born. He was born while we were in New York.

ISOARDI: That's right, when you guys were living in the same building in the East Village?

BRADFORD: Right. I had talked to his father over the years back and forth, but I hadn't actually seen the boy. I talked to his father every now and then, and he said, "Oh, yeah, Charnet's standing on a milk case now playing the bass." He finally told me, "Oh, man, he's going to [the] Juilliard [School]." We talked periodically.

ISOARDI: How about Billy Higgins?

BRADFORD: When I was here back in the fifties with Ornette, I never played with Billy during that period.

ISOARDI: So he hadn't hooked up then with Ornette?

BRADFORD: Unless he was doing it in a way that I didn't see him. The times I played with Ornette it was either Eddie Blackwell or this one drummer from Fort Worth, the one who almost got us arrested with the dope in his pants. His name I can't

remember now.

The bass player I was trying to think of a minute ago that played with me here in Pasadena and still lives around here now, Richard Reywald was his name. I think he has been suffering with some serious mental illness in the last five or six years. He is on a lot of medication and stuff. A good bass player, though, a fine bass player.

Whenever he was in town Mark Dresser would come and play. Mark at one point during that period was trying to do the regular college thing. I think he went back to Indiana at one point to go to school there. He didn't like it and came back home.

ISOARDI: He is from here?

BRADFORD: He is from [the] Los Feliz [neighborhood of Los Angeles]. His folks live about a block from where these guys did all that Tate-La Bianca murdering.

ISOARDI: Beverly Glen.

BRADFORD: Somewhere right over in that area.

ISOARDI: Oh, the La Bianca was—

BRADFORD: Whichever one was in Los Feliz.

ISOARDI: That was La Bianca. Oh, jeez.

BRADFORD: He's got two really wonderful parents, and he's got a couple of sisters. I know his mom and dad—nice people. In fact, we talk periodically. Dresser finally went to New York, too.

ISOARDI: I associate him more with Europe and the East Coast.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, but he is a Los Feliz kid. He went to UC [University of California] San Diego for a while, he went to Indiana, and he finally went to New York.

ISOARDI: When did he leave the West Coast?

BRADFORD: My guess is that he probably left around here about '76, because he has been in New York twenty years now. He is married and has a little kid about four or five years old.

ISOARDI: Eddie Blackwell.

BRADFORD: Blackwell was a guy that I played with with Ornette here in Los Angeles, and I played some gigs with Blackwell around town that Ornette wasn't in, just pickup jobs. But he is a guy that— Everybody around town loved his playing, because he had something about it that had something to do with New Orleans that was different than the rest of the L.A. drummers. The hotshot drummers around town then were Larance Marable, Chuck Thompson, and the white drummers would have been Shelly Manne, Larry Bunker—

ISOARDI: Was Larry Butler around?

BRADFORD: —Frank Butler.

ISOARDI: Frank Butler.

BRADFORD: Now, Frank Butler, I don't remember him being a high-profile drummer during that period. Frank I think sort of popped up here maybe in the sixties playing with Dupree Bolton and people like that. I don't remember him with Curtis

Counce and all those guys. I don't know where Frank Butler came from. He was one of the biggies around here in the sixties, but I left in '54.

ISOARDI: How would you compare somebody like Eddie Blackwell with Billy Higgins in playing behind Ornette Coleman?

BRADFORD: Well, the difference is Eddie— Boy, this is not easy. Billy's drumming is a more open, really accessible, very swinging, pulsey kind of drumming. Blackwell's drumming is more like Max Roach—how can I say it?—a real precise, very intricate, very methodical kind of drummer, a lot more technique in terms of stick control and drum precision than Billy but not in any sense of being more creative. He was the kind of drummer that you have to learn how to play with. Everybody wants to play with Billy Higgins. You know what I mean? But a lot of guys didn't like Eddie Blackwell. He played the kind of drums that made you responsible for what you were playing in a way that Billy didn't. Billy would play with you and try to help you do what you were trying to do. Blackwell might say to you "Hey, what's that?" on his drums.

Even as people, Billy is a more open spirit, where Blackwell is not as open. How can I say this? I may have to edit this out. There is a way that Billy is total honesty. You know what I'm talking about?

ISOARDI: He is what you see. That kind of thing.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's right. That's Billy. He's love, he's honesty, he's— Blackwell is the kind of guy where you had trouble often making eye contact with him.

ISOARDI: It's not necessarily a knock, but he is more of an inward-looking kind of guy.

BRADFORD: He is an inward kind of guy. He doesn't engage you in a real serious conversation unless he knows you. Very intelligent. But he was also the kind of guy—Now, both he and Billy were heavily involved with drugs. I think Eddie was the kind of guy that would do some things to get drugs that maybe Billy wouldn't do. I may have to scratch this out when this thing comes around again. I love both of them.

Something really interesting happened. I came back from London right after the *Science Fiction* date, about six months later I came back—I was going back and forth to London a lot then—and one of the drummers I had played with, John Stevens, had heard that Eddie Blackwell was sick, already having kidney problems. And this was way back there; this is the seventies, right? Blackwell, I remember, had several kids and was living in a really horrible place, man, and this kidney thing was bad. You could smell the urine when you walked in his place.

ISOARDI: Where was this at?

BRADFORD: Somewhere in [Greenwich] Village, somewhere on the East Side. I can't remember now.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO

JUNE 5, 2000

BRADFORD: Blackwell was having a tough time because he was in a very tough state physically. These guys in Europe had heard about it. Well, Eddie Blackwell is like a god to these British drummers.

ISOARDI: I could imagine.

BRADFORD: So John Stevens organized a benefit for Eddie Blackwell.

ISOARDI: In London?

BRADFORD: In London. My group played it, and several other bands played, and we raised about several thousand dollars—I mean serious money. It seemed like it was about five grand. So they asked me, "What do you want to do, Bob? Do you want to try to take the money back to him?" And they said, "You have to be careful, now, because you know how it is if you are caught bringing that kind of money out of London. We could lose it all."

So one guy there who was part of the group that played to raise the money was a guy who was of Jamaican ancestry, but he was a surgeon, a black saxophone player who still lives in London now, a hell of a saxophone player, but also a surgeon. He said, "Well, a kidney transplant would cost Blackwell probably twenty thousand dollars, but I would do the surgery for free, and the five thousand dollars would be just about what it would cost him to be in the hospital. So you can tell him when you get

back that if he wants to come over here and have the work done I'll do the surgery and get him in the hospital, and the five thousand dollars will probably be what he needs to take care of the hospital fees that the doctor couldn't volunteer. So you go back to New York and tell him— Does he want to do that? Or does he want the money?"

This was around Christmas.

So I go back to New York. And I didn't even know where Eddie Blackwell's house was. So I went by Ornette's, and I told him what had happened. We got in the streets that day, and it was snowing, man. I had just come from London where there was snow, but it wasn't bad, just the kind of stuff you like to walk around in. I come to New York, it was deep and cold. I had on these little city shoes kind of like this, and there's snow and ice and all in the streets. I was tipping around trying to get over the snow, and I didn't have my boots.

He took me by Blackwell's place, and we walked in there, and it was just pathetic what was in the house. So I told him what had happened, and he said, "Oh, man, wonderful." I said, "Do you want to think about it and have me call these guys? What do you want to do? But I'm the messenger." So Blackwell said, "Man, you know it's Christmas, and my family—"

ISOARDI: Oh, he took the money.

BRADFORD: He took the money. So I used his phone, and I called the guys in London from right there and told them. I said, "He needs the money, man. You're going to have to telex it here to his checking account and all."

Then, of course, about a month later Ornette has a benefit for him in New York but feeling kind of like Johnny-come-lately, you know? Nobody in New York had raised a finger. You see what I'm saying? Then all of a sudden they all go, "Oh, yeah."

ISOARDI: "Let's do something."

BRADFORD: "Let's do something now." These guys in London are the ones who have made this thing happen. So I want to show you something. You can keep your tape [rolling]. While we're talking here, you're looking at this poster that I have saved. Now, look at this.

ISOARDI: Jeez, what does it say? Oh, "Ed Blackwell Benefit, December 16, Bobby Bradford Quartet, Ian Carr's Nucleus, the Hook Foot—"

BRADFORD: With this Caleb Quaye, who was a conga player. He's a black guy with Caribbean ancestry.

ISOARDI: Ralph McTell?

BRADFORD: Yeah, and Danny Thompson. Those are British musicians all of them.

ISOARDI: "All profits from this evening go to Ed Blackwell and family." Very nice.

BRADFORD: Isn't it?

ISOARDI: Very nice.

BRADFORD: So every time I would see Blackwell after that, man— And we were friends back in L.A. during the period. In fact, I was the only one—with the big old raggedy car—hauling him around different places to get dope back in those days.

Sometimes, I think I remember telling you, I'm sitting out there with my car idling, waiting for him to go in, and a cop— The lights or something would pull the battery down, and it wouldn't start, and there we are in front of this shady house, and I'm the one with the old raggedy car.

ISOARDI: Back in L.A.?

BRADFORD: Yeah, back in L.A. We knew each other, but after that, man, it was like— When I would come to New York, going through, no matter what I was doing, it was like I was his brother.

ISOARDI: Well, you did a wonderful thing.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I guess so. But I didn't get to play with him a lot over the years, now. The only occasion other than playing with Ornette with him was then finally back here in whatever year it was that we did *Death of a Sideman*.

ISOARDI: That was just a couple of years ago, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Well, it's been three or four now, I think.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's true. That was '91 that you did *Death of a Sideman*, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Is it '91? Yeah, so that's almost ten years. David [Murray] was using him a lot in New York, though. David told me once, "You know, when I first played with Blackwell I could never quite get with him. It took me a while to learn how to play with him, but when I figured out what he was doing I thought, 'Oh, my God, look what I've been missing.'" Those were David's words. He said, "I didn't know. I couldn't play with him." He said he'd be trying to get something going, and Blackwell

would make him feel like he was at the wrong place all the time. See, where it would be totally opposite with Billy. Billy would be trying to help you do whatever it is you were doing and make it happen. Blackwell would make you go another way. In fact, I remember talking to Art Farmer once about Blackwell. He said he didn't like playing with Blackwell. He loved to listen to him play with others, but how he played didn't work with the way Blackwell played the drums.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: He was never comfortable with him.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: And, you know, strangely enough, if the guys would all be honest about it, you could just pick ten drummers from the whole scene in New York, just pick ten and ask a lot of players, "Is there anybody that you played with and it never worked?" "Oh, yes, this guy and that guy. I never can get my thing going with that guy because the cracks he jumps in are not the ones that I jump in." You know? Because, you see, anybody who loves to play with somebody like Roy Haynes might not necessarily like to play with a guy who plays like Elvin Jones. That's two—

ISOARDI: Different worlds.

BRADFORD: Yes, a different world. The tempo could be the same, but they're— It's different. You know, it's awfully hard to put in words, but it's different. It's like with bass players. You're sitting there, and one guy's playing, and another guy's playing. You might not like how that bass player lines his thing up with what you're doing.

And it's true. You could go ahead and play, but you say that, given your druthers, you'd rather play with this guy than that one.

ISOARDI: This is getting ahead a bit—I mean, we'll come back to this when we get up to it—but what about Blackwell's playing on *Death of a Sideman*?

BRADFORD: Oh, it's beautiful, man. Listen, when I told him that we had to rehearse all of that and do everything in one day— We were in the studio—

ISOARDI: Rehearse and record in one day?

BRADFORD: That's all the budget would pay for. We went in there that day at about three o'clock—two or three—and we got finished that night about eleven. That's it, rehearsal and everything. Nobody had seen any of the music. David had heard some of the songs I had played for him on the telephone, right? We went over the tunes. So I told Blackwell, I said, "This is supposed to be kind of like a funeral march, man."

You know, like the New Orleans "saints." The dirge on the way to the cemetery is the funeral march sound I wanted.

ISOARDI: Well, that's what I was thinking. That tune, that would fit his New Orleans sensibility.

BRADFORD: That's all we had to say. When the bass—Fred Hopkins was playing bass—he said [sings slow quarter notes], Blackwell said [mimics snare drum roll]. I thought [makes sound indicating "he nailed it"]. You don't have to tell him anything, man. Just play it. Yeah.

Of course, if it had been Billy Higgins, too—Billy's not from New Orleans, but

if you said, "Billy, now, here's the line, and here's the feel," he's just going to do it, just like all that stuff he did with Herbie Hancock. Herbie didn't know how he wanted the drums to go, man. You don't tell Billy Higgins what to play. You just play your song and say, "Hey, man, do something with this." Right?

ISOARDI: Truly.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Because there's no name for the shit Billy plays. Right? Once Billy Higgins plays, like, "Sidewinder," that's how you play it, right? That's it. That's it, man. It's definitive recording, and there's no way to even conceive of it even being played any other way, right?

ISOARDI: That's good.

When we were chatting earlier, before we had the tape on, you were talking about Charlie Haden's Liberation [Music] Orchestra. When do you hook up with them?

BRADFORD: Well, when Charlie—

ISOARDI: You've known Charlie for some time, now.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but, you see, having played with Charlie out here in the early days just briefly—

ISOARDI: You mean the fifties?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: How did you hook up with him? He must have just been a student.

BRADFORD: Charlie was a guy who was going around and just sitting in with

whoever would let him play in those days. And he really got hooked up with Ornette after I left, I mean where they were really— That was Ornette's bass player.

ISOARDI: Right. But you remember him before that?

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. Just another figure around town, you know? But we played together with Ornette, and then when Charlie decides to come back and sort of make L.A. his base— And he had been back and forth here for a long time, coming back and forth. And he had organized that Liberation Orchestra. Well, originally it was a New York crew, the original group, and of course he couldn't afford to bring New York guys out here unless it was something really big.

ISOARDI: Not that many.

BRADFORD: So he had his West Coast version of the Liberation Orchestra and his East Coast version. And he called me and asked John, would John play? He knew he had to have people who could read his music—because he had lots of written stuff—and who could solo too, you know? And John and I played with him.

I don't know how long it was, but we didn't spend a lot of time with him. First of all, it was time consuming. See, if you would go play with Charlie—I remember the last time we played, we went someplace like McCabe's [Guitar Shop], and we're going to play at nine [o'clock]. Charlie wants us there at about 5:30 to have a rehearsal before the gig. Then you play, and then you wait around until about eleven [o'clock] or something to get paid. Well, see, that turns out to be like an eight-hour job.

ISOARDI: It's a long evening.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I just finally got so when he called me for those things I said, "Oh, man, no way." Most of it was reading, anyway, you know. I said, "There's lots of guys you can call for that, man. I can't give you that kind of time. It's too much."

ISOARDI: Yeah. When was that?

BRADFORD: Oh, man. This has to have been—

ISOARDI: This is late seventies, early eighties?

BRADFORD: This has to have been the early eighties. We played around town, and then he went up to San Francisco a couple of times. And John played clarinet and soprano sax in that band [with] Oscar Brashear, and I don't remember who the other people were. Nels Cline played in it. And I mentioned this Tom Heasley, tuba player who lives up in the Bay Area now; he played in the band. And then at one point here he had another trumpet player in the band, some guy from Santa Barbara—trumpet and flugelhorn. I can't remember his name. Good player.

But that sort of just kind of petered out. Charlie would just put the band together at different occasions and called cats that he knew could come together and do it quickly enough.

ISOARDI: What did you think of the music?

BRADFORD: I liked it, I liked it. It's not something where I would want to go out on the road for six weeks playing that book and doing that.

ISOARDI: Every night for six weeks it would wear a little thin on you?

BRADFORD: Yeah, well, but then only because you didn't get to do your thing. See,

70 percent of what you're doing, you're just reading those charts, you know? And that's all right for a concert here and a concert there. But, I mean, this was fine music. That's not something that I would want to do like for a six-week tour playing that. You know?

ISOARDI: Right. It's sort of political.

BRADFORD: Yeah, well, you know, he got arrested in Portugal for mouthing off about Che Guevara and "power to the people" and all. He got arrested in Portugal, taken off the bandstand and all. And he's always been kind of political, outspoken about things, you know. He went through a period when I think what he was about was being like the peasants. He was wearing sanitation workers' clothes like the French wore. That was sort of his badge, you know? And that was cute, you know. And I knew what that meant to him. He was sincere. You know, it's like Gandhi wearing that Indian outfit after all those years of wearing a regular three-piece suit like a British lawyer, going back to India and finding out who he was and then coming back with that little thing, spinning his own yarn and all. I think Charlie was just trying to get a fix on who he was and all. [tape recorder off]

Charlie's a great bass player, a fine musician. He's a guy who is in a way like Billy. You get one hundred percent from him when you get him up on a bandstand. He wants it to happen, and he'll try his damnedest, you know what I'm saying? He's the kind of guy, when he gets on the bandstand, the spirit sort of takes over, and you get all he's got to offer. Very talented, got a sound of his own. Ten seconds on the

bass and you know it's Charlie Haden. Just how he hooks up his amplifier and his bass and all and what he plays, you know it's Charlie.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Okay, so it's about the late seventies and Rudolph's is no more. Little Big Horn has passed. So then what happens? Where are you guys playing now? Is it opening up a little bit for outside players at all by the late seventies?

BRADFORD: Well, what has happened— By 1980, '81, I started to get these calls from David Murray to come to New York, play in his octet. I think about 1980 I went to New York playing with David Murray's octet. John and I were going back East every now and then playing duos. John's going to Germany every now and then playing with some German clarinet players. You know, we're getting a little international stuff.

ISOARDI: Well, you do what I know a lot of critics think is one of Murray's finest albums, *Murray's Steps*. You're with the octet for that recording.

BRADFORD: Right, right. John started off on that tour that made that record, *Murray's Steps*, because [Henry] Threadgill couldn't make it. And then John left when Threadgill could show up, and Threadgill made the record date. We made that in Italy. John was playing alto with the band.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He pulled the alto out?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah, just to make that thing with David, you know. He still had

his clarinet, of course. But he did that to play in David's band. When Henry showed up and the band stayed on tour, John went someplace in the Black Forest with some guy he knew there, another German clarinet player. They were doing duets.

We were doing our little thing, especially in the summer, going to different places and playing. Every now and then we'd go to New York for something. We went back there once, he and I, and played with Phillip Wilson, the guy who was murdered, and Art Davis. We did a little something with them. It must have been the early eighties. I went back to England a couple of times and did stuff with Johnny Dyani and John Stevens—you know Johnny Dyani, the expatriate, the South African guy? Then I started doing things with Frode Gjerstad, the Norwegian saxophone player.

ISOARDI: Yeah. He's an alto player, right?

BRADFORD: Alto and tenor. He's mostly alto now, but for a while he was playing tenor. A great free player. Most of this would be summers, but during the school year sometimes—John and I would leave here during Thanksgiving; the Europeans don't celebrate that. We'd go over there and do duo stuff in Europe. Sometimes he'd go by himself.

ISOARDI: Well, you guys do this in the material that comes out later on *Tandem 1* and *Tandem 2* on Emanem [Records], right?

BRADFORD: Yeah. In fact, part of that is from a big festival at UCLA and part of it is from a little tour we did back East, where we played in Boston and in New York and

in Worcester—duo, a little duo tour we had.

ISOARDI: How does a duo start emerging? Because you guys had the quartet for a while. So about '76 the quartet ends, and then you guys start doing more duo work?

BRADFORD: Well, you know, that duo thing was big during that period. Solo and duo playing started about then and in the early seventies. Everybody was doing it.

Steve Lacy was doing solo soprano things, and John was trying it over at Rudolph's—you know, sometimes he'd play solo pieces. That's when he started doing all that singing in the horn and multiphonics and all. That was big then. The duo thing just evolved from that.

We'd be on a plane, and sometimes John said, "Isn't it nice? We don't have to worry about some drummer that doesn't have his drums or a bass player whose bass got lost. Just you and I?" And he and I were both of the same mind, now. John and I were both guys who were never late for rehearsals or lost the music, [got] drunk, missed the plane.

ISOARDI: Well, you both had important jobs at home.

BRADFORD: We had jobs, so that kind of thing was just understood. I have lots of musicians around town now that are supposed to play with me someplace and they don't show up. I see them later, a week later, and they don't even call, and they say, "Oh, man, you know, I couldn't make it." Well, see, now, John and I think a guy like that—"He's fucking crazy." You've got a job, you don't show up, you don't call. You see a guy later and go, "Oh, hey, I couldn't make that." That would be like not

showing up for school one day and telling the principal, "Oh, you know, I couldn't make it that Thursday. Hope you got somebody." See, that's unthinkable. One thing that we were really comfortable with each other with was responsibility of what we had to do. We're going to meet someplace. John said, "Well, man, I'm in Germany. Man, we've got this thing. Meet me in Oslo, and we've got this hookup." He knew when he got there I was going to be there. I'd have my music. We'd be ready to play. We'd get up on the stage and we'd play it. And that's what we liked about the duo thing.

But we had to rehearse that duo thing so that it had some power.

ISOARDI: Well, also, you didn't have much— With just the two of you you don't have anything to fall back on.

BRADFORD: That's right. And we had our little thing together. We had a little duo book, as you can see from *Tandem 1* and *Tandem 2*, man. We had our little thing worked out. He'd be playing kind of a little ostinato with that circular breathing and taking the place of the drums and the bass, and I'd be doodling on top of that. I was never so good at all that circular breathing stuff, man. All that multiphonics stuff made me gag. And the circular breathing, I never quite got that together. I could just barely do it. But he did it very well. He and James Newton both liked to do that. So he would often do this little thing where he would kind of noodle like an ostinato, just endless, and I'd play on top of that. We'd play these things that were really unbelievably fast, very intricate to play together, real precise. And a lot of the jazz

audiences, man, would just say, "Well, we can't tell where the song stopped and you guys started improvising."

It was a good duo. In fact, I had never heard anything better. I've heard lots of duos out there, but I never heard anything any better. We really had it down, man. I remember once we played at one performance where we were the warm-up band and the Art Ensemble [of Chicago] followed us. You know, we met those guys in about 1969. They came out here, and John and I played— There was some sort of black festival in town. It was totally black. And we played as a part of it at Shelly's [Manne Hole]. We ordinarily couldn't play at Shelly's [because we were too out]. But it was something around town that had to do with black week or whatever it was. Shelly was opening up to just the black thing that particular night, like a Tuesday night or something. That's the only occasion I ever had to play with John at Shelly's. And the guys from the Art Ensemble were in town, because there used to be a place over on Slauson [Avenue] called Studio Z. You know, on Slauson there are railroad tracks running around there. There was a big second floor place that cats used to use.

ISOARDI: Really? Slauson and what?

BRADFORD: Oh, my God, man. I don't know what the cross street would have been. I could find it now. It was like— You walk up the steps, and it was on the second floor, and it looked like it had at one time been a ballroom, because it had this wonderful wood floor.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Like it had been a ballroom.

ISOARDI: And now it was just a performance space?

BRADFORD: Just a performance space called Studio Z. And the Art Ensemble was playing there.

ISOARDI: Who ran it? Who ran it, do you know?

BRADFORD: I don't have a clue, man.

ISOARDI: It sounds like it was an alternative venue. All the out cats playing—

BRADFORD: Oh, yes, it was. None of the straight stuff. I think it might at one time have been a dance studio where people taught dancing and ballet or whatever, because they had that wonderful oak floor, you know, that kind of floor.

ISOARDI: Yeah, and that kind of space?

BRADFORD: Right. And that's when we actually met them and got acquainted with them, with the Art Ensemble. That's when we began to decide not to call ourselves the New Art Jazz Ensemble anymore, because the name was so similar. So by the time Bob Thiele approached us and said, "You know, I'd much rather deal with you guys as personalities than the name of the group—" But I said, "But how will that make the drummer and the bass player feel?" We'd been a group all this time and called ourselves the Ensemble. Now it's John Carter and Bobby Bradford, but what about these other two? And I didn't like it. We were the leaders, so we were the only ones talking to Bob Thiele. The drummer and the bass player were never there as part of the negotiations. So it became John Carter and Bobby Bradford.

ISOARDI: Was that ever a problem?

BRADFORD: I think it was for Tom and Bruz. They didn't like it. They never said anything. But Bob Thiele pushed the idea. John went along with it and finally so did I. I didn't put up much of a fight over it, either. That might have been one of the straws on the camel's back that started to move us apart, too. I'm not sure. You can see what that will do to two guys in a band who have been the Modern Jazz Quartet and all of a sudden it becomes John Lewis and Milt Jackson's Quartet. The other two guys will say, "Hey, man, I thought this was kind of a co-op thing here."

Anyhow, we played before them [the Art Ensemble of Chicago] at UCLA for something. I forget what it was, man. They were standing in the wings when we did this duo. And you know how guys are. We knew them, and we knew their reputation. We'd heard their records. And they'd heard about us, too. But we didn't have any kind of name like they did at that time. They were on their way up, you know. So John says, "Bobby, we've got to really boogie tonight. These guys are just standing there. They're waiting to see what we're going to be doing." I said, "We're going to smoke 'em, man." Right?"

You're going to love this. They were standing in the wings while we were playing, and we were smoking, man. That shit was flying, man. Mark Dresser was in the audience that night, and he said, "Bob, when you guys got through playing, all I could think about doing then was going home and practicing." So listen, when we got off stage, we went back into the dressing room where the guys of the Art Ensemble

were waiting, getting ready. You know, they're smoking and getting ready to come on stage. When we walked in to put our horns down and wipe our brows and sit down and let them go out, there was a big silence when we walked in. The room just went shhh. But you knew what it was about. It wasn't malicious. It just meant— John looked at me and said, "Bob, we must have played really good." They got really quiet.

These guys, they were big. They were all good players, but they hadn't heard us. They had just heard about us. But that night, it was like [whistles], "What the fuck is this, man?" You know, that's when that kind of shit hits you. You know, it's like saying— You're doing your thing, and you hear about this, and you hear about this, and you hear about that, and all of a sudden you go someplace and say, "Who are these guys? We're from Chicago."

ISOARDI: There's not supposed to be anyone out here who can play like that.

BRADFORD: Yeah. You go out here and you hear these guys and you say— L.A.'s supposed to be— It's not happening in L.A.

ISOARDI: Yeah. You're supposed to be wearing Hawaiian shirts or something and sitting on the beach.

BRADFORD: But we jumped on that bandstand and we lit this motherfucker up, man. So after we got in there and it got really quiet, John said, "We must have played really good, Bob." [laughs] I remember that very well. Over the years we became very good friends with all those guys, with Lester [Bowie] and with Malachi [Favors] and especially [Famoudou] Don Moyé. Roscoe [Mitchell] and Joseph [Jarman] were a

little bit more distant than Lester and Don Moyé. They were real kind of outgoing people. And we got to be pretty good friends with Lester and Don Moyé. I never got really close to Joseph or Malachi or Roscoe. I mean, I know them, you know what I mean? But it never got anyplace in terms of any kind of personal hookup.

But they were a great group, man. We really loved everything they were doing. They were really sort of carrying us to the flag, you know? Everybody loved what they were doing, man. They had their thing, and it had its own identity, and they had declared their own turf, you know. They just made a statement, "We don't have to get up here and play 'A Night in Tunisia.' We don't have to play 'Stardust.' We don't have to play 'Round Midnight.' We can play beautifully, and we don't have to do any of that. We don't have to wear the tank top. We don't play rock. We don't have to do this. We can do whatever we—" You know, they were doing a lot of strange stuff up there, man.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

BRADFORD: And all the costumes and everything. I didn't want to do what they were doing, but I admired them. I didn't want to paint up like an African warrior or wear a Chinese coolie outfit. But I appreciated them, because this was part of their new garments, you see?

ISOARDI: Their approach was so different. I mean, the more obvious things like the range of instruments and things like that, but even the way they structured their performance, the way they moved from piece to piece.

BRADFORD: That's right. Everybody thought, "Man, what a wonderfully organic thing." Once they walk on stage it's just one great big symphony, isn't it? And there's no counting the tune off—"one-two-three-four"—stopping in between, introducing the players. They didn't do any of that. They got on stage and it was like a little opera. They just went through it.

ISOARDI: Really. They were always changing. They would react to each other.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Textures, interactions, solo pieces, cues, and lots of stuff happening where they didn't even know what was going to happen. You know? Which was wonderful. I loved it.

I'm trying to remember now— Beyond what was happening with me in the eighties with David— He was calling me a lot from then on, especially in the summer—little tours, little quartet things. And then when he got that big band he started calling me for that, too.

ISOARDI: I haven't asked you this in a bit, but by the early eighties, your own writing, how's that?

BRADFORD: Oh, I'm flying by the eighties, man. In fact, my writing—

ISOARDI: I mean, it does explode, you said, when you go to England, and then it just opens up for you.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I start writing, man. Well, what it is is that all this stuff was all already inside. I just didn't understand what it meant to compose as opposed to just get up on the stand and blow. You know what I mean? All of a sudden it hit me what the

difference was. And after that, man, I was just writing up a storm.

ISOARDI: So ten years later you're still just coming at it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. And right now, if I had more opportunities to play and was not so busy teaching, I'd be writing three times as much music, you know? This grant that I just applied for, I proposed another thing about a portrait kind of suite, to continue this thing that I've been doing recently. Rather than just isolated pieces, I want to combine Duke Ellington and Horace Silver and Ornette Coleman, maybe, and Lester Bowie in a piece so that it might start off sounding like Duke Ellington and then be Ornette Coleman mixed into that rather than play them separately.

I've got some other thoughts. I've been churning around in my head for the longest about some vocal stuff. I want to do something with about ten singers plus the band. And I just don't—I don't have the time now to do that—you know, teaching and all of that. In fact, I'm looking forward to next year.

ISOARDI: Well, you're going to be retiring next year, aren't you?

BRADFORD: Yeah, in another year I'm retiring from my regular, full-time thing at Pasadena City College, and I'll do nothing but write and play. I'll probably teach at Claremont two days a week, but that will be almost like I can do that standing on my head.

ISOARDI: Ever thought of a Little Big Horn II?

BRADFORD: You know, actually, in the last couple of years I've been looking around Pasadena for some sort of storefront to start this thing up again, but everything

is so expensive, man. The part of town where things are cheap enough has such a bad reputation, nobody would come, you see? There are lots of little places, like over on the west side here in Altadena-Pasadena, but nobody would come. You'd be afraid to park your car, you know? So I've been looking around and even approached some people at some places here, like some of these churches, but some of the things that they want me to do I don't want to do. I don't want to have somebody else in control of what I'm doing. I want it to be a place where I'm in total control of the space, I can do whatever the hell I want. You know? Like I remember once at Little Big Horn, I decided we were going to play New Year's Eve. And we were going to play from about nine o'clock that night until six the next morning, before the parade started, which we did. We started at about nine. I had Lisa [Tefo Bradford] bringing hot food down there. We played from nine o'clock that night until the people started getting ready for the parade to start. I think we stopped at about six thirty-seven the next morning.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

BRADFORD: That's right.

ISOARDI: Well, you know, it just occurs to me— You mentioned Lisa. Another thing that does happen, I guess, is you get married again, don't you?

BRADFORD: That's right, Lisa and I. Well, we don't get married at first. Lisa and I, we were living together, now, from about '77 maybe. Then we decided to make it legal. At first she said, "I don't want to get married. I don't want to have any children."

It will just be you and I." So I said, "Perfect. I love it." Because I'm already forty-eight years old. And she's fifteen years younger than I am, you know? I said, "Well, you know, this is fine. You don't want to get married? We'll just live together. You don't want to have any children? Fine. No problem."

ISOARDI: [laughs] You've been there.

BRADFORD: Then all of a sudden, about 1980, she says, "You know, I changed my mind. I do want to get married, and I do want to have a kid." You know, the biological clock or whatever it is. So we get pregnant I think in '80, and she miscarries the first kid. And then she gets pregnant not long after that, another six months later. The doctor says, "I don't know what happened." There's no explanation for what caused the miscarriage. So Benjamin [Bradford] was born October of '81. And it's been good, though, man. I have no complaints.

ISOARDI: How did you meet Lisa?

BRADFORD: Lisa took my class at Pasadena City College.

ISOARDI: Really? [laughs]

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: The reason I laugh is it's so funny, because that's how I met Jeannette [Lindsay]. She took my class at Antioch [University].

BRADFORD: That's great.

ISOARDI: She hates it, too, hates to be reminded of that.

BRADFORD: Lisa was working at Caltech [California Institute of Technology] for

one of these guys in one of these microbiology labs, where they have these graduate students or post-docs all working in these laboratories. There's one big cheese that goes around the world getting funding to keep it going. Some serious stuff, though, at Caltech. That's not her field, but she was in charge of making sure that—The refrigeration units, where they put all the experimental petri dishes and all that crap, had to stay at a certain temperature. And if one of them wasn't working right, she had to get the fix-it guy in twenty-four hours a day and kept inventory control and ordered new equipment and stuff like that. She wasn't really a scientist, even though she's got a B.S. in neuropsychology or something. It didn't have anything to do with microbiology. And she worked there for the longest time, man, until Benjamin was about six or eight years old, when she finally quit and stayed home.

She actually is a writer, you know. She went to CalArts [California Institute of the Arts]. In fact, she got her M.F.A. [master of fine arts] from CalArts while she was carrying Benjamin. And she still writes; she just hasn't been able to sell anything big or anything. She's done some work cowriting with some people and made a little money here and there, but she's never been able to break into what she wants to do. But that's the name of the game, isn't it?

ISOARDI: Truly.

Let me ask you, also—We've been talking about the late seventies, early eighties. The last time we talked about politics it was ten years earlier—late sixties, early seventies.

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: What's happened over those ten years?

BRADFORD: Well, you know what's happening in the country.

ISOARDI: For musicians and this scene.

BRADFORD: Well, the scene leveled off. The militant edge leveled off.

ISOARDI: Did the music change?

BRADFORD: Yeah, the music changed. That fire and brimstone stuff, back to Africa, pretending to be tender warriors, and Marcus Garvey's ghost, and, you know, "*as salaam 'alaykum*" and that stuff sort of leveled off. You know, the fire of that revolution cooled off. I mean, a lot of ground was gained during that period, though. Some of it we lost, but some we've kept. A lot of players who were young men during that period and who are still around now and are still working—like David Murray, for example, is a product—There's a young kid whose music still now is about—

ISOARDI: Still has that fire in the things he says and the things he plays.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right, but now he plays funk. He has a band in England called the Posse. They play kind of a Jamaican-African rock. He plays all kinds of stuff. And it's gotten to a point where these guys—This world music idea I think is more meaningful than it had ever been before. It's not just Africa now.

ISOARDI: Do you think that goes back to his experiences in the sixties in L.A.?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. There's no question about it. David never was—And none of those guys that we associated with him, like Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill and

Hamiet Bluiett and Henry Threadgill and some of these other guys that were on those records that were on those *Wildflowers* [New York "loft jazz" recording compilations]— You know those guys?

ISOARDI: Yeah, the loft sessions in New York?

BRADFORD: Yeah. You know those guys like Marion Brown, who got sick for a while and is just recovering from some long illness—

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: All those guys have never lost that thing about their identity in terms of the music not necessarily being about George Gershwin or about Charlie Parker, either, or about Duke Ellington but about everything, all their experiences, you know?

Guys are running around now with dashikis and Afros. The musicians aren't, now.

You'll see a lot of guys in New York wearing a dashiki and a little pillbox African-looking hat, but it doesn't have anything to do with Africa. You know what I'm saying? Not in the sense that it did in the sixties and the seventies. It's just a hip looking outfit now. A lot of the black men who are Muslims now, they're not going around saying anything about it meaning anything about back to Africa; it's just their sort of socio- kind of religious choice now. And it's not a— Now, how can I say it?

You're not running around with a big flag now trying to say "I'm black and I'm proud!" But the residue, if you will, of the "I'm black and I'm proud" thing is still here.

ISOARDI: It's that people are black and proud without yelling it at you.

BRADFORD: That's right, yeah. You know, in the same way that the rock thing—

The jazz musicians were looking at it askance; many of the musicians look at hip-hop askance. But a lot of guys don't. A lot of guys are trying to figure out a way how to make the hip-hop thing a part of what they do.

ISOARDI: You know, the name that pops into my head is somebody like Miles Davis. I think the last thing he was doing was playing around with hip-hop.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I find what Miles Davis was doing in the late years kind of disappointing in that Miles liked what the hip-hop people were doing except that his actual playing had nothing to do with it. He liked the sociopolitical blah blah blah idea and would have liked to have been a part of that, except that it was too late for him to try to make the trumpet behave in a way that would work with hip-hop, what he was doing. He knew too much. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: You also wonder how many changes an artist can make in their lifetime.

BRADFORD: Yeah, true.

ISOARDI: And he made about as many as anyone can.

BRADFORD: I think Miles Davis's career up to and including about 1972, '73, '74 was just unbelievable. After that I find him at a point where most guys would be trying to mellow out. He was still trying to do something different. You know, the Creator somehow just doesn't give you all that many opportunities. Guys say they wonder what Trane [John Coltrane] would have been doing if he'd been living, or Charlie Parker. I think they'd be disappointed. Trane made a hell of a big statement. If he were alive, I think he'd be doing pretty much what he was doing then.

ISOARDI: Or he might have been moving.

BRADFORD: That's no disrespect to him, though.

ISOARDI: No, not at all. Not at all.

BRADFORD: I don't hear Charlie Parker, if he had lived, jumping on Ornette Coleman's thing. I hear Charlie Parker going on enhancing what he did. But I don't see Charlie Parker coming up with, after Ornette Coleman, another breakthrough.

Like there's bebop, and there's free jazz, and here comes Charlie Parker with another thing called loobloom or something, a total new—I mean, that's asking a lot, man.

ISOARDI: You sort of wonder where Trane could have gone after what he was doing the last two years.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that's asking a lot. You see, but if you're forty years old, now, think of the psychic energy that it takes to do another big thing. That would be like asking Einstein, if he'd lived to be about eighty, "Well, come on, man. What about another one of those E=mc— Something like that. Give us another one of those." Hey, man, that's it. That's the only one you're going to get.

But these guys—I was just getting ready to get this [referring to vinyl records from the cabinet] out, and some of these guys whose names have slipped away now, like Ken McIntyre—

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. Fine alto saxophone.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: He recorded with Eric Dolphy, I think.

BRADFORD: Yeah, and bass clarinet, too. There's Anthony Braxton. There's a good example of a guy who always knew exactly what it is he wanted to do and was never intimidated by people coming on him saying he didn't know how to play this, he didn't know how to do that. Then Marion Brown, of course, who [had] been ill [until] recently, you know, for a long time.

ISOARDI: I didn't know that.

BRADFORD: I don't know what from, but apparently it's kind of a comeback, you know. There's Leo Smith, trumpet player, who calls himself Wadada.

ISOARDI: He's up at CalArts?

BRADFORD: Yeah. He started calling himself Wadada early on. I don't know when that began, but this stuff goes back to— Man, this is the seventies, mid-seventies.

ISOARDI: Yeah, the *Wildflowers* loft sessions.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. Anthony Davis, who did this opera.

ISOARDI: *X, Malcolm X*, his opera [*X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*]?

BRADFORD: Right, right. In fact, one group here was Leo and Anthony Davis and Oliver Lake and Stanley Crouch on drums.

ISOARDI: Well, those sessions, the loft sessions were done, I think, just about the time that Stanley Crouch went back to New York.

BRADFORD: Yeah, when he first got to New York, exactly. Hamiet Bluiett, you know?

ISOARDI: David Murray is on some of those.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Julius Hemphill; Abdul Wadud, the cello player; Don Moyé again; Jimmy Lyons, even though Lyons was in a way a bop player for a long time. He played with Cecil [Taylor], you know. [He was] playing bop tunes but moved over into this thing, too.

ISOARDI: Very much so.

BRADFORD: Yeah. And this woman who I think was either his wife or his lady, Karen Borca, the bassoon player—Scandinavian woman, I think.

ISOARDI: Oh, really? I'm not familiar with her work.

BRADFORD: David Murray, he was on one thing with Stanley on it. And Olu Dara, the trumpet player.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, very fine trumpet player.

BRADFORD: Who is now playing guitar on records and doing stuff that is not necessarily what we call jazz as we have talked about it.

ISOARDI: I love his playing on some of those octets.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he's beautiful, man. He's a wonderful player but not just interested in one thing, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly. You know, it's funny, the one person I've thought about quite a bit is Trane and how he lived. I've got to think he would have been, maybe before anybody else—or not before anybody else, but—one of the first people to really move into world music. He would have been in Japan and India, and he would have been experimenting with different sounds.

BRADFORD: Sure, just like Don Cherry had already started moving towards stuff like that, too. You know? And these guys weren't doing that to be cute; they just wanted something else, man. Just like Charlie Parker. [Charles] Mingus says Charlie Parker called him a couple times playing Igor Stravinsky over the telephone and playing along with it. He said, "What about this? Man, what do you think of this?" He was tired of playing "I Got Rhythm" and "I'll Remember April" and "Stardust." You didn't know what he was going to do.

But it's not like saying it's just going to automatically happen for Charlie Parker because he's Charlie Parker. You have to pay some serious dues, don't you? I mean, just think of the psychic energy and the labor that's involved in doing something like Ornette Coleman did, just beyond, now, the physical part. Like we're training Eric [Dolphy]. He was trying to get up there and play those forty-five minute sessions, that kind of energy. That started him, I guess, to drinking all those fruit juices and eating granola and all that stuff, you know, trying to figure out a way just to get up and to do that, you know?

ISOARDI: And honey, eating honey all the time.

TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE

JUNE 5, 2000

ISOARDI: Again, in the period of the late seventies, early eighties, how does the progressive scene, the avant-garde scene, in L.A. look?

BRADFORD: Well—

ISOARDI: Does it change much? I mean, you said there wasn't much in the late sixties.

BRADFORD: By the seventies, now, Vinny Golia's making strides. Alex [Cline] and Nels Cline are playing.

ISOARDI: They've emerged by the late seventies.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Of course, Roberto Miranda has appeared.

ISOARDI: He has emerged, yeah.

BRADFORD: Horace [Tapscott]'s band, of course, is still going. You've got a couple of— One young saxophone player in that band. Now, what's his last name? [Ray] Straughter [also known as Shams]?

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, there were two Straughter brothers [the other being Ernest Straughter, also known as Hamid].

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. One of them was a really hot saxophone player. There was another saxophone player around town. What was his name now? Kind of a—

ISOARDI: In Horace's band?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he played with Horace for a while. Recently I heard he was in Las Vegas.

ISOARDI: Oh, Azar Lawrence.

BRADFORD: Azar.

ISOARDI: He's back in L.A. now.

BRADFORD: Is he?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Azar was playing. Sonship [Theus] appeared, right?

ISOARDI: So you guys weren't so lonesome?

BRADFORD: Oh, no. There were other people around town who clearly see that there's no money to be made here but want to play some other music, you know? I'm trying to think of who else was around town. There used to be quite a little colony of guys around here. Some of these names don't come to me right now, but I suppose they will as we keep talking.

ISOARDI: Are there venues finally opening that give you more of a chance?

BRADFORD: No, there's not a lot of that.

ISOARDI: It's still grim that way.

BRADFORD: There still is nothing happening around in places to play. John [Carter] and I played at a Buddhist temple someplace here in town. I don't remember where it was, maybe over in Eagle Rock—someplace we used to go and play every now and then. I don't remember now where it was exactly, but it was a Buddhist church. It had

one big space with just pillows around the room and a nice wooden floor. We used to go over there and play, but I've forgotten where it is now.

ISOARDI: Jeez, how did you get hooked up with that?

BRADFORD: I don't know. Somebody approached us and said "Would you like to come and play during one of our meditations?" or something like that.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. And I was doing some theater pieces with this guy out in Claremont who just died here recently. You know Dick Barnes?

ISOARDI: Theater pieces? What do you mean?

BRADFORD: Dick, he wrote these plays that were staged outdoors. He'd have these big eighteen-, twenty-foot puppets. Guys would be inside on stilts, you know? And one of them we did way out about seventy miles in the desert, past San Bernardino. A full moon. And another one we did on a rock quarry there in Claremont, where it's gouged out where they've been pulling all that stuff to make cement products. And we did three or four of those. They were big events, though.

I wrote music for those. Now, those weren't exactly jazz things as such, but there was jazz playing in it. But it was music written to go with what was happening in the play, you know. I loved it. It was lots of fun. And I would be using sometimes the students at the college, if they were up to the level to play. Mark Dresser played a couple of times with me. I think Diamanda [Galas, formerly known as Diane Galas] played once with us. It seems to me John did something with— You know, David

[Murray] married Ntozake Shange, the woman that did that *For Colored Girls [Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf]*.

ISOARDI: Yeah, *Colored Girls*.

BRADFORD: And that must have been in the seventies. It didn't last very long, but John did some stuff with her at one point.

ISOARDI: She was based out here?

BRADFORD: No, no. She was based back East, but she came out here a couple of times and did some of her stuff here. John did some things—just him and James Newton, maybe. In fact, James Newton was coming on.

ISOARDI: He's emerged about then.

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. He's doing it, too. Glenn Ferris, the trombone player who had played with Don Ellis's band, you know? And of course, Henry Franklin was playing some of the stuff with us too, even though Henry was always still working around with some of the bebop guys around town. William Henderson, piano player—

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

BRADFORD: —was still playing with boppers and [doing] post-bop stuff but played with us, too. In fact, he's on one of our records. I think he's on that *Secrets*.

ISOARDI: Yeah, the Revelation [Records] release.

BRADFORD: Nate Morgan.

ISOARDI: Oh, right. Nate's on that, too.

BRADFORD: Yeah. Nate had come out of the woodwork.

ISOARDI: How did you bump into Nate Morgan?

BRADFORD: I think with Horace somehow.

You know, I've been trying to think, since I talked to you last, when I first met Horace. I cannot remember when we first met. I just can't. It's just all of a sudden where— There's Horace. I do not remember.

Horace liked what we were doing. In fact, I went to one of Horace's rehearsals, man, and he had listened to the [Flying] Dutchman records and had transcribed the stuff that we were doing. He was doing some of our stuff with his band. He didn't even wait to ask, "Give me a lead sheet or something, Bobby"; he had already transcribed it off the records. In fact, one of the pieces that he liked most was that one of mine called "The Eye of the Storm." When he did that thing that we did—I told you that we did this record date that some writer around town had the money, and you were there, you said, at one point. You know this record date with David Keller?

ISOARDI: Oh, more recently, the Don Snowden thing?

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. Well, that one piece that I brought in, orchestrated for that group, that was something that we had done—

ISOARDI: Years earlier.

BRADFORD: —years earlier with two basses, with Henry Franklin and Tom Williamson and me and John, John playing alto [saxophone]. That was before John decided to really focus on the clarinet totally.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: He liked that piece and asked me to come and bring a little arrangement of that for that group. And that was, of course, [William] Roper on tuba and Thurman Green [on trombone] and Roberto [Miranda on bass] and Horace and Michael Session [on saxophones].

ISOARDI: Oh, Michael Session I guess is coming out sometime in the seventies.

BRADFORD: Yeah, Michael, too. Michael spent some time in the army, and I think he was playing also while he was in the army in Europe, in Holland or somewhere.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I think it was Horace and some of the older guys that told him that they were able to get some benefit out of military service in terms of the time devoted to musical practice and training. I think Michael went in. I think he followed Jesse Sharps in, and they both ended up in Germany or something for a few years. Jesse's still over there.

BRADFORD: Also around town there was this trumpet player who played with Horace and then moved back to New York, now, with a Muslim name; Rasul Saddik, he calls himself. But he hadn't taken that name then. I don't know if you know him when you see him or not, a fair-skinned brother but with dreads—he wears dreadlocks. A good trumpet player, man, a good soloist. Almost all the time when we go out with David's big band he's in it. In fact, he's on that poster right there where we were in Paris with that band. That's Rasul Saddik.

ISOARDI: Yeah, David Murray, the big band conductor. Well, Butch Morris is out

here too, isn't he?

BRADFORD: Now, Butch is kind of quite a bit further back. Butch is somewhat younger than Wilber [Morris], and I didn't— Butch doesn't really come into my consciousness until much later.

ISOARDI: You mean when he's already back East and hooked up with David?

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. I mean, to think of him as a real player and all, even though it seems to me he used to kind of hang around when Stanley Crouch had that thing [Black Music Infinity]. But he wasn't playing with us. He was just sort of—

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Sometimes I think he would— Now, he was in the army, too, in Vietnam. You know, he played the trumpet or cornet.

ISOARDI: Yeah. We've got a picture of him from— I think it's around 1970 at South Park [in Los Angeles] with Horace's band. And Arthur Blythe is in it. And he's there with his cornet.

BRADFORD: Yeah. See, I don't remember him at that point, though I've got some photos with us in South Park, too—that bell stage. I don't remember Butch very much back then. It's kind of vague.

ISOARDI: Yeah. So there are guys by the late seventies, early eighties. It's not so lonely anymore. You've got another generation coming out.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. By 1979 and '80, man, there are lots of cats out there playing so-called new music.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. But still no places?

BRADFORD: No, no places to play. You had to make your own thing.

ISOARDI: Create your own spaces.

BRADFORD: You could see Horace was making his own thing happen. Those guys definitely weren't making any money. What kept them together was Horace, Horace and his music.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. Horace told me once, "Money was never a question because we always knew there wasn't any." So nobody worried about it.

BRADFORD: That's right. What that meant was those guys were flying on the momentum, you see, of this identity thing and the spirit which is all still rolling on the fuel of the sixties. That's what that was all about. The one woman that sang with Horace, the one who fell dead in the parking lot of something—

ISOARDI: What?

BRADFORD: You know, one of the women that was a singer with Horace back then in that period— And she's been dead quite a while.

ISOARDI: Gee, I haven't heard that story. She sang?

BRADFORD: Yeah, she sang with Horace's group over the years. What's her name? One of the important women that sang with the band. She's dead now. I think she died in the parking lot or something.

ISOARDI: I think Linda Hill sang at one point, but I don't know how she died. It was in the early nineties, I think, she died.

BRADFORD: This may be the same woman. I can't remember her name now. I remember hearing her singing in "Giant Steps."

ISOARDI: She had kind of a bald head—maybe not.

BRADFORD: Yeah, that seems like her. There was something odd about her hairdo or something. But a fine singer. Really into what Horace was doing. That might be her. She's dead now, isn't she?

ISOARDI: She died in the early nineties, I think. But she was a little bit older then, because she was one of the people who founded the whole thing in the early sixties along with Horace.

BRADFORD: I think that may be her.

ISOARDI: Maybe. I know she played a little piano. I don't know if she was a lead singer or not, but she sang, she wrote lyrics.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I remember hearing her doing "Giant Steps" at that Foshay [Junior High School] one day with Arthur [Blythe].

ISOARDI: Maybe that was her.

BRADFORD: One of the days when we played some things with Horace, Arthur played and she sang. It was one of those days when John was there and Horace was sitting on the hood of the Porsche. [mutual laughter] Funny.

TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE ONE

JUNE 13, 2000

ISOARDI: Bobby, last time we sort of stopped in the early eighties, and I guess what's looming next is John Carter, your collaboration with him from then up to the early nineties and his passing. But actually, before we get into that, I wanted to ask sort of a detail question from last time. You had mentioned Rudolph [Porter]'s place [Rudolph's Fine Arts Center] in the sixties, early seventies, and you said that John played there with his trio quite a bit. Who was in his trio, do you remember?

BRADFORD: Well, his regular trio was him, William Jeffrey [on drums], and his second son Stanley [Carter] playing the bass. I mean, John would have other people come in and play. But it was his regular venue every Sunday afternoon. When I got back from England at one point after having been away quite a few months, he had this thing really going and had a regular Sunday crowd—you know, of forty or fifty people, something like that.

ISOARDI: That's a good crowd for challenging music.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it was. And by that time he had just totally started to focus on the clarinet. He wasn't playing any other instruments, but he did get himself during that period a soprano saxophone. In fact, I've got tapes here someplace of us at a concert at Caltech [California Institute of Technology] where John played soprano on a couple of tunes. But I think he just got the soprano because the overwhelming thing

during that period with the soprano was that everybody— It was almost like you've got to have one, man. Plus it had so much power and connection with “Trane” [John Coltrane], you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah, after "My Favorite Things."

BRADFORD: Yeah. And it's a great little instrument. I don't really think of it as an instrument that a guy would focus on and make that his main thing even though— And that said, of course, somebody like Sidney Bechet, who's more famous on that than he is on the clarinet—

ISOARDI: Definitely.

BRADFORD: But I actually think of Sidney Bechet being more important on the clarinet than he was on the soprano. That's just my little thing there. But then there's Steve Lacy, you know, who abandoned whatever he used to play with the tenor and some other things for the soprano. I don't think Lacy has played anything but the soprano for the last thirty-five, forty years. So John didn't play it a lot. I don't think he's on any record playing it. He did play it somewhat when we played together in the Liberation [Music] Orchestra.

BRADFORD: Oh, he did play it then?

ISOARDI: Yeah. There were some of those places where the music asks for a soprano, and he played it. But for the most part he put the other horns under the bed. Man, he had that clarinet going.

ISOARDI: Throughout the decade of the eighties, ultimately a series of five CDs is

released.

BRADFORD: Actually they weren't CDs in the beginning, they were on vinyl.

ISOARDI: Oh, right, of course. The first one, *Dauwhe*, I guess comes out around 1980.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, in the beginning—I hope I'm right on this, and having John say what he said to me and what I could glean from the whole thing about it was that when he wrote that very first one—It's before *Dauwhe*; it's one called *Night Fire*. When he was starting to get some thoughts about doing some bigger ensemble—

ISOARDI: Wasn't *Night Fire* subtitled "Themes in American Music" or something like that? I think it has a kind of—

BRADFORD: I don't think so. I don't have *Night Fire* here, but I think you may be thinking of one record that he did on Moers [Music Records] called “themes and variations on American folk music” [*Suite of Early Folk Pieces for Solo Clarinet*].

That's like a clarinet solo thing of his. I don't think *Night Fire* was subtitled.

ISOARDI: Didn't have a subtitle. Oh, okay.

BRADFORD: I don't think so. But he was all of a sudden starting to think about—I don't know how long he'd been thinking about it before, but he started doing something with a large ensemble. But in his own words to me, the idea for making this thing a sort of parallel to the history of the black man, from captives in Africa to slave ships and all the way over here, that wasn't originally the idea about a larger ensemble. But he said to me, "I had a lot of music I wanted to write." And that idea

gave him a forum for writing some music that he already wanted to write.

You see, to the best of my knowledge John never had any particular scholarly interest in African history as such or American Negro history as a scholarly pursuit. But his oldest son [John Carter Jr.] went to Africa one summer, like on a study abroad or whatever, and came back and told him about these places he went in Ghana, where he saw these slave castles where they kept all these people bunched up until they got enough of them to go on a boat. And he said that's what he thought would be a wonderful vehicle for him to write music about. He said if he couldn't do that there was music that he wanted to write, and he was going to write it no matter what. But that was an opportunity for him to be able to hook it up with something that has some sort of sequence.

So the very first of those things that were just beyond me and him and a bass and drums was when he did that *Night Fire* leading to *Dauwhe*. And I'm not even sure if *Dauwhe* had totally crystallized that that was what he wanted to do. But he was definitely already using that instrumentation and writing in the kind of stuff that you could see he was going to write after that. But I think when it did sort of gel in his mind, then the other stuff came rather quickly.

ISOARDI: So *Dauwhe* is the first of what becomes a five-album set called "Roots and Folklore: [Episodes in the Development of American Folk Music"].

BRADFORD: Right. Suites, if you will.

ISOARDI: Five suites.

BRADFORD: Of "Roots and Folklore," as it was called. "American Music."

ISOARDI: Yeah, something like "Themes in the Development of American Music" or "Folk Music" or—

BRADFORD: Yeah, the verbiage I don't quite have together. In fact, a few months ago we played this tribute to John. I got to talking about that, and I never did get it straight. Somebody in the audience had to say it for me. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: So that was a memorable evening, when the police shut you down halfway through the second set.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, right. [laughs] But he definitely had a clear, clear picture in his mind, now, of what the ensemble was going to be, the instrumentation, and what it was he wanted to write.

ISOARDI: Why the framework that he chose? Was this something that just evolved out of discussions with his son from his travels?

BRADFORD: I'm sorry, when you say "framework" you're talking about instrumentation?

ISOARDI: No, I'm thinking more— Well, you mentioned that this kind of pulls it all together for him, that he'd been wanting to write a lot of music. So there's something about the themes.

BRADFORD: Well, you see, once he had decided that he was going to take the idea of these slaves coming over, then he had a deal— Like that one, the suite that I like more than any of the others, *Castles of Ghana*.

ISOARDI: The second one.

BRADFORD: Yeah. That's my favorite of the whole bunch. Now, it's clear in *Castles of Ghana* that he's already on a track. You know what I mean? *Dauwhe* to me is like just sort of, even with the mask—That's the one with the mask on the cover, isn't it?

ISOARDI: Yeah, and the kente cloth.

BRADFORD: Yeah, yeah. Now, that to me is sort of general references to African American, African, lineage, history, but *Castles* really deals with the specific idea of the prince in Africa who's involved in the slave trade and winds up being involved with Europeans and selling his own kind into slavery, though he didn't realize what it was going to be. The Africans themselves were involved. Maybe that was new for John, too, and for a lot of African Americans. Maybe for whites, too. It's that the Africans were involved in the slave trade to this extent: if the Europeans came, and there was going to be some trading done, and let's say the Africans didn't have any gold or any spices or any ivory to trade, and they wanted whatever the Europeans had, then the next thing is to say, "Hey, take some of these captives. We just took these guys from another tribe here. Take some of them."

ISOARDI: Yeah, they were usually opponents or enemies in war.

BRADFORD: Yeah. But the thing is—The difference, I suppose is—and, of course, this is a big can of worms here, that slavery was an old institution in Africa—

ISOARDI: As it was throughout the world.

BRADFORD: Right, but there was no racism attached to it. One tribe confronted another, and you got your ass kicked, and they took the people that they wanted with them, right? They raped women, I'm sure, and killed right and left. But the idea was, I don't think they ever stopped to think, now, what this is going to mean when they sell these Africans to these Europeans and they bring them to the Caribbean and to the New World, what it's going to be like.

ISOARDI: There would be no way for them to know, actually.

BRADFORD: No. And I don't think they cared enough. They were dealing, you know. "Here, take twenty of these slaves and give us whatever we want from you"—guns, maybe, or gunpowder, or a better grade of steel, perhaps, than they had. Who knows? Maybe some scholars do. But John really got into this, now. That might have been new, that concept of what was happening there and how they were bringing these people. And one of these castles, the picture that's on the cover, is actually one of those forts that was built I suppose with the money of the Europeans and maybe some of their artisans. But it was a dual project between the kings, or the African rulers, and these Europeans to bring these people to this fort, and when you got enough of them together, bring one of those big clipper ships and put them in there and take them away.

So John writes this thing on that one album about the helplessness of these people waiting. You know, they've been captured. Then they're on this boat going all the way over and knowing they're not coming back. One piece, it's called "The Fallen

"Prince" and relates to this African prince, if you will. Another piece is about this hopelessness of getting on the boat, going away, way across the ocean, knowing you're never coming back—you know, total despair. I mean, it was really a focused piece.

All he had to do then was follow the historical sequence. Then you get blacks and slavery and the New World, with them borrowing from the slavemaster's culture, borrowing the harmonic framework of Western music—which is not a part of African music, but bringing it into their own musical language—coming into Christianity from a tradition of multigod deity and mixing all the Africanisms in with Christianity, and we get these Negro spirituals. We get these work songs that John always focused on as best he could from what information he had. And then up through the period during and after the Civil War, then leaving the South and coming to the North. Then the early blues and all that stuff. You know, he was really focused in there. And he had an instrumentation that was perfect for what he wanted to do.

He also had something that would tell him what to write. Now you've got to write a story about these black people leaving the South in droves. What are they going to do when they get back to New York and Chicago and Philadelphia and all that? What will their music be like? And it doesn't have to be in many ways— You see, in my mind, that doesn't have to be accurate in the sense that it's supposed to sound just like their music sounded.

ISOARDI: Yeah, because John doesn't write program music.

BRADFORD: No, no. It's not programming in the sense that we're talking about it.

John was just saying, "This is from what I can feel about this." He didn't go around, now, looking in the archives finding out, "Now, what were they doing in Philadelphia? What kind of music were black people playing in Philadelphia in 1890?" I don't think he did that. In fact, I could swear that he didn't.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: But that's not important, you know? Big things in the music, now, like tap dancing, the black version of tap dancing, boogie woogie, the swing style, you know? Blues music, those slave songs, those slave narratives that he extracted. On one of the records he's got some old relative of his in Texas talking, where you can hear that sort of thing that's still a throwback to slavery. One place—not this record but one of the others—he has some Ghanaians speaking the old original Ghanaian tongue. Which one is it? I get them mixed up now. That might be *Fields*. But, you see, once he had pictured in his mind what it was that he wanted to reflect upon, then he had it laid out. All he had to do was put his imagination and talent to work.

It was a great series. Again, my favorite of the whole group is *Castles*. That's a wonderful piece.

Actually, it's the only one that John Carter's octet [played], to the best of my knowledge, unless there was some occasion when he had an octet that played and I wasn't in it, and I don't think so— We played— Except in Europe, in the U.S. that group, we played in Claremont once, at Pomona College. We played at the Japan America Theater. We played in Amsterdam with that group. We played someplace in

Holland. I forget now. I mean no more than a half dozen occasions, because that's where we'd get together with the professional people and play that music. Each time we played we played *Castles*. You know, that made a whole concert. The first half was the first half of *Castles*, and then the second half. We never got to play those others except at a recording date. In fact, when we did this tribute here a few months back that you saw, I extracted stuff from *Castles*, because that was the one that I liked the most.

ISOARDI: Although the personnel of the octet changes.

BRADFORD: Yeah, but not— Well, to the extent that at one point there he decides to add Don Preston.

ISOARDI: Right. I think he had Roberto [Miranda] on an early one or two but not on—

BRADFORD: The only reason for that was, I think, when record companies got ready and decided to do it, they wanted to do it in New York and wanted to add some New York people thinking that it would add some clout to it. They sort of tie your hands on that. John really, I think, had to do some real soul-searching about whether he wanted to do that or not.

ISOARDI: It's something that happens so often.

BRADFORD: You sit there and you say, "Well, do I want to do this or do I not want to record?" You want to document your music, you know, so you go ahead and do it. I mean, he went to New York there and played with some guys who have a bigger

reputation, let's say, than some of the guys here. But they didn't know John's music as well as somebody here. So, you know, it often happens. I've talked to people, especially the Europeans, who say, "I want you to come to Europe and bring X, Y, Z musicians with you instead of the guys you play with in Los Angeles." I say, "But these guys in Los Angeles know my music. These guys that you want me to bring from New York, they're great players, but they don't know my music. It's just almost a sight-reading gig for them." They go, "Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho. It's okay." Which means they don't really understand what's happening when you're up there on the bandstand, you know?

But that band at one point, when it had two trumpets—on one occasion me and Baikida Carroll on record, on another place it was me and Oscar Brashear playing, when we played here—Oscar's not on any of the records. Then another point, where we had—Well, we didn't have keyboards. John I think brought Don Preston in somewhere about the third one. And I met Don Preston, in fact, through John Carter and that Wind College that he had over there on the Westside, you know?

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: But that band didn't perform a lot. He made all the records, and most of those, with the exception of *Castles*, now, we went in and rehearsed the stuff. Sometimes we'd have a day of rehearsals and record the next day. That was the first and last time the music was played, and nothing since. I've had a couple of people who have called me and sort of talked about trying to put the octet together. Then we

start talking about them wanting all these people that were on the original record, we start talking about what it's going to cost, then they start backstepping, all wanting you to come in with a cut-down version of it, you know? And I don't think a lot of that. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: I wouldn't want to go to Europe with sort of a cut-down version of the octet. I wouldn't have any problem, now, going to Europe, and the guy says will I play some of John Carter's music. Then I might play some of the stuff from our duet repertoire or quartet repertoire. But I certainly wouldn't want to take the octet stuff and shave it down for the budget, you know? Because that does the thing a real disservice.

ISOARDI: Truly. There seems to have been a change in personnel when the *Fire Music* and *Dauwhe* are done on—what?—Soul Note [Records] and Black Saint [Records], and it's when Gramavision [Records] comes in for the rest of them that the personnel seems to shift.

BRADFORD: Well, you see, the guy at Gramavision—I can't think of his name right now. It seems like Rosen. [Jonathan F.P. Rose] That may be wrong. But the Gramavision guy, I'm guessing now, but I think it was mostly his idea to come to New York and then have John use as many New York guys as he could. I think he thought then that those guys' names would give the thing some clout, you know?

ISOARDI: That's the kind of stuff that Horace was fed a lot, too.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. And of course, those guys do a good job, man, but it's still not the same. It's like they go in one day and they play your music, and the next day they may be playing with Sun Ra. The next day they may be playing with Muhal [Richard Abrams]. So you can only get so much out of them as opposed to guys who have been playing your music enough to really know what it is you're doing.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly. Truly.

BRADFORD: And those guys, you know, they did a good job. But it's still not the same, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah. Any thoughts on—? I mean, here are three important composers: yourself, and then John Carter, and Ornette Coleman, right? There's a real richness here. How would you compare the three of you? Because you're kind of the crucial link in a sense. I mean, on the one hand, you guys seem very different.

BRADFORD: We are, actually, you know? I think that we may have some kinship philosophically. But when you get down to the note, note, note, note, note, we are very different. I learned a lot from Ornette Coleman, but not actual notes as much as I did attitude and stance and philosophy. And so did John, I think, from Ornette. Except that, you see, John was a better trained musician than Ornette in terms of training as a composer, blah blah blah blah.

ISOARDI: Right, a master's degree in music and all that.

BRADFORD: I'm not trying to compare their talents, now. You can't take anything from Ornette as a genius of a composer. But John had the scoring and orchestrating.

You see, John definitely had that together, where in my own humble opinion Ornette Coleman did not and still does not—as a scorer, you know what I mean? Let's face it. I mean, you listen to somebody of the classical musicians and you say, "Well, what about who-do-do-do-do?" and you name somebody that knows what to do with the orchestra, like Maurice Ravel. Now, he may not have been the greatest of the composers, but as an orchestrator, man, I mean, there's nobody any better in terms of what to do with those eighty-eight people up there and who to get to play what and how to get the best out of each instrument. You know what I mean? This guy as an orchestrator, boy, is just scary. If you sit down and listen to his stuff, if you're interested in orchestration— You know what I mean?

Just like Rimsky-Korsakov, who has a book. In fact, when I was in college that was the textbook, the Rimsky-Korsakov book on orchestration.

ISOARDI: Still?

BRADFORD: Yeah, *Principles of Orchestration*, Rimsky-Korsakov. What the violins are going to sound like with the muted trumpet, when to use them and when not to, in what range the violin is going to be nasal, and all that stuff that some guys have, you see, just cataloged. Like Gil Evans. You see? They've got all that in their heads.

But, now, getting back to— When John decided to use that octet, man, he knew exactly what he wanted from the tuba on that particular day. He knew what he wanted from the clarinet, with another woodwind player playing bass clarinet or flute

or alto saxophone or whatever. Whenever he'd write something for the trumpet, man, it was just— John could play all these instruments, too. He could pick up the trumpet. Now, some days he'd say, "Now, what about this, Bob?" and he'd pick up my trumpet and go [sings march-like phrase]. So he knew what the instrument was, how it worked.

You see, what you have to do if you're going to be a really good scorer or orchestrator, you've got to be familiar with the instruments, what they'll do and what they won't do, and where they behave and where they misbehave.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: But when you go to our backgrounds— Like, we all grew up for the most part in Texas. They were born in Texas; I was born in Mississippi. When I moved to Texas I was about eleven [years old]. But we grew up listening to the same music. We all grew up listening to the R and B [rhythm and blues] people, you see? Let's see, now, John was born in 1929, and I think Ornette, too. I know they were about five years older than me, something like that. But let's say you had stopped all of us in 1948 and said, "Who do you like in R and B?" Well, see, one of us might say, "Oh, man, I like Ivory Joe Hunter." [sings] "I love you, yes, I do—" And then somebody else would say, "Oh, no, man. I don't like him. I like Meade Lux Lewis and Big Joe Turner." You know what I'm saying? We all grew up listening to the same R and B people, because the canopy over black music then was that everybody was an R and B artist. They all had their own personal styles, but everything was

rhythm and blues. You had the old country blues guys still doing their thing, you had the guys doing boogie woogie, and then you had what we would call R and B in the forties, especially after the [Second World] War. There's no way to get around, as you're growing up, hearing that.

We grew up with families where you'd go to church like—I did. I was up every Sunday at church all my life. I don't think they came from a family that made them go to church ritualistically. So I was a little deeper steeped in church music than them. Not by choice, but the family I grew up in, you were going to church every Sunday, man, unless you were dead sick. So I got a good really deep soaking in black Protestant church music, whether I realized it or not. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: You couldn't help but absorb it.

BRADFORD: Oh, no. Even if you didn't like being in church, you were there witnessing it, you see? I find myself sometimes writing music here, man, and I'd find that stuff seeping up into what I'm doing. You know? But we all are very different. I mean, you could stop Ornette and John and me and put the three of us together and talk about what Tin Pan Alley songwriters did we like. And you'd see we'd split up right there, too. You know what I mean? One of us might like "Body and Soul" and the other one like "Stardust" and the other one like "Pennies from Heaven." You know what I'm saying?

It's like movies. Some people say, "Oh, I thought Abbott and Costello were just hilarious." And I'd say, "Oh, man, I hated slapstick kind of comedy, where people are

falling around and buckets are falling on them and they're stepping in a mop bucket." I didn't like that stuff. I liked funny lines, but I didn't like a lot of falling and tripping over things. You know what I'm saying? So we definitely— There was a level at which we were very much alike, but we all had a kind of personal aesthetic that was different.

ISOARDI: It just strikes me, talking about Ornette's big compositions and John's also with a larger ensemble, have you wanted to do something with a larger band? Because I could see aspects of *Death of a Sideman* with a thirty- or forty-piece orchestra.

BRADFORD: The only reason I haven't done something for a larger orchestra— And that's one difference, a big difference, between me and John, was that John would sit down and write music for this orchestra that he might never have. He believed in writing music, now. He'd say, "My plan is to write some music every day, good or bad, for this in particular or that in particular." I have problems writing—for example, like a trio piece for violin, piano, and flute—if I don't have some opportunity for it to be played, if someone's not asking for it. So when I sit down and write something, it's only something that I think I'm going to be able to produce, sell, play, or use right away. I'd love to do something with a larger ensemble with voices, but I don't—

ISOARDI: A choir?

BRADFORD: Well, not that big. I'm thinking about ten voices. Now, once I did that, though, I could see the next thing would be three hundred singers, something like that. [mutual laughter] But I have these thoughts all the time, but I don't pursue it, because

I'm trying to do stuff now that I think somebody's going to record and I may be able to document.

BRADFORD: If somebody came up to you and said, "Okay, we've got a forty-piece band and your ten voices," what would you do?

BRADFORD: Well, probably the first thing I would do is go back and do some of the stuff that I've already written for that particular—

ISOARDI: That would really suit that kind of a—

BRADFORD: Yeah. And some of my stuff would work beautifully for that now. In fact, there are a couple of things that I've done where I've been tempted to approach somebody like Oscar Brown Jr., whose writing—I'd like [him] to do words to some of my stuff. You know, that's just something I talk about, but I definitely—In other words, if there was time and budget for that right now, even limited, especially with access to singers at Pasadena City College, I'd be on that right now, man. But I have a hell of a time just marketing this quintet of mine, you know—or quartet sometimes. I was just thinking that the other day when we played at this memorial for Glenn Horiuchi, you know, and Wadada Leo Smith was there, and Francis Wong, a saxophone player from the Bay Area—

ISOARDI: Was Jon Jang there?

BRADFORD: No. But Vinny [Golia] was there. And that was a place where we of course didn't have to worry about trying to sell anything. I was just listening to the saxophone player, Francis Wong, and I could hear stuff I could write for him, man.,

just right now, for him to play. You know? I just knew him kind of really at a distance. I know his music. I actually got some of his CDs. I've heard him up in the Bay Area, and he's heard me, but we've never played together. And I could see, man, I could have a band playing some music with him tomorrow, man. It would be smoking. You know what I mean? Because there, of course, I was just thinking about pure music. I wasn't thinking about "Is this record company going to do this?" We all were trying to pay respect to Glenn, you know? And we just played what we wanted to play at this memorial, and it was beautiful.

Bill [William] Roper passed out a little tune of Glenn's, new to us all, right there. We walked into the services, and he passed it out. He says, "Now, look at this. Here are the instructions. I'll hold a card up for who's going to play the solo first." He had cards. We played through a little part on the page. He held up "Bobby," and I played. Then Wadada, Leo, played. Then Vinny played, and some others. Like that, you know, right there on the stage. And a lot of people are not into that, man, but it was beautiful music. Everybody was really into it, now. Nobody was thinking, "I'm going to catch this chick sitting out there" or "I'm going to catch this record producer there" or "I'm going to show off. I'm going to be cute." You know what I mean? No agenda other than just our love and respect for this guy who just died and trying to make some music up there. That takes music to just a totally different place. And you've got an audience that's sitting there listening. They didn't come there to chat or to eat. You know?

ISOARDI: It's about as real as it can get, about as honest as it can get.

BRADFORD: Yes, that's right. There's a level at which— You know, there were times in Ornette's band when things were that good, where we weren't worried about how much money we were going to make, weren't worried about anybody out there in the audience, if they didn't like it. We weren't worried about the owner of the club saying, "I don't like the music. You're fired." You know? But it's hard to keep that, man, because there's so much shit that comes up into the arena—

ISOARDI: Well, more than most musicians, though, it seems like you've found a way to do it, because you've had a regular gig that pays the mortgage. So you had the freedom to—

BRADFORD: One thing I don't worry about when I get ready to write some music now is "Are they going to like this?" You know? I hope they do. But if they don't it's too bad. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: I don't have to deal with that. On the one hand, I don't get to play as much as I want to. I don't make as many records as I want to. I don't get to go to the big festivals in Europe like I want to, all that stuff. But when I write some music now, it's just me and the Lord, right? I don't have to worry about catering to anybody or what the record company wants or who do you want to play this? None of that, man. You get to do whatever you want to do. And that's the blessing of teaching five days a week.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly. Was John pleased with the results of those recordings?

BRADFORD: Yeah, I think he was. John wasn't making any money, but he was getting some international acclaim, you know? He was being invited to come to Europe and play clarinet with other orchestras over there, playing duo, trio things with other clarinet players over there. As a result of that, he was instrumental in organizing that Clarinet Summit with himself, Alvin Batiste, Jimmy Hamilton, and David Murray. And they did a couple of CDs, I think.

ISOARDI: So he was pleased that those albums really reflected what he wanted out of that music?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. I think he was really pleased with all of that. He was grateful that he could manage to get it done, you know?

ISOARDI: Didn't you hook up at one point with Horace and maybe—Was it Arthur [Blythe]? The Together Again band?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: In the late eighties?

BRADFORD: Yeah. We were in Europe. We played at the—Let's see, now, where did we play this one? We played in Nickelsdorf [Austria]. It was me, Horace, Arthur—What's the drummer?

ISOARDI: It wasn't Sonship [Theus]?

BRADFORD: No, no, it wasn't Sonship.

ISOARDI: Donald Dean?

BRADFORD: Yeah, Donald Dean. Right. Donald Dean, and Roberto playing bass, and John.

ISOARDI: Great band.

BRADFORD: Yeah. [mutual laughter] Hot band. It seems to me somebody taped that. I think Roberto taped that.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he gave me a copy of a tape from one of your gigs.

BRADFORD: Yeah. We played Nickelsdorf. We played someplace else. I forget where, but—I don't know whose idea that was to put that together, but John and I had some other work over there already, and so did Arthur. But that band came together at Nickelsdorf and a couple of other jobs. I know after it I went on to another job that I had, and John stayed at Nickelsdorf and played the next day with Cecil Taylor.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

BRADFORD: I took John's wife and John's sister-in-law and her husband with me, because they were already booked into a hotel somewhere else that John and I were going to play. They didn't want to hang around there, because we didn't have a decent place to stay. Nickelsdorf is about as big as Snuffbox, Texas, and the closest decent hotel would have been all the way back in Vienna someplace. So we were already booked someplace else in Germany. So we left John and Roberto there to play with Cecil for the next day, and then John joined us wherever the next job was. But we left John and John's wife Gloria [Carter] and Gloria's sister and her husband. Yeah, that was a hot band, man. I'd forgotten about that. Yeah, that was terrific.

ISOARDI: But that was just those couple of gigs and that was it? There was no attempt to do some recording or hold you guys to—?

BRADFORD: No, I can't even remember how that came about, to tell you the truth. I don't know how that jumped off. I think that guy in Nickelsdorf [Hans Falb] had that idea. He saw the possibility of us, being in such close proximity, playing, and then he decided to put it together.

ISOARDI: Good idea.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Really. You mentioned John's Wind College.

BRADFORD: Right.

ISOARDI: Maybe you could talk about that a bit.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, John and I at one point were talking seriously about having a place where we'd give private lessons and maybe play small concerts—a room, you know—and where we'd have a place to work and all. It was just he and I in the beginning.

ISOARDI: When was the beginning? When are you talking about?

BRADFORD: God, now, the dates? Boy, you've got me on that. This has to be in the— This is the eighties.

ISOARDI: Somewhere in the eighties.

BRADFORD: This is somewhere in the eighties. And we—John and I—would get in the car on weekends going around town scouting out locations for the place. We went

over on kind of the edge of— Like, you know where the CBS [Television City] studios are? Right there near the Beverly Center?

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, off of Fairfax [Avenue].

BRADFORD: Yeah. We looked around there and checked some things out. The rent was so high, it was just outlandish. So we said, "Well, man, maybe we've got to move a little farther off the tracks." So I said, "Well, what about downtown L.A. in one of those lofts or something in a highrise?" And John didn't like that idea. So we drove around and we drove around and we drove around, and we're talking. And then somehow James Newton and Red Callender got involved. I can't remember how they got involved. But all of a sudden one day John says, "Man, I found this space." You know where it was? It was not far from John's house, actually. Going from here, you would get off the Santa Monica freeway at that Kaiser Permanente.

ISOARDI: That's around Fairfax, La Cienega [Boulevard]?

BRADFORD: Yeah, La Cienega. It was at La Cienega Boulevard. and La Cienega [Place] or something, where they come together at a big intersection.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I remember it was roughly that area, but I can't remember any of the streets.

BRADFORD: Yeah. So he said, "I found this space, man, blah blah blah blah." I said, "Yeah, man, but that's just right down there. That's close to your house, but it's not close to mine, right?" So I said, "Unless I get a lot of students, I'm not getting up and driving all the way over there on a Saturday morning to teach one kid a half-hour

lesson." So he said, "But the rent's good and it's duh-duh-dah, duh-duh-dah." And so James liked it and Red Callender liked it. And finally Charles Owens got involved. I said, "Well, man. You go for it. Just count me out. You know? It's not going to cost you anything." Then everybody got upset, saying, "Well, Bob, you blah blah blah." I said, "But, hey, man. Just go ahead. Do whatever you can do out of this, but I'm—" Unless I had five or six students or something, I'm not driving all the way from Pasadena on Saturday morning, way the hell over there to do anything on any regular basis. I said, "I would have driven to downtown L.A., you know, where we're all kind of coming from equidistant places to come together for that. But I'm not going to do it." I don't know if I didn't get a wild hair up my butt the way they just sort of went ahead and kind of got that and then told me after the fact, but I think my main reason was it's just too far away for me to go to sometimes. And we were planning on a couple of nights a week doing things, you know? I said, "It's going to have to be closer to me than that, man. I can't do it." So they went ahead.

John taught lessons, sort of private lessons. Each one had his own little cubicle. And John had a little space that was his office where he got a lot of his work done. James taught private lessons, so did Charles Owens, so did Red Callender. And every now and then they'd have somebody come in and do a little clinic, you know? I remember once late in the period where John had the thing he had Frank Morgan come once and do a Saturday morning clinic. He was bringing other people in there to do—
ISOARDI: Were there any performances?

BRADFORD: I don't think so. Not as such.

ISOARDI: Strictly teaching?

BRADFORD: Yeah, it was too little for any kind of performance; the space was actually too little. Unless they had been able to take the walls out from each one of the cubicles and open the whole room up. Maybe if they had some kind of thing, that folding office space that you could open up and open up the whole room, but they didn't. So it was big enough to have eight or ten students sitting in there while you do a saxophone clinic or something like that. I think Julius Hemphill came once and did something.

ISOARDI: How long did it last?

BRADFORD: Well, John didn't actually shut the thing down. See, towards the end, everybody bailed out, James and Red and Charles. Little by little they all kind of bailed out.

ISOARDI: So everybody was sort of contributing to the rent?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. That's the way it was working. And then, as they bailed out, it got to be more and more of a burden for John.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: And I went over there with him after his—I think it was after his—first surgery to help him clear the place out. He let it go. So he must have let the thing go about 1991. I remember a lot of that shelving, that metal shelving that you can buy, he just set it out on the street for whoever wanted to come by and take it. It probably

went for five or six years.

ISOARDI: That's a while. Any students that came out of that that we would know about or should know about?

BRADFORD: Not to my knowledge. John and James and Red and all these people had students, but I can't think of anybody that's a product of the Wind College that I can speak about right now, that rings any bell for me. But I'm sure these guys had some what one would safely call promising students, but none of them comes to mind right now.

But it was a good place for these guys, especially for John, to compose. Having a family at home— No matter what it's like at home, it's hard to work as a composer at home. You see, John still had two of the kids still at home, as I remember. The youngest boy, Chris [Carter], was still at home. Grandkids by the older boy were coming by. You know, it was a *house* like it was supposed to be; a family was there. There was no place to really get away. He didn't have anything like I have here, a separate space where you can get away. So he spent a lot of time at the Wind College. He'd get up early in the morning and go over there. He was over there writing music. That's where I think he wrote most of the stuff that is in those octets, at the Wind College.

ISOARDI: I guess he must have finished writing— The last of those “Roots and Folklore” sessions, the last recording, is around '89, I guess.

BRADFORD: Yeah, I think it is.

ISOARDI: Where was he going to go from there? Do you know?

BRADFORD: I don't know, to tell you the truth. John was ambitious about what he wanted to do. I could see John, if the opportunity afforded itself, with a large ensemble, you know, and maybe voices and all. He certainly had the talent and imagination. And he was planning on retiring in the next several years, had the sickness not changed all his plans.

ISOARDI: Yeah, right. Did he ever fool around with a bass clarinet?

BRADFORD: I don't think so. I think like most music majors, you have one semester where you deal with the woodwinds and—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: I can't imagine a guy who plays the clarinet like him not having picked one up and fooled around with it, but nothing extensive. He had the alto and the tenor [saxophones] and the flute and an oboe and his clarinet and soprano [saxophone].

That's all I know of.

ISOARDI: I could see him picking up an oboe and doing something with that.

BRADFORD: Yeah, he was already, before the beginning of our group. Because he thought at one point he might get an opportunity to get into the studio thing here, you know?

ISOARDI: Did he try?

BRADFORD: Yeah, he did. I don't know to what extent. Now, whether he decided,

"I'm just going to be a guy who's going to really focus on being just a woodwind player or just a saxophone player or a guy who's a specialist on the clarinet who also plays other saxophones—" But he did. Somehow he got a lot of rejects from the studio thing. I think it was clear to him early on that that was a waste of his time, trying to get into that.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE TWO

JUNE 13, 2000

BRADFORD: John had already begun working with—I can't remember the woman's name now, but he had started making plans to do his autobiography.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

BRADFORD: With somebody's help, yeah.

ISOARDI: You don't remember who it was?

BRADFORD: No, I don't remember the woman's name. She was a writer that—

ISOARDI: She wasn't the one who did Red Callendar's book, is she?

BRADFORD: What's her name?

ISOARDI: Elaine Cohen.

BRADFORD: It might be. You know her?

ISOARDI: I've never met her, but I know she also started working with Buddy [Collette] on his in the eighties.

BRADFORD: I think it is her. Tall woman with dark hair. She'd show up at some of the gigs in New York, and I had the feeling that she had a place here and in New York. I'd see her on both coasts all the time. I think that is her. And I think they had already got to the point where they talked about him sort of organizing his thoughts, and they were going to get started on it.

ISOARDI: But never did?

BRADFORD: No.

ISOARDI: Too bad.

Any other thoughts about John that we should know?

BRADFORD: Well, no. Not that come to mind right now.

ISOARDI: How might you sum up the importance of his work?

BRADFORD: Well, I can't say too much about what John had done, because— You see, John had done actually with great success what a lot of people had tried in New York who didn't have his skills, who wanted to use techniques and sonorities and practices that were available in classical music and use them with skill but still try not to write classical music. You see, John wasn't trying to write classical music. You know what I mean? There are a lot of guys I think in New York, especially in the middle and late sixties, who couldn't figure out how to use those orchestral devices without it becoming like classical music. See? In none of John's music, when you put it on the turntable, do you actually think it's classical music. You know, John was a hell of a classical clarinet player.

ISOARDI: I can't imagine there's anything he couldn't play on clarinet.

BRADFORD: Yeah. You see, but John could play the Mozart clarinet concerto, man. Just smoking. Right?

ISOARDI: I believe it.

BRADFORD: And he studied with some major clarinet teachers when he was doing his graduate work. Just a terrific clarinet player. But what he liked about the idea of

trying to bring all those things to jazz was—or jazz-like music— And I think if you asked him, "Well, is this jazz right there?" he'd say, "Oh, man, I don't know what to call it." I could hear him saying, "This is just American music now." But what he wanted to do was not let anything go, you know?

He was a good saxophone player just in terms of straight-out, standing-up-there- flat-footed playing jazz. Yeah. You could take him on any gig and say, "Hey, man, we're playing 'Night Train.' Go for it." You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: But there were things about subtleties of orchestral sounds and—how can I say it?—sonorities that he liked, and he wanted to use them, like in that octet, in a way that he could say what he wanted to say and it would still be about the music that he thought he knew best, you see? I mean, if you listen to—without me calling their names—the guys in New York now who write in that area that we say is an outgrowth of African American music and jazz in the late sixties who begin to sort of go over into things that are free structure with lots of stuff going on in it— You know what I mean? And I'm not picking on anybody back there. Some of them didn't know how to do what it was that they wanted to do, what John did, you know?

John figured out how to fit Don Preston playing the electric keyboard into what he was doing there and make it work, you know? And places where he had me— He wanted [me] to be playing the plunger but play it the way I like to play it, you know? And every now and then he'd be playing some clarinet part where he wanted to use that

Sidney Bechet vibrato. [demonstrates] He could do that, you know?

So he had a real wealth of resources as a player, as a listener, and as a well-trained musician. I mean, look, it's almost ten years now since he died. God, he'd be climbing the walls now, man. No telling what John would be doing now. He might even be doing film scores. Who knows?

ISOARDI: When you wrote *Death of a Sideman*, was that with John in mind?

BRADFORD: Yeah, that was with John in mind—and others besides John. Actually, when I started working on *Death of a Sideman* it went all the way back to my hearing about this friend of mine here in Los Angeles who died, a bass player, a friend of mine, who was from Fort Dodge, Iowa. I came back in town once and went over to a place—He worked at a little store that sold—You know, like the black version of a deli. [mutual laughter] And I had gone in to check him out, and when I came back one of the guys there said, "Oh, man, he died a few months back here." I said, "Well, what about family?" They said they couldn't find anybody that could figure out where he was from. Nobody seemed to know him. The guy said, "You knew, but you were out of town." The county cremated him.

ISOARDI: And just put him in a county grave?

BRADFORD: Yeah, a county grave. Nothing else to do. No family, nothing.

And then I was in New York once, and somebody told me that Hank Mobley, who was a saxophone player I really liked, had just sort of become a bagman in New York and then went back to Philadelphia or someplace and had died just totally

obscure, you know? All the time I'd hear about some guy who had been a really important sideman dying without a dime. And a couple of guys died here in L.A., I think. Blue Mitchell died here, a trumpet player. There was a scuffle to get the money to bury him, you know? And all this stuff—I started thinking about that then.

ISOARDI: Man, it breaks your heart.

BRADFORD: Yeah. I started mulling over writing this thing, and I didn't realize at the time that it was going to turn out to be a suite. And the centerpiece, that one called "Have You Seen Sideman?" was already in my head. In fact, I had John once trying to play the melody for me before I had given it a name, because it was going to be the centerpiece of this suite. But it was on a back burner.

Then, when John died, I finished it, and I sort of put it together. My feeling was then to hook it up with this sideman, this musician who lives this life of support, a wonderfully talented—or competent, at least—musician who plays with the big guys but who always is on a record after "with—" You know, "Big Star, with—" And "With" never makes a lot of money. "With" never gets any big play. "With" dies without a dime.

So I started with the early days of a player, how you start getting your skills together at home. One of the pieces is called "Woodshedetude," you know, which means, "Take that horn out to the woodshed, son. Nobody wants to hear you practicing in here." Those are the dues that you're paying. Then another piece was "Going to New York," and trying to see if you can make it, and one called "Sidesteps,"

trying to see if you can stay alive in New York and not get mugged and keep your horn out of the pawnshop and keep working. Then another piece, of course—"Have You Seen Sideman?" was the funeral march that would culminate the thing at the end of the piece. And there's another piece in there called—What's the name of it? "Waiting for Thelonious." You know, in fact, I had an audition with Thelonious Monk, and of course he never showed up.

ISOARDI: No! When was that?

BRADFORD: Oh, this was when I was in New York, when I was working with Ornette, one of those periods where he wasn't working. I was dating a woman [Myrna Greenfield] who was the sister of the woman [Mildred Fields] who was going to ultimately manage Ornette Coleman while I was in the band. But that wasn't happening at the time. Anyhow, I was at her place once and discovered, unbeknownst to me, that she and Monk were good friends. They were good friends to the extent that sometimes when he'd be out tripping around he'd come to her house at two or three o'clock in the morning and just knock, and she would go, "Hey, man, please come in. Sit down, have a beer, listen to records."

So we weren't working, and she said, "What do you think about the idea of playing with Monk?" I thought, "Ooh." She says, "Well, maybe you can play for him, and he'll put you in the back of his head and maybe use you sometime." So we had this appointment, and I was going to play for him when he came to the place. But he never came. Years later I told her I was kind of relieved that he didn't come. Because

you can imagine an audition for Thelonious Monk, man.

ISOARDI: You would never know.

BRADFORD: Yeah, not a word, I'm sure. He'd just get up and go, "Hm." And you're supposed to know what that means, you see. And you're supposed to play something and play really good.

All of this stuff was about the sideman: coming to New York, hanging in there, doing your damndest, supporting the big stars, and then often, as in the case of some of these guys I talked about, dying in total obscurity without a dime. And then, of course, asking yourself the one big question: "Would I do this again?" You know, "Did I love this that much? Did it mean that much to me?" [Those] are things that I think most of us think about and think about way before it's time for us to check out. "Is this important? Why am I doing this?"

Of course, a lot of people decide early on, "I don't like this that much. I'm not going to pay these dues. I'll do something else." And I don't have any problem with somebody saying, "I don't love this enough now to pay those dues. I think I'm just going to play some popular music or commercial music, make a good living, and be happy." And I'd say to somebody who thinks like that, "You should do it." You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Because you certainly shouldn't do this thing if you're not willing to—Because it's definitely going to kick your ass really good.

ISOARDI: I remember I was at a master class at Bill [William] Green's studio on La Brea [Avenue], and he had Phil Woods come by, and Phil Woods said something like that. He said, "You should only do this if you cannot do anything else." He said, "Only if this is the only thing you can do and you know it's the only thing you can do—"

BRADFORD: Then do it, eh?

ISOARDI: Then he said, "Then you should do it. Only if you really feel that way, that this is what you have to do." He said, "Otherwise—"

BRADFORD: It's suicide, yeah. That was good advice. I think a lot of guys go through that same situation without having the question formalized like that but sit down and think about "Do I want this? Does it mean that much to me?" And sometimes the answer is "No, it doesn't."

ISOARDI: Tough road.

BRADFORD: Yeah, it's a tough call sometimes. But I think a lot of people decide, "No, I'll just be honest with myself. I don't like it that much." You know?

But I always loved the music. I mean, the thing that got me into music, now, had nothing to do with being a professional or having a career; it was just the music. If somebody had said to me, "You know, Bob, you'll probably graduate from this little college where you'll go, and you'll be the band director in Humpdump, Texas, and you'll play in Dallas on weekends, playing jazz Friday and Saturday," I would have said, "Fine. I just want to play really good, though." Yeah. "I want to play like Dizzy

[Gillespie] and Miles [Davis] and Fats Navarro and Kenny Dorham. I want to be that good. Then if I have to be the teacher five days a week and play on weekends, that's okay. Then I'm ready. But I want the music to be happening." Yeah.

ISOARDI: That's nice.

BRADFORD: I was talking to Horace Silver once, and he said the same thing to me. He said, "Man, all I ever wanted was to get up there and play with these cats. I had no other thoughts about it. Just to play that music." I've got one friend of mine who always says to me, "Bob, how's your career?" And I still have trouble with that word "career." You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: It seems to me "career" is a word that's used by somebody who knew early on, I mean early, when they were six years old, that they had some control over their lives. And early in my life it wasn't clear to me that I had control over my life. Maybe somebody says, "Well, that kid down the street could do it." Maybe he did, but we're not talking about him. It always looked like black people were just doing whatever it was okay to do rather than making these choices. You know what I mean? It's like saying, "I want to go to college and be a doctor, so in high school I'm going to take the science regimen." Right? "And I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that, and I can just see it down the road there, and I want to go to graduate school here." And somebody says, "Well, black people, you don't go to graduate school in Texas." I'm not picking on Texas now; I just want you to see that at every turn there's

somebody who can say, "Oh, no, no. You can't do that."

So you find yourself saying, "Well, if we can't do that, well, you won't bother me if I do this, will you?" And you're always saying, "Well, okay, if I can't do that, then I'll do this." But you're always saying, "I don't have control over this." It's like if somebody stops me from doing this, then I'll go to the option play, like in football. If there's a big ugly guy over here that weighs three hundred pounds, then I'll opt to go the other way, you know?

But all I wanted out of music was just to be able to play it, just what I heard. It was just a spiritual awakening for me, man, when I heard Charlie Parker and Dizzy and Miles and those cats. I thought it was really heavy, man. I'm telling you, I'm still reeling from it now. Everything those guys were doing: their language, their dress, the names of the tunes, the sound—Just the sound, you know what I mean? I mean, it leaped away from the swing thing like from BC to AD. You know?

ISOARDI: A new world. New world.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. New world.

ISOARDI: One thing we haven't talked about at all, Bob—I don't know if it plays much of role in your, I won't say, career—is the musicians union [American Federation of Musicians].

BRADFORD: Oh, no, man. The union. The only thing I've ever gotten from the union is a fine or a dun in the mail that I haven't paid the dues. I belong to— Well, you know, when they merged the two unions and it became [Local] 47, and they

closed down the one black local [767] over on Central [Avenue]—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: —yeah, I joined 47. You paid your money, you know, and they took you through this phony audition.

ISOARDI: When did you join? When you first came out?

BRADFORD: No, they didn't have it when I first got here. Let's see, when they put those two—

ISOARDI: It must have been April '53 when they merged.

BRADFORD: Well, then that's when I joined.

ISOARDI: Oh, you joined when they merged? You weren't in [Local] 767?

BRADFORD: No, no, I didn't actually belong to that local. I used to go over there where the guys— That building over there on—

ISOARDI: Seventeenth [Street] and Central?

BRADFORD: Yeah, somewhere in there. I never actually was a card-carrying member in that local. But I joined 47 in like the middle of 1953, it seems like. And you know, they've got this audition where they'd say that— At first it looked like they didn't want a bunch of black guys just coming and jumping in there in big numbers, just joining the local, because we already had the big high-echelon guys like Buddy Collette and Curtis Counce and all those guys.

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: They were the biggies around town. This idea of one black and white

union, now, everybody wasn't happy about that, you know? But they had this audition that would eliminate you in the beginning. If you'd come in and you couldn't read music, they'd say, "Well, you can't join the union if you can't read music at all." Of course, everybody knew that was a bunch of bullshit. Then after a few months of that, things kind of calmed down.

ISOARDI: Was that the only criteria? You had to be able to read something?

BRADFORD: Well, that's what they would do. That's the only thing they could test you on. They couldn't come in and say, "Well, can you play jazz?" because half of the white musicians that belonged to the union didn't play jazz. That's all that's left, to give you an audition, is to have you read some music.

ISOARDI: Unbelievable. So all these guys that were playing night after night but maybe couldn't read—

BRADFORD: At first probably couldn't get in the union. But they stopped that right away because, you see— The idea, I suppose, is that once they had gone through all the pros and cons and the people who had to make the decision— That was a decision by the whites; it wasn't black people deciding that we're going to merge. The white union had to finally say, "Well, okay, we're going to have a mixed union." And then they finally sort of calmed down. I joined. I think you payed \$75 to get in the union.

But you still didn't get any of those jobs, you know what I mean, except the elite half a dozen black guys around town. But what it meant was that when you played around town, they had these guys— No matter where you played, unless it was

way out in the sticks, if it was a union house they would come and see that everybody on the bandstand had a card. And we had one black guy who was a notorious union scout, who would come out and see if you had somebody on the bandstand who wasn't in the union. His name was Elmer Fain.

ISOARDI: He was still acting as an agent after you merged? He was still around?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. Well, I don't know if he worked for the other union or not.

ISOARDI: He was in 767.

BRADFORD: Was he?

ISOARDI: He was notorious.

BRADFORD: Well, then he was "notoriouse" in 47 [laughs], going around to the clubs. And if you had somebody up there who wasn't in the union, he'd write you up, and you'd have to pay a fine. That's about the only thing I ever got out of the union.

ISOARDI: Elmer Fain wrote you up?

BRADFORD: No, no. He wrote up the band that I was in once. He wrote up a band leader who let me sit in. Then he wrote me up once, too, for being on the bandstand with nonunion musicians. Everybody would say, "Hey, man, Fain's coming." And everybody would jump off the bandstand and all kinds of stuff like that. [mutual laughter] Right. That was a poor, misguided soul. You know?

But no, the union never did anything for me, now. I'm sure it helped Buddy Collette, who's the guy who—

ISOARDI: I guess the half dozen guys who got into the studios.

BRADFORD: Buddy was the first, which meant that you've definitely got to be in the union, right? But as the years went by it got better and better for people who belonged to the union, because there was certain work for which you had to be in the union.

Now, if you're going to do film scoring or TV work or anything Hollywood—

ISOARDI: You've got to be a member.

BRADFORD: You've got to be a member, because the money is going through the union. There's no getting around it. But I can't remember the last time—I don't think my name is even in the computer anymore. I haven't paid dues at the union—I think I quit paying fifteen years ago. Now, John remained in it until the day he died. He was a card-carrying, dues-paying member. I quit paying.

I'm trying to remember now—When I did that thing with Ornette in New York, when I got to do the *Science Fiction* [recording], those guys said, "Are you a union member?" I said, "No, man, I don't belong to a union." They said, "Okay. We'll fix it. They're going to take some tax out of your money"—the New York union or whatever—"and you'll get your check in the mail." I think they took about twelve dollars out of a check that was about \$1,500 or something like that. And I had no problem with it.

I've got nothing since, good or bad, from the union, you know? So they have not played any significant role in my life at all.

I used to go over there sometimes and see these guys who'd be in that big ballroom, and they'd be reading off jobs for people. You know, it's almost like on the

floor at Wall Street.

ISOARDI: Reading off jobs?

BRADFORD: Describing jobs and putting them up on the— Who's available for this?

"We need a trumpet player who can play C trumpet and B-flat trumpet and blah blah blah leaving here and going to be in so-and-so for so many weeks." And some guy goes, "Hey, I'm interested in that." And you go up there. It's kind of like the floor where jobs are coming in. You sit there and look at stuff like that. Man, I can see I wouldn't work in any of that.

But some of the guys who— You know, competent musicians, obviously, people like Buddy and like Bill Green and like Curtis Counce and people like that around town, the union sort of helped in that wherever they worked around town, if it was like a class A club or a class B or whatever, they knew they were always going to get union scale.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: And they got these little bits every now and then. But I think if you ask somebody like— Oh, I can't think of somebody around town who was somewhere in the cracks, that belonged to a union but would do a lot of scab work, too. You could say, "Well, has the union helped you?" They might say, "No." Well, a guy like Buddy Collette would say, "Oh, yeah, man. All the money I ever made I got through the union."

ISOARDI: Yeah, really, really. So that probably would have been— You mentioned

that some people were in favor of it and some people were against it.

BRADFORD: Yeah, they were. In fact, I think Benny Carter and others had been sort of pushing the idea for longer than people can imagine. Finally, by 1953 the wall sort of came down. And there were dissenters during that period, too, but not enough to stop it, you know?

ISOARDI: Do you know why they were dissenting?

BRADFORD: Well, I think, if nothing else, just "these black guys." You know, they wouldn't want these black guys over here in the white union.

ISOARDI: Oh, you mean in the white union there was dissent?

BRADFORD: Yeah. Oh, I don't think the black players were unwilling, you know? I think most of them saw that even though there would be some problems it eventually would be a step up. I don't think that any of them thought it meant that it was going to be a union for all now, and everybody's going to be white now. I don't think they thought that.

ISOARDI: Yeah. What was 767 like?

BRADFORD: You know, I honestly can't tell you a lot about that union other than it had limited authority, you know? I'm sure if you picked the places around town where black musicians played, 70 percent of them were nonunion.

ISOARDI: So probably I would guess by the mid-fifties or so people were playing everywhere. Maybe when it was just Central Avenue the musicians union was stronger, but as that starts declining and musicians are spreading out, playing all

around town, they are—

BRADFORD: You can imagine what it's like with a guy like Benny Carter who would be doing film scores and all kinds of Hollywood music. Then you have to deal with him through the black union. It makes it really complicated, you know? And then little by little, finally you get a guy like Buddy Collette, you know, a studio musician, and you're saying it's useless to have these two unions here. What sense does it make? You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: He told me one time that on one of the shows—I don't know if it was the first time he was on the Groucho [Marx] show [*You Bet Your Life*] or whatever, but whoever it was, the agent came by, and they were sort of collecting dues or something, like going down the bandstand—\$2.50, \$2.50—and he got to Buddy and he says, "Oh, no, you're in the other union, \$1.50." And the white guys got all upset, "What do you mean he's only paying \$1.50?"

BRADFORD: It's cheaper, right? Black is cheaper. Oh, that's great. [laughs cynically] That's good.

ISOARDI: So he said that probably had more of an impact than anything else.

What about the new music scene in Los Angeles? I mean, you've talked about John and his work in the eighties. But what about in the eighties in general, and the nineties? How is it changing? Or is it, in Los Angeles? Is it continuing to grow and flourish or—?

BRADFORD: Well, it's growing. I mean, there are all kinds of people here doing

stuff now and music that— Lots of improvisation, but you can't call it jazz—some of it not even jazz related, you know? But good music.

ISOARDI: Such as?

BRADFORD: Well, I don't want anybody to say that I call their music not jazz, but you know in these little venues around town comparable to the thing that you saw me do in Santa Monica [the Knauer/Johnston Studio]?

ISOARDI: Right.

BRADFORD: There have always been little things like that around town—a flute player and somebody doing body movement, or groups with art instrumentation, you know, electric guitar, violin, and somebody playing harmonica. And people doing all kinds of— And there was this dance group around town, a tap dance group that had jazz, and sort of free improvisatory groups were coming in then. In fact, this bass player who died here, von—

ISOARDI: Oh, Eric von Essen.

BRADFORD: Eric von Essen played for some group around town [Jazz Tap Ensemble]. It was a tap dance group. But there are—I mean, maybe I should go back on whether it was jazz or not—groups around town like Emily Hay, a flute player that plays some jazz. Some of the stuff she plays, I don't think you'd call it jazz. Michael Vlatkovich, the trombone player, I think some of the stuff that he plays you wouldn't call jazz. I don't think he'd want it to be called jazz, just as some stuff I've done I wouldn't want to call it jazz. I'd just rather call it American music, you know? I don't

want to argue about it, you know what I mean? There's Nels [Cline] and Alex [Cline], there's Vinny [Golia], there are people I can't even name now. You know, they play in Vinny's big band [the Vinny Golia Large Ensemble]. All those people in there have got things going, you know?

ISOARDI: And Vinny has the label, Nine Winds Records.

BRADFORD: Yeah, and he's got lots of people on it, you know? CalArts [California Institute for the Arts] has a program out there that encourages people who are doing so-called new music, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly. So there is quite a bit going on.

BRADFORD: Yeah, there's a lot of stuff happening around town.

It's just— It's hard to categorize the stuff now, you know? But I think the same thing is true for New York. I was just talking to Mark Dresser the other day on the phone. He told me about stuff he's doing in New York with various instrumentation. People are doing things that— It's like the Knitting Factory [club]. A lot of the stuff that those guys do there, you can't call it jazz. Half of what John Zorn plays, you can't call it jazz.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: But, now, he's definitely associated with the jazz community, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, certainly.

BRADFORD: People like Henry Threadgill, stuff he's doing, you know?

L.A. is kind of— The only thing unhealthy about L.A. is that guys don't have enough opportunities to play. We've got a radio station like KLON that ignores all of that.

ISOARDI: Completely.

BRADFORD: Just totally ignores it.

ISOARDI: I remember in one of their promos a couple of years ago they were—I mean, they didn't think of what they were saying, I don't think, but they were saying KLON represents the full scope of jazz from New Orleans to bebop.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: And it's like they didn't think what they were saying. Bebop is the furthest— You know, they've only gotten up to the 1940s, right?

BRADFORD: They might have known what they were saying, and that's it to them, you know? [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: But that seemed to summarize it.

BRADFORD: I heard them saying “KLON plays wonderful mainstream jazz, and we let the other people play the other stuff.” Even if you think something like that, you shouldn't say it. “We let the other stations play the other stuff.” You know what I mean? That's like, "We're deciding what's good," which is a terrible thing to say, even if that's who you are. And it looks like every time you turn around they're begging for money, right?

ISOARDI: Yeah. I was at a dinner one night with Clora Bryant and a couple of other

people, and there was somebody there I didn't know, and we were just talking about jazz, and somebody mentioned KLON, and I just sort of cracked, "Yes, it's got to be the only jazz station in America that plays more Jack Sheldon than John Coltrane." And I didn't realize that this guy I didn't know was on the board of directors at KLON.

BRADFORD: That's good you said it.

ISOARDI: But it was true.

BRADFORD: It is true, man. That Helen, Helen— What's her name?

ISOARDI: Oh, Helen Borgers.

BRADFORD: With all that Jack Sheldon.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's a real problem. And I don't know that this new jazz station, KJAZ, is going to be any different in terms of their scope.

BRADFORD: They don't have any signal, man. I can't even get them here.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: And when I get them it's fuzzy.

ISOARDI: I've been getting them clearer than KLON on the radio.

BRADFORD: Have you?

ISOARDI: In the car driving around.

BRADFORD: Well, of course, sometimes driving around, if you're going in the right direction—I guess going that way you're going towards the signal, aren't you?

ISOARDI: I guess, as I head west.

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: But what are some of the venues, then? I mean, there are some places.

Certainly LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art] has been a decent venue.

BRADFORD: Well, LACMA and MOCA [Museum of Contemporary Art], and every now and then these guys will come up with their own little thing. It might not last for a while. Alex had a thing here at the [Pasadena] Shakespeare [Company] Theater in the old Pasadena Mall for a while.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right, that theater. Yeah.

BRADFORD: Right? Yeah, and now they've got another place someplace now.

ISOARDI: Out in Culver City?

BRADFORD: Yeah, something like that. Then there's another place called— Oh, I got something in the mail from them the other day, this [Jeff] Gauthier, the violin player—

ISOARDI: Yeah, isn't that the place out in Culver City?

BRADFORD: Where I played and the police came?

ISOARDI: Yeah. [This was actually the Knauer/Johnston Studio in Santa Monica.]

BRADFORD: Now he's got a new space someplace. [Conjunctive Points Dance Center in Culver City]

ISOARDI: Aha.

BRADFORD: There's a couple places in town now that the flyers are coming out for, and one's in Culver City, one's in Santa Monica—

ISOARDI: There was one downtown, too, wasn't there [the Downtown Playhouse]?

BRADFORD: Well, you see, that— Don Preston was sort of running that for a while. I was supposed to play there the second of June, but they were having some problems, and he said, "We've got to back up for a while and regroup." And they're going to start up again, too.

ISOARDI: They're going to try it again?

BRADFORD: Yeah. I'm going to actually go and talk to them, because I'm thinking about starting another thing, too. I don't know where or when.

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Yeah. The idea was to have something on this end, you know? There won't be any money to be made at it, but I just— It just seems like we need a place here for people to come and sit down and for people to hear people play music.

ISOARDI: That would be great.

BRADFORD: But that's on the back burner too, man.

ISOARDI: Have you ever played down in Leimert Park?

BRADFORD: Not in a long time, man. Not in a long time. It's been ages. I know guys play there, you know, but I haven't been in a long time.

I haven't played in Watts since they used to have the Watts [Summer] Festival [of Art]. I haven't played out that way—you know, south—in ages. I mean, there was a time when there was something happening in the wake of all the other stuff. But nothing's happening now in Compton or in Watts on that level, you know what I mean? Nothing's happening. Billy [Higgins]'s place is happening, the World Stage.

And there's another little place apparently very near the World Stage that somebody tells me about that's two or three doors away.

ISOARDI: Oh, Fifth Street Dick's?

BRADFORD: No, now, Fifth Street Dick's— Something else right in there. One of my bass player students said he was playing there recently, but I can't remember the name of it, but not Fifth Street Dick's. And I forgot about Fifth Street Dick's as we were talking here. That place was a real blessing for the time that—I don't know what the future of that is, now that the guy [Richard Fulton]'s dead, but I imagine they're going to try and hang in there, too.

ISOARDI: Yeah, they've reopened it, and they've got a little stage that they put on the main floor now, downstairs up front, and there are people out there playing. I don't know if they're going to be able to—

BRADFORD: —to hang in.

ISOARDI: Just wait and see. So it's still a scuffle.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. The scuffle continues.

ISOARDI: The scuffle continues. There's nothing new there.

What about some of the new trends in music that are happening? L.A. is a major Latino center, and L.A. is going to be a majority Latino city very soon. How is this going to affect the music?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. There's a big thing now of so-called Latin jazz, salsa, and other musics all mixed, where we've got these bands that are playing a little ska, a little

R and B, a little jazz, a little salsa, everything, like— And I've got some students that are into some of these bands, like that one called Ozomatli.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Weren't a couple of your students in Ozomatli?

BRADFORD: Yeah, more than that. Were you here the night the one [Ulises Bela] brought me the cigars?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: He was one of my students, and two or three other guys in that Ozomatli band. Yeah, and there's another group called Yeska. Almost all those guys were students of mine at Pasadena City College.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

BRADFORD: And the other guys at school now are just— One group, now, called itself some sort of Clandestina something. [Arkestra Clandestine] They've got a sign up already. They're playing some sort of Latin jazz, you know, ska, bebop, all sewn together.

ISOARDI: It seems like more so now than almost any time I can remember there aren't many boundaries.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. The Latino population now, even though it's growing— In addition to it growing, it's always been big here. This is the first time in years I've seen the Latino musicians pulling on jazz in a way that they haven't before. The largest enrollment at Pasadena City College now is Latino. Almost all the musicians in the jazz bands are Latino. Right? I think of my bands in the last five or six years, now,

and out of ten people, always six of them are Latinos, playing saxophones, basses, drums, whatever. Right?

ISOARDI: And interest in the music?

BRADFORD: Yeah.

ISOARDI: The history of the music, too?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. All of them have taken my Music 25, my History of African American Music, classes. They're all interested in any kind of black music, you know? They all are trying to figure out a way to make this—I think this is a bigger time now than I've ever seen it before for it's so-called Latin jazz, whatever that means.

All through the period, now, when people like Cal Tjader were trying to make a statement like that, or Dizzy Gillespie was doing all that stuff, and Machito's band in New York, and going back in the bop era with Mario Bauza and then Chico O'Farrill—Somebody like Tito Puente—For the longest time Tito Puente's thing was just mostly salsa or salsa-like music. You know, in recent years, his band started playing jazz standards. See, now, in the fifties Tito wasn't playing jazz tunes. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: But in recent years he's playing really obscure stuff from the Jazz Messengers and Miles Davis and Hank Mobley, and Coltrane tunes. Yeah, you can hear these guys playing Coltrane tunes—you know what I mean?—and putting them under a bolero, you know? And there's a super crossover. The jazz musicians are

borrowing a lot. Like this young trumpet player from Texas. What's his name? Roy Hargrove? He's borrowing from Cuban music. So now the thing is finally so convoluted you don't know who borrowed from who. And in my mind it's healthy, you know?

ISOARDI: Well, David Murray—I mean, he's recorded in the Caribbean, he's recorded in Senegal—

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. David is just— Whatever it is, David could— He just did something in New York with Fontella Bass, you know the one—

ISOARDI: Really? Lester Bowie's ex-wife?

BRADFORD: Right. They're doing gospel-like sort of stuff. Just last week he appeared—

ISOARDI: Oh, the latest album of his is with her.

BRADFORD: I haven't heard that, but whatever— That JVC Festival in New York, he was on it with her. A friend of mine in New York called me; he said David is perfect in that. Because he grew up in a church, too.

ISOARDI: Right. Yeah, I love that album that he did with her.

BRADFORD: I haven't heard that.

ISOARDI: Oh, it's great.

BRADFORD: Now, see, that's just like throwing a rabbit in a briar patch, to put him in a gospel setting, you know?

ISOARDI: Really?

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah. He's a good example of somebody who just— You know, with no disrespect to Ornette Coleman, who went to someplace in North Africa and recorded with those guys [the musicians of Joujouka] and all, which didn't work, but David's thing, wherever he's gone and played with these people, man, he makes it work.

ISOARDI: I read somewhere that Ornette said—or maybe not him, but somebody writing about him said—that his trip to Africa is when he really got into the funk thing, that the funk thing didn't have so much to do with what was going on here but what he picked up in Africa.

BRADFORD: I don't believe that—that's just me saying that—because I heard tapes of what he was doing in Africa, man. It was just— These guys were playing, and he'd try to get the saxophone and play in there with him. They were videotaping the whole thing.

ISOARDI: Didn't work?

BRADFORD: Didn't work. Had nothing to do— You can't go to Africa, now, and get turned onto the funk thing from there. Never mind. You know what I mean? I have some problems with that, even though there's some wonderful music, now, wherever— David has picked these musicians now that have figured out a way to come to what they're doing and make it work and what he wants to do, too. You know?

There's nothing like going to some other music, now, and you just stick it on

like Porsche hubcaps on a VW [Volkswagen]. You know what I mean? That's one thing. If you could do that, I could get with these throat singers from Tibet and have them going [mimics nasal vocal drone], and I'll play the trumpet over that [sings eighth-note jazz phrase]. And [you would] say, "Well, damn, Bob, that makes no sense." You know what I mean? But I'm doing it. Things have to work if you're making some kind of musical statement. And if they don't, man, you have to kind of go back to the drawing board.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRAFDORD: Don Cherry had a real handle on that *Multi Kulti* thing, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, he did.

TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE ONE

JUNE 13, 2000

ISOARDI: So what does the future look like?

BRADFORD: Oh, boy, you know—

ISOARDI: Or have we missed any projects in the nineties? I know, aside from *Death of a Sideman*, you did David Murray's *MX* album.

BRADFORD: Oh, I did this album that I thought you knew about, but maybe you don't, with Anthony Braxton.

ISOARDI: Oh, no.

BRADFORD: We did it here, and then we sent the results to Braxton and he played over it. You see, this guy John Rapson, who's a trombone player and an instructor at the University of Iowa.

ISOARDI: [reading from album] It's called *Dances*—

BRADFORD: —& *Orations*. I would give you that copy, but that's the only one I've got here. First of all, John Rapson and Braxton played together in duet form, right? Then they extracted their improvisations and put that down on paper. Then Rapson came here and scored these improvisations for me and Bill [William] Roper and Alex Cline and some other people. We played them and improvised, and he sent that back to Braxton, who then improvised over the variations of his improvisations. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: What did you think?

BRADFORD: Oh, I liked it. I liked it. I think you'll like it, too.

ISOARDI: All right.

BRADFORD: It's from that group in Berkeley.

ISOARDI: Oh, Music and Arts [Records].

BRADFORD: Yeah, right. There's their information there on the back if you want it.

ISOARDI: Yeah, definitely. Anything else?

BRADFORD: Well, you know, Diamanda [Galas] is coming to Los Angeles to play at the new Knitting Factory [club]. And I've got a project in the back of my mind that I'm going to try to interest her in. I don't know whether she's going to want to do it or not, but I've got an idea about something with her doing sort-of— What do you call it, like when a singer's doing— It's like scat singing, except I don't want her to go "doobie-doobie-doobie." You know? I want to use her voice in a way that I know she can—throat noises and oral percussion. I don't know whether she'd be willing to or not. I've got just some ideas about me and her and a cello player and a bass player maybe, and then somebody with a low-range instrument, like trombone or bass clarinet. I just remember when I saw that she was going to be here I started thinking, "Hey, man, that would be interesting, something that I think record companies would be interested in hearing, anyway." That's just something on another back burner.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: But I've got to get the move on some of this stuff, you know? Don

Cherry and I—I just briefly spoke with him about it. Oh, it's been fifteen years ago or more. We were at one jazz festival, and he was sitting at the counter. He had a tooth that was—I don't know what it was. Anyway, he had this ice pack up to his face because something was killing him, a tooth or—He had to play that night, too. We were talking about the possibility of us getting a rhythm section and doing two trumpets on it. But he was so out of it, man; I think the next day he didn't even remember it. He had some tooth that was just driving him nuts. He had a rag, a napkin with ice cubes in it, and he had just stuck it up to his face trying to numb some of his pain because he had to play in about an hour. And we were talking about—I said, "Well, we'd better get on with our show. We'll be dead soon." You know, not knowing that it wouldn't be long that he *would* be dead.

ISOARDI: That's something that you would have liked to have done?

BRADFORD: Oh, that would have been really fun, man.

See, the writers often put us in the same bag. Like, "Bobby Bradford played with Ornette, and Don Cherry took over and did that, and then Bradford—" See, there's no similarity in our playing at all, none whatsoever. And some writers say, "Bradford took the Cherry idea and went that way with it." That's just—You know, that means you've got an ear made of just exotic stone. You know what I mean? Don's a wonderful trumpet player, man, but—Do you know what I mean? It would be like saying Ben Webster and John Coltrane or something. It's just there's no connection between our playing styles at all. And [when] the guys say that, I want to

say to them, "Well, then this is clear, now, that you don't listen to music. You just write about it, but you don't listen."

But it would have been fun, because we both probably would have played some of Ornette's tunes, maybe a couple of standards. And it would have been a really good record, you know?

ISOARDI: Any other regrets? Things you wish had happened or that you had done?

BRADFORD: No real big ones. I don't have any things I look back on and I think, "Oh, my God. I wish I—" I don't have any of those. Not even not going to make that *Free Jazz* record [with Ornette Coleman]. [mutual laughter] I think I made the right move. All I know is if I had to do it again, I can't see myself doing anything other than what I did.

ISOARDI: What about looking back on L.A. as a place for jazz? I mean, you've got a perspective now, on and off, of about fifty years.

BRADFORD: Well, you know, there's been a lot of talent here. There are a lot of things about L.A. that don't help it in terms of jazz. First of all, it's so big and has unbelievably bad transportation. Also an audience here that is not the best. A part of it, I think, is this big influx and outflux of population here, where you don't have a hard core— You know, it's like somebody was— Woody Allen was saying something that somebody said to him not too long ago, all that trouble about his marrying his whatever [Soon Yi Previn]. He said, "Well, I'm a New Yorker." Well, see, nobody would ever say, "I'm a Los Angelean," because there's nothing to say about you being

here, is there? It's not like saying, "I'm a San Franciscan." That sort of means something.

ISOARDI: It does.

BRADFORD: But it doesn't mean anything to say "I'm from L.A." It's just a great big old country town. And the movie studios are here. And you don't have a hard-core audience for anything other than party. Just party, whatever goes with having a great time, you know what I mean? Dressing beautifully and driving fancy cars and having a good time. But—

ISOARDI: It's almost impossible to put a label on anything, then.

BRADFORD: Well, it's true.

ISOARDI: This thing about L.A. being the home of West Coast cool and all that, does that make any sense?

ISOARDI: That's not true, either. The beauty of that is that people have— It's just a wonderful misnomer in that whatever cool jazz meant was a product of Miles Davis and those guys in New York. All of a sudden some of them moved to L.A.

ISOARDI: Well, and some of the guys who were studio musicians and who made those early records, that represents only a small part of what was going on here.

BRADFORD: Sure. There was an older and stronger bebop colony from Charlie Parker. In fact, you know, when "Bird" [Charlie Parker] came here in 1946, Howard McGhee was already here, having left New York. So L.A. wasn't a total stranger to bop. So when he got here, the cats not only heard the Bird records, but they had been

playing with people—like Teddy Edwards and like Howard McGhee, who was one of the really good bop trumpet players—who had the language early on.

So then the West Coast jazz comes after that. And even that is a product of what Miles and those guys did in New York, isn't it? You know what I mean, the idea of that no vibrato kind of thing on the trumpet, man, guys try to give that to Shorty Rogers and Stu Williamson and all that. That's Miles Davis. Miles Davis invented how to play the trumpet like that. And then you've got all these guys here like Jack Sheldon and Chet Baker, all these guys who were very talented—especially Chet Baker, very talented—but that particular approach to playing the trumpet, that's Miles Davis. Now, Chet Baker came in and had his own thing to say.

ISOARDI: And he was even from L.A.

BRADFORD: No, no, he's from Oklahoma.

ISOARDI: Yeah, but he came west.

BRADFORD: But, you see, neither was Gerry Mulligan. Mulligan comes here. Who else comes? Of course, Dave Brubeck is from California but not from L.A. He's from Concord or someplace.

ISOARDI: Yeah, San Francisco area.

BRADFORD: He comes here. Some of those guys that were in New York come here. I can't think of all of them right now, but all that population of so-called West Coast cool jazz guys, it's a misnomer to say West Coast cool jazz. That would be almost like saying West Coast bebop. You know what I mean? But I don't suppose—

ISOARDI: I always thought it was something that was pushed maybe by a few record companies and media. Is that true?

BRADFORD: You know, I think actually it was pushed by people who didn't get the connection, who liked hearing these bands out here who played kind of soft-edged. In fact, a lot of the beboppers used to make fun of those guys, man.

ISOARDI: A lot of it was overly arranged, wasn't it?

BRADFORD: Well, there was a lot of writing. The beauty of it, though, was that for the guys who were good, the writing was really good. The Don Fagerquist band, the writing was good.

ISOARDI: The which band?

BRADFORD: Don Fagerquist, white trumpet player here during that period that had a West Coast band. Shorty Rogers's band was good because the writing was good. Lennie Niehaus, the writing was good. The small band writing here was better than in New York, if you ask me, during that period—just the writing. But these bands here lacked the soul intensity. They played a really light sound. The rhythm section was kind of light, you know? They didn't have any Art Blakey kind of drummers, except the guys who were playing—You know, the black bop guys. But, you see, that music, the light stuff, was more accessible, easier to listen to, easier to play on the radio for people, too. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

BRADFORD: Just think of it, now. Dave Brubeck's most famous piece, written by

Paul Desmond, that "Take Five," that's the most unswingiest thing you could play in terms of getting a groove. But it's cute. That's the word I would use for it. It's got a nice little lift, you know? "One, two, three, four, five." But the swing, or the groove— But, you see, what would happen with that, I suppose, and you have to go along with it, [is that] people, whether they "knew what they liked" or they "liked what they knew," the final product was just Dave Brubeck standing there, and those guys are playing [sings sweetly], "Ding ding ding went the trolley. Ding ding ding went the bell," and these other guys are over here are playing [sings bold, syncopated phrase]. And this music over here is aggressive, abrasive even, you know, mean, some of it. And why not pick that nice, easy-to-listen-to music? In fact, I remember when I was in the military, guys used to say, "Well, Chet Baker and Shorty Rogers and those guys are trying to play like Miles Davis." They want that kind of puffy sound like Miles gets, so "maybe they ought to put on boxing gloves"—that's what one guy used to say—"and finger the trumpet with boxing gloves so it would be all muddy," right? And some of these guys would call what the West Coast guys played "foofoo," "foofoo jazz," because it was light. Guys would make fun of it, because it sometimes got to be [sings light, cute, perky phrase]—which it often did, you know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah. But that was just a part of the West Coast.

BRADFORD: That's right.

ISOARDI: It was just certain artists.

BRADFORD: Certain artists who weren't as good as some others.

ISOARDI: Yeah, because at the same time, the California Club was—

BRADFORD: —was happening. Art Pepper was happening. He certainly wasn't any foofoo.

ISOARDI: It amazes me when people list him as this West Coast cool improviser. Never.

BRADFORD: You see, I suppose what they hear in him is that sometimes when he switched to tenor [saxophone]— He sounded so much like Lester Young on tenor it was scary.

ISOARDI: Maybe he just played a lot of charts, a lot of—

BRADFORD: Well, the thing about him— You see, he was playing all the Charlie Parker stuff, but most of the white saxophone players out here who liked what Charlie Parker was playing in terms of the notes liked the Lester tone. Now, think about it. All the white saxophone players like Bob Cooper, Richie Kamuca—

ISOARDI: And Stan Getz was out here, too.

BRADFORD: —all those guys liked Lester Young's sound. They didn't like that Coleman Hawkins thing. But when Charlie Parker's thing hit the streets, they liked the bop linear thing, right? It's hard to have them both. So Art Pepper was the guy who swung really heavy. But he still had a softer, less edgy sound than the Charles McPherson, Sonny Stitt, Charlie Parker kind of alto [saxophone] players, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, definitely.

BRADFORD: So when you listen to guys like Art Pepper play, you could— Art

Pepper was like a smoothed-out, easier-to-listen-to version of a bop saxophonist.

ISOARDI: I always thought that he had such passion in his music, though.

BRADFORD: He was a wonderful player, man. He was a strong, good player. Big doper, that was his problem, right?

ISOARDI: When I read his autobiography it was just four hundred pages of pain.

BRADFORD: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Almost nothing about music. All about the drugs.

BRADFORD: Yeah, just drugs. There were guys here in town, man, that played well, like Zoot Sims. I don't think of Zoot Sims as a West Coaster because he was back and forth—

ISOARDI: He grew up here, though.

BRADFORD: But all these guys were great players who got hooked on Lester Young, and then when the bop thing came they were trying to pull that bop thing into their style but still were coming from kind of— Especially the saxophone players. And there were lots of them here who played beautifully, man. Like Bob Cooper—good saxophone player, you know? There were lots of good players here. So when you listen to two guys like— Like Lee Konitz. I don't think of him as a West Coaster, though he made a lot of records with Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker and those people. He was a New York cool jazz-bop modernist. The same thing would be true for Warne Marsh. All these guys were good, man.

ISOARDI: Any final thoughts, Bob? We've come down to it.

BRADFORD: I can't think of anything that I want to say, man. It seems like there ought to be a little coda that I can slip in here. I've enjoyed flashing back over this though, man. I really have—things I had totally forgotten about that had happened.

ISOARDI: There was so much. It's awfully rich.

BRADFORD: Yeah. But it's been good, man. There have been some painful periods, you know? I had some really painful periods in New York and then when I went back to Texas after the New York thing didn't work out and trying to go to college with a wife and a couple of kids and trying to go to classes during the day and working at these jobs at night and playing on weekends, man. God, I thought if I live through this, man, I could do anything. Nothing can stop me. [laughs] You know? But it's been good, man. I don't have any real complaints.

We didn't talk about the woman violin player, Terry Jenoure, in John's—That's the octet bunch there, that photo. On that particular date they had Fred Hopkins, you see? And Terry Jenoure did a lot of that vocalization and some of the poetry reading on all the records.

ISOARDI: What about her?

BRADFORD: Very talented. Puerto Rican woman, you know? New York. Violin player, singer. She was really good, man. In recent years, after our final thing with the band, she went to some school in upstate New York or someplace in Massachusetts to get a Ph.D., and I haven't heard a thing from her since. As I remember, though, she was having serious man trouble.

ISOARDI: Bob, thanks very much. Extraordinary.

BRADFORD: Well, I've enjoyed it, man. I'm looking forward to seeing this stuff in print. [mutual laughter]

INDEX

- Adams, Bertrand, 113-14, 119, 123, 126-27
Adams, Marcus, 136
Ali, Muhammad, 335
Ambrose, Emma (great-grandmother), 17-18
American Federation of Musicians Local 47, 492-98
Ammons, Gene, 83-85
Anderson, John, 133, 174-75, 206, 212
Anderza, Earl, 164-70, 176-78, 196, 199, 208-9, 285
Arkestra Clandestine, 507
Armand's (club), 147-49, 192-93, 199
Armstrong, Louis, 61, 125, 299-300, 372-73
Art Ensemble of Chicago (musical group), 428-33
Ayler, Albert, 189
- Baker, Chet, 210, 215-17, 517, 521
Banks, Martin, 81
Barnes, Dick, 447
Barton, Dee, 78
Barton, Will, 78
Basie, Count, 75, 91, 102, 119, 361
Bass, Tontella, 509
Batiste, Alvin, 81, 474
Bechet, Sidney, 455
Beiderbecke, Bix, 364
Bela, Ulises, 92, 507
Belgrave, Marcus, 230
Benton, Walter, 152, 158-59, 217
Berg, Billy, 209-10
Big Top (club), 154-55
Black Music Infinity (musical group), 315-16, 353-54, 451
Blackwell, Ed, 150, 187-88, 205, 241, 260, 396, 400, 409, 411-19
Bledsoe, George, 152, 154
Bluiett, Hamiet, 439, 442
Blythe, Arthur, 309, 315-16, 353, 453, 474-75
Bomar, L.J., 108
Bond, Jimmy, 133
Borca, Karen, 443
Bowie, Lester, 431-32
Bradford, Benjamin (son), 14-15, 436-37
Bradford, Bishop Johnson (uncle), 2-3, 7, 10, 51-53
Bradford, Bishop Johnson, Jr. (cousin), 3
Bradford, Bobby—works: *Bobby Bradford with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble* (recording), 394; *Death of a Sideman* (suite of compositions), 417, 419-20, 470-71, 486-89; *John Carter and Bobby Bradford: The New Music* (video), 358-60; *Love's Dream* (recording), 346, 395; *Tandem I* and *Tandem II* (recordings with John Carter), 347, 425-27
Bradford, Carmen, 78, 233, 238, 256-59, 265, 267, 269, 273, 278, 303, 349-50
Bradford, Henrietta Isabella (grandmother), 10
Bradford, Karl (son), 233, 238, 256-59, 265, 267, 269, 273, 278, 303, 349-50
Bradford, Keith (son), 233, 238, 256-59, 265, 267, 269, 273, 278, 303-4,

- 349-50
- Bradford, Lisa Tefo (second wife), 14, 361-62, 393, 435-37
- Bradford, Robert Delane (uncle), 3, 7, 51
- Bradford, Webb Eugene (grandfather), 2
- Bradford, Webb Eugene, Jr. (father), 1-2, 6-7, 10-11, 17, 25, 28, 50-55, 57-58, 62, 65, 86-87, 104, 106-7, 115-17, 327-28
- Bradford, Webb Eugene, III (brother), 1, 7-8, 17-18, 22-23, 26-27, 30-31, 37, 39-40, 42, 48-49, 52-53, 86-87
- Brashear, Oscar, 422, 464
- Braxton, Anthony, 346, 442, 512
- Brewster, Roy, 160, 197-98
- Brown, Carrie, 65, 104-5
- Brown, Clifford, 151-54, 158-59
- Brown, Marion, 439, 442
- Brown, Oscar, Jr., 471
- Brubeck, Dave, 517-19
- Brunswick, William, 127
- Bull, Peter, 358-59
- Bunker, Larry, 411
- Bunn, Jimmy, 133, 210
- Butler, Frank, 411-12
- Calhoun, Red, 102
- California Club, 154, 172, 213, 218
- California Institute for the Arts, 501
- California Institute of Technology, 323, 454
- California State University, Dominguez Hills, 347-48, 351
- Callender, Red, 477-80
- Carroll, Baikida, 464
- Carter, Benny, 498-99
- Carter, Chris, 480
- Carter, Gloria, 475
- Carter, John, 38, 141, 205, 280-84, 286-93, 295, 297-98, 306, 309-11, 313, 321-24, 326, 339-42, 347, 353, 356-62, 384-86, 388-93, 401, 421-22, 424-32, 446-49, 453-70, 474-87, 496, 522
- Carter, John, Jr., 457
- Carter, Kent, 272, 345-46
- Carter, Stanley, 322, 385, 453
- Catalina Bar and Grill, 341-42
- Century City Playhouse (performance space), 288, 292, 313-14
- Chambers, Melvin, 106-7
- Chambers, T.M., 38-39
- Charles, Ray, 76-77, 80-81, 408
- Cherry, Don, 156, 160, 163, 196-202, 236-40, 260, 270, 396, 398, 404, 444, 511, 514-15
- Clay, James, 72-73, 77-79, 81, 92, 94, 99, 230, 254
- Cline, Alex, 315, 445, 501, 504, 512
- Cline, Nels, 315, 422, 445, 501
- Cobb, Arnett, 254
- Coker, Dolo, 133
- Cole, Nat King, 138-39, 331
- Coleman, Denardo, 354
- Coleman, Ornette, 134-45, 147-51, 155-56, 158, 161-62, 164, 177, 183-92, 198-99, 201-7, 236-55, 257, 259-67, 271, 281, 325, 394-401-9, 411, 415-17, 421, 441, 444, 466-70, 473, 489, 496, 510, 514-15
- Collette, Buddy, 133-34, 493, 495-97, 499
- Coltrane, John, 262-64, 270, 314, 323, 369, 380, 440-41, 455, 508, 514
- Concerts by the Sea (club), 390-91
- Condoli, Conte, 216
- Cooper, Bob, 521
- Cooper, Leroy, 77
- Cortez, Jayne, 141-42, 162, 183, 187, 240

- Counce, Curtis, 133, 150, 158, 412, 493, 497
- Crawford, Hank, 77
- Crenshaw, Willie, 118
- Criss, Sonny, 208-9
- Crouch, Stanley, 295-96, 315-19, 341, 347, 352-55, 385-86, 442-43, 451
- Cyrille, Andrew, 341
- Daaood, Kamau, 294
- Dara, Olu, 443
- Davidson, Madelaine, 346
- Davidson, Martin, 346-47, 356
- Davis, Anthony, 442
- Davis, Art, 260, 425
- Davis, Jim, 74, 93
- Davis, Miles, 61, 82, 86, 197, 270-71, 381-82, 398, 440, 491-92, 508, 516-17, 519
- Davis, Richard, 341
- Davison, Wild Bill, 119
- Dean, Donald, 475
- Dolphy, Eric, 148-49, 159-60, 217, 236-37, 444
- Donte's (club), 320
- Dorham, Kenny, 86, 270, 491
- Downtown Playhouse (performance space), 504-5
- Dresser, Mark, 317, 410-11, 447, 501
- Drew, Kenny, 151, 270
- Dunbar Hotel, 35
- Dyani, Johnny, 425
- Edwards, Teddy, 83, 217, 517
- Ellington, Duke, 76, 100-1, 108, 110-12, 138, 331, 361, 373, 383, 398-99, 434, 439
- Emanem Records, 346-47
- Fagerquist, Don, 518
- Fain, Elmer, 495
- Falb, Hans, 476
- Farmer, Art, 88, 133, 418
- Favors, Malachi, 431-32
- Felder, B.O., 27, 29-30
- Ferris, Glenn, 386, 448
- Fields, Mildred, 260-61, 488
- Fifth Street Dick's (club), 506
- Five Four Ballroom, 209-10
- Five Spot (club, New York), 199, 241, 243, 245-46, 248, 255-56, 262, 320
- Flying Dutchman Records, 293, 295, 338-41, 449
- Franklin, Henry, 288, 386, 389, 448-49
- Freeman, Bruz, 38, 283, 288, 295, 354, 391-93, 430
- Freeman, Bud, 254-55
- Freeman, Chico, 289
- Freeman, George, 289
- Freeman, Russ, 273
- Freeman, Von, 289
- Friedman, Don, 155, 215
- Galas, Diane. *See* Galas, Diamanda.
- Galas, Diamanda, 317, 447, 513
- Garland, Red, 102
- Garner, Erroll, 146
- Garrison, Jimmy, 243, 256-57, 260, 263-65
- Gauthier, Jeff, 504
- Geller, Herb, 159, 217
- Gillespie, Dizzy, 61, 74, 82, 86, 89, 116, 118, 120-21, 124, 157, 197, 270, 490-92, 508
- Gilmore, John, 135-36
- Gjerstad, Frode, 425
- Goldsmith, John, 386, 389
- Golia, Vinny, 315, 445, 471-72, 501
- Gordon, Dexter, 82-83, 108, 133, 150, 155-56
- Gray, James, 74
- Gray, Wardell, 133, 154, 163, 174,

- 212-14, 218
 Green, Thurman, 311, 450
 Green, William, 490
 Greenfield, Myrna, 488-89
 Griffin, Azalee Hemphill
 (grandmother), 4-6, 8, 17, 18
 Griffin, Bernice (mother). *See* Walker,
 Bernice Griffin.
 Griffin, Eve, 240-42, 266

 Haden, Charlie, 396, 399, 420-24
 Hagman, Larry, 285-86
 Haig (club), 217-18
 Halton, Eugene, 80
 Hamilton, Jimmy, 474
 Hardee, John, 76, 101, 254
 Hardy, John, 292-93, 323
 Harper, Billy, 78-79, 254
 Harris, Barry, 270
 Hasaan, Jeff. *See* Jeffrey, William.
 Hay, Emily, 500
 Heasley, Tom, 422
 Hegwood, Ernest, 121
 Hemphill, Julius, 438-39, 443, 479
 Henderson, David, 397, 405
 Henderson, William, 448
 Higgins, Billy, 188, 205, 241, 396, 399,
 409, 412-13, 418-20, 423, 505
 Hodges, Johnny, 90, 398
 Holman, Bill, 216
 Hope, Elmo, 270
 Hopkins, Fred, 419, 522
 Horiuchi, Glenn, 471-72
 Howard, Floyd, 150, 186-87
 Hubbard, Freddie, 237

 Izenzon, David, 256-57, 263-65

 Jacquet, Illinois, 254
 James, Harry, 61, 108
 Jarman, Joseph, 431-32

 Jeffrey, William, 321, 384, 453
 Jenkins, Freddie, 76, 101
 Jennings, James, 121
 Jenoure, Terry, 522
 Johnson, Budd, 76
 Johnson, Claude, 80
 Johnson, Feltus, 48-49
 Johnson, Herbie, 79, 94, 99
 Johnson, Keg, 76-77, 101-2
 Johnson, Wilda Bell (cousin), 40, 46,
 48-49
 Jones, Quincy, 258
 Joplin, Janis, 364
 Jordan, James, 395-96
 Jordan, Louis, 72, 325-26

 Kamuca, Richie, 216
 K and H Records (shop), 161, 201
 Keller, David, 311, 449-50
 Kenton, Stan, 78, 216
 Kinnard, Pete, 161-162, 201
 Klein, Jack, 97
 Klein Music (shop, Dallas), 87, 97
 Knauer/Johnston Studio (performance
 space), 500, 504
 Knepper, Jimmy, 219
 Konitz, Lee, 521

 Lacy, Steve, 260, 346, 357, 426, 455
 Lake, Oliver, 386, 438-39, 442
 Land, Harold, 153, 158, 219, 320
 Lane, Morris, 83
 La Roca, Pete, 241
 Lawrence, Azar, 446
 Lewis, John, 240
 Liberation Music Orchestra, 420-22,
 455
 Liston, Melba, 124
 Little Big Horn (performance space),
 326, 386-89, 391, 393, 435
 Lopez, Paul, 42-43

- Lowe, Walter, 316
 Lyons, Jimmy, 43
 Maini, Joe, 215
 Mangione, Chuck, 243
 Mangione, Gap, 243
 Manne, Shelly, 273, 411
 Marable, Larance, 210, 411
 Mardigan, Art, 215
 Marsalis, Wynton, 382
 Marsh, Warne, 320
 Mayfield, Percy, 208-9
 Mazur, Kurt, 401
 McCurdy, Roy, 243
 McGhee, Howard, 316-17
 McIntyre, Ken, 441-42
 McTell, Ralph, 416
 Miesner, Giuseppe, 43
 Miller, James, 66-70, 96
 Millinder, Lucky, 119
 Million Dollar Theatre, 43-44
 Miranda, Roberto, 311, 445, 450, 463, 475
 Mitchell, Blue, 487
 Mitchell, Roscoe, 431-32
 Mobley, Hank, 486-87
 Moffett, Charles, 134-35, 140-41, 241-42, 248, 256, 260, 264-65, 268, 395, 409
 Moffett, Charnett, 268, 409
 Monk, Thelonious, 270, 325, 488-89
 Moore, Harold, 386
 Moore, Melba Joyce (first wife), 78, 230, 233, 235-38, 256-59, 265, 267-69, 273-74, 278-79, 303-4, 348-50
 Morgan, Frank, 154, 163-64, 170-75, 210-11, 218, 478
 Morgan, Nate, 448-49
 Morris, Butch, 451
 Morris, Wilber, 223-24, 292, 297, 316, 318, 451
 Morrow, George, 153
 Moyé, Famoudou Don, 431-32, 443
 Mulligan, Gerry, 216-17, 517, 521
 Mullins, Herb, 209
 Murray, David, 316, 319, 352-53, 417-19, 424-25, 433, 438-39, 443, 447-48, 450-51, 474, 509-10
 Navarro, Fats, 61, 82, 86, 108, 156, 196, 491
 Newman, David "Fathead," 69-70, 72-73, 77, 84, 92, 94-95, 230, 254
 Newman, George, 156, 160, 162-63, 196-99
 Newton, James, 316, 319, 386, 427, 448, 477-80
 Nickel (district), 149-50, 183, 186, 212
 Niehaus, Lennie, 518
 Nimitz, Jack, 216
 Norbo Grill, 212-13
 North Sea Jazz Festival (the Netherlands), 362
 Oasis (club), 175
 Occidental College, 292, 323
 Olvera Street, 40, 43-44
 Owens, Charles, 478
 Ozomatli (musical group), 507
 Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra, 293-94, 309
 Parker, Charlie, 36, 71-72, 74, 82, 90, 107-8, 116, 137, 139, 144, 146, 148-49, 171-72, 176-77, 188-91, 196, 210-11, 253, 325, 361, 369-70, 373, 379, 439-41, 444, 492, 516-17, 520
 Pasadena City College, 43, 332, 351-52, 355-56, 369, 374-75, 434, 507
 Pecot, Monica, 318

- Pepper, Art, 216, 520-21
 Perkins, Carl, 152-54, 219
 Perry, King, 207, 219-20
 Phillips, Fuzz, 80
 Phillips, Leo, 102
 Pico-Dil (club), 175
 Pomona College, 315, 317, 323, 332, 352-53, 355-56, 363, 374, 462
 Porter, Rudolph, 321, 384-85, 388
 Powell, Bud, 217-18
 Powell, Richie, 153-54
 Preston, Don, 341, 464, 485, 505
 Priester, Julian, 77
 Pomona College, 317, 323, 332, 352-53, 355-56, 363, 374, 462
 Puente, Tito, 508-9
 Puthli, Asha, 192

 Quaye, Caleb, 416
 Quebec, Ike, 101

 Rapson, John, 512
 Redd, Sonny, 258-59
 Redman, Dewey, 254, 396, 398-99, 407-9
 Reywald, Richard, 389, 410
 Roach, Max, 152-54, 159, 412
 Robeson, Paul, 330, 334-36
 Rodriguez, Bobby, 43
 Rogers, Shorty, 517-18
 Rollins, Sonny, 239, 323
 Roper, William, 311, 450, 472, 512
 Rose, Jonathan F.P., 465
 Rosolino, Frank, 219
 Round-Up (club, Dallas), 99-100
 Rouse, Charlie, 83
 Rudolph's Fine Arts Center (performance space), 321, 384-85, 388, 426
 Rumsey, Howard, 390

 Saddik, Rasul, 450
 Samuels, Sol, 80
 Sanders, Pharoah, 254, 390-91
 Savage, Walter, 316
 Sessions, Michael, 450
 Shange, Ntozake, 448
 Shank, Bud, 216
 Sheldon, Jack, 215, 517
 Shelly's Manne Hole (club), 273, 320, 428
 Silver, Horace, 491
 Sims, Zoot, 521
 Slater, Vernon, 208-9
 Slater, Vivian, 209
 Slug's (club, New York), 396, 407
 Smith, Boston, 76
 Smith, Buster, 75-76, 80-81, 100-1, 254, 361
 Smith, Fred, 408
 Smith, Wadada Leo, 442, 471-72
 Snowden, Don, 311, 319
 South Park (Los Angeles), 38, 451
 Stamp, Herbert, 121
 Stevens, John, 272, 299, 345-46, 413-14, 425
 Stitt, Sonny, 82-85, 152-53, 520
 Straughter, Ray, 445
 Studio Z (performance space), 428-29

 Taft Theatre (Cincinnati), 260-61
 Tap City (club), 155, 216
 Tapscott, Horace, 30, 287, 293-94, 297, 309-11, 314, 320-21, 445-46, 449-50, 452-53, 474
 Taylor, Cecil, 443, 475
 Theus, Sonship, 446
 Thiele, Bob, 293, 295-98, 310-11, 338-41, 354, 390, 429
 Thompson, Chuck, 411
 Thompson, Danny, 416
 Thompson, Lucky, 158

- Threadgill, Henry, 424-25, 439
 Tiffany (club), 217
 Tip Top (club), 217, 219
 Tower (club), 391-92
 Travis, Marshall, 124-25
 Trice, Amos, 210
 Turrentine, Stanley, 91-92
 Tyler, Charles, 318, 354-55

 Uehlinger, Werner X., 342

 Vaughan, Stevie Ray, 364-65
 Vlatkovich, Michael, 500
 von Essen, Eric, 500

 Wadud, Abdul, 443
 Walker, Augustus (stepfather), 25-26,
 30-32, 34-35, 37, 39-40, 48, 50, 52,
 128, 130-33, 162, 168, 183, 185,
 272-73
 Walker, Bernice Griffin (mother), 1-8,
 12, 16-20, 22-23, 25-28, 30-32, 37,
 40, 47-50, 52, 126, 130-32, 168,
 185, 236, 272-73
 Walker, T-Bone, 208, 326
 Walker, Toby, 34-36, 131-32
 Walton, Cedar, 71-73, 80, 92, 98-99
 Warfield, William, 336-37
 Watts, Trevor, 272, 299, 345-46
 Watts Summer Festival of Art, 181,
 319, 505
 Watts Towers, 181-82
 White, James, 67, 96
 Williams, Cootie, 108, 398
 Williamson, Tom, 283, 288-89, 295,
 391, 393-94, 430, 449
 Wilson, Gerald , 133, 175-76
 Wilson, Phillip, 425
 Wind College (music school), 464,
 476-80
 Wong, Francis, 471-72

 Woods, Phil, 490
 World Stage (performance space), 505-
 6
 Wright, Callie, 27-28
 Wright, Ernest C., 28
 Wright, Eugene, 133, 150-51
 Wright, Leo, 118, 126, 128, 135-37

 Yacht Club (Dallas), 83
 Young, Lester, 520-21

 Zardi's Jazzland (club), 151-52, 154,
 216
 Zep's Music Center (music store,
 Burbank), 42-43
 Zorn, John, 501