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JAZZ MUSICIAN, JAZZ EDUCATOR

Paul Tanner

Interviewed by Alex Cline

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

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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: October 15, 1917, Skunk Hollow, Kentucky.

Education: B.A., Music, UCLA, 1958; M.A., Education, 1962;
Ph.D., Music Composition, 1978.

Spouse: Bunny Smith Tanner, deceased 1981; Jeanette Steele
Tanner, 1984-present.

Military Service: United States Army, 1943-45.

CAREER HISTORY:

Played trombone with the following:

American Broadcasting Company staff orchestra

Tex Beneke

Les Brown

Neal Hefti

Henry Mancini

Billy May

Glenn Miller

Nelson Riddle

Pete Rugolo

Charlie Spivak

Trombone soloist with symphony orchestras conducted by the
following:

Leonard Bernstein

Walter Hendl

Zubin Mehta

Eugene Ormandy

André Previn

Arturo Toscanini

Bruno Walter

Teaching Positions:

Senior lecturer, Department of Music, UCLA, 1958-81.

Freelance lecturer, 1981-present.

AFFILIATIONS:

World Jazz Association

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

A Study of Jazz. With Maurice Gerow. Dubuque, Iowa: W.C. Brown Company, 1964. Revised edition issued as *Jazz*. With D. W. Megill, 1987.

Every Night was New Year's Eve: On the Road with Glenn Miller. With Bill Cox. Tokyo: Minato-Ku: Cosmo Space, 1992.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Alex Cline, editor, UCLA Oral History Program. Musician.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Tanner's home, Rancho La Costa, California.

Dates, Length of Sessions: July 7, 1993 (94 minutes); July 8, 1993 (122); July 9, 1993 (64).

Total number of recorded hours: 4.65

Persons present during interview: Tanner and Cline.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

In preparing for the interview, Cline consulted biographical information culled from books and newspaper sources supplied by Tanner, publications on Glenn Miller such as George T. Simon's *Glenn Miller and His Orchestra*, and Tanner's textbook, *A Study of Jazz*.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Tanner's childhood and early musical experiences and moving through his years as a trombonist with Glenn Miller's band and his work in Los Angeles as a studio musician and lecturer at UCLA. Major topics include musical life and personalities during the swing era, Glenn Miller, the evolution of jazz music, and Tanner's Development of Jazz course.

EDITING:

Peter Looney, Gold Shield intern, edited the interview. He 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.

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

Cline prepared the table of contents and interview history. Kathleen McAlister, editorial assistant, assembled the biographical summary. Peter Limbrick, editorial assistant,

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

JULY 7, 1993

CLINE: Traditionally with these interviews we start at the beginning, so what I'd like to ask you first is if you could tell us when and where you were born and any unusual or interesting circumstances that may surround that particular information.

TANNER: Well, it was a little more unusual for my mother [Janet O'Donnel Tanner] than it was anybody else. You may not believe this, but I was born in a place in Kentucky called Skunk Hollow. And that's the truth. When they put me in the *The Encyclopedia of Jazz*, Leonard Feather-- You know, musicians put him on, and rightly so. So he called back and said, "Paul, about this Skunk Hollow--" I said, "It's the truth, right across the road from Pumpkin Ridge." That ought to place it.

CLINE: From Pumpkin Ridge?

TANNER: Right. It's in between Fort Thomas and Covington, and it's in Kentucky. My dad was teaching school out there.

CLINE: And what was his name?

TANNER: My dad's name? Well, we always called him "Colonel," because he was a colonel, and that replaced "Dad" or "dear" or something like that. His name was Archibald [Tanner], but you'd never call him that. You know, he was a big, husky army fellow. But he was also a very good musician and a good

educator.

CLINE: And what did he play?

TANNER: Piano. He went through the Cincinnati Conservatory [of Music] on piano. He and my mother met at the state college in Minnesota [Mankato State University]. They met in the choir. My mother was singing, my dad was singing, and they met there, and they-- In fact, I went back there years later as a guest soloist on trombone, and they didn't even know I had any connection with the place. I told them if they hadn't had a good choir I wouldn't be there. [laughter]

But when they left there, my dad went-- He played college football and all. They needed a big, husky guy to teach down there in Kentucky, so he took the job. And he had to be a good athlete in order to do it, because the kids down there chased away the last half a dozen teachers. But he told me--and someday I'll do a book on my dad--it went fine until recess.

They went outside, after recess they called them in, and nobody came inside. So he stepped out into the middle of them, and they said, "We chased away the last six." And one kid had a big club. My dad grabbed the club, hit the kid over the head, and they all lined right back in. No more problems.

CLINE: [laughter] Oh, man.

TANNER: That's what they needed.

CLINE: So he wound up in Skunk Hollow due to his athletic--

TANNER: Athletic prowess. [laughter]

CLINE: Mostly his brute strength, it seems.

TANNER: Yeah. But then he went on to Virginia as a teacher, a school superintendent. Then he went into Delaware, the southern part of Delaware, then into Wilmington, Delaware--you know, the one big city in Delaware. [laughter] He was the head of the state reformatory there in Delaware. So I was raised there for eleven years in a boys reformatory. Six brothers in our family, and one of them was born in a boys reformatory. Now, I can see being born in a girls reformatory, but a boys reformatory-- I told them I sure hope it was a cesarean.

CLINE: So where was your father from originally, then?

TANNER: Minnesota.

CLINE: And how did he get involved in music? Was that something that was always in his family?

TANNER: Well, when he was a kid he had his choice. He had an older brother. They lived out on a farm. He'd either practice the piano or go out and work on the farm, and he would much rather practice the piano.

CLINE: And his athletic interest didn't compete or interfere with his musical interests?

TANNER: No, I guess not, because he was a pretty husky fellow.

CLINE: He didn't break any fingers, then?

TANNER: No. [laughter]

CLINE: Okay. What about your mother?

TANNER: She was a very good soprano, a very nice singer. She taught at the very low level for a little while, and then she got too busy. Too many kids.

CLINE: Where was she from originally?

TANNER: She's also from Mankato, Minnesota. It's a small town up there. It's very nice. The college up there, it was state teachers normal or something like that, and now it's a state college, Minnesota state college, or Mankato State University in Minnesota. They got married and had a long, long life together, stayed together until both of them went.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: And you said you had a number of siblings.

TANNER: Yeah, six brothers in our family. As a consequence, we had our own band.

CLINE: Everyone played?

TANNER: Yeah, Alex, everybody tried to play. Six of us. It ended up that three could play professionally and three couldn't, so I don't know what that says about the genes.

CLINE: Was it because they tried to play professionally and couldn't? Or they just weren't as interested?

TANNER: No, they really didn't have it.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: But part of that could be they didn't have it to practice enough or something, you know. But my oldest brother, by golly, he had good teachers back in Wilmington, Delaware, and he practiced like the devil. He wanted to play in the worst way, and that's the way he played: in the worst way.

CLINE: [laughter] What did he play?

TANNER: He was a saxophone-clarinet player, but he didn't play very well. But a couple of the other guys wanted to start out at the top, and that doesn't work out, you know.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: Two of them are still playing now, playing very well, in Los Angeles, a drummer and a bass player.

CLINE: And their names are--

TANNER: Slim is the bass player, and he only answers to that. His name is Homer [A. Tanner]. You're not going to call a bass player Homer. And the other guy, the drummer's name is Don [Gordon L. Tanner]. They've played with some good bands, and they play very well today.

CLINE: And what was the name of the one who played saxophone who didn't make it--?

TANNER: Bob [Robert E. Tanner]. But Stu [Stuart E. Tanner] didn't want to practice enough and Tim [Archibald E. Tanner]

didn't want to practice enough, so--

CLINE: And what did they play?

TANNER: Not much of anything, the way it ended up. [laughter]

CLINE: Oh, okay. [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So you, on the other hand, were not found wanting in terms of ability, it seems. You were interested and had ability.

TANNER: Well, I practiced awfully hard, Alex, I really did.

Now, the kids at the reform school showed me how to hold the horn and where the slide positions were and all, you know.

So I practiced in a hurry. In our family you had to work up a certain amount of proficiency on the piano, and then after that you could choose your instrument. So I worked real hard on the piano because I wanted to play trombone.

CLINE: And what was it about the trombone that interested you so much?

TANNER: Those guys are out front, Alex. [laughter] They have to be or they harpoon somebody. [laughter]

CLINE: So that's it. Was there any particular band or individual you saw that really first piqued your interest in the instrument?

TANNER: Well, back in those days--that's the bottom of the thirties, you have to understand that--a trombone player has

got to be thrilled by hearing Tommy Dorsey. And he's got to be thrilled by hearing Jack Teagarden. As far as bands are concerned, you've got to be thrilled by hearing Duke Ellington. So those three, I guess, were very heavy on my listening chart.

CLINE: And did you hear those bands when you were young?

TANNER: Records.

CLINE: Records--

TANNER: Yeah, I heard records mainly. I heard Teagarden when I was quite young. He was with Paul Whiteman then. But mainly you listened to records. You couldn't believe what some of those fellows could do on an instrument I was trying, striving to play the scale on, you know. Of course, you being a drummer, you don't have to fool with scales.

CLINE: No. [laughter] Sometimes that's not so fortunate, however.

So at this point had you made up your mind that you wanted to be a professional musician?

TANNER: Oh, yeah. That was all I ever wanted to do. I actually wasn't a real good student in high school because all I wanted to do was play music. And I started writing arrangements for my brothers and me.

We had this band, a pretty good-sized band, and we needed arrangements written for them, so I started writing arrangements

for our band when I was a kid in high school. Wilmington, Delaware, that's the biggest city in Delaware, and my brothers and I had the most active and I guess the best band there at that time. So we were pretty busy. And I really had no excuse. My two older brothers were going to college and they were good students: I stayed up all night writing arrangements and then slept through the study part. But we had a good time and eventually we went out on the road, my brothers and I.

CLINE: You wound up in Delaware because your father got a teaching job there?

TANNER: Yeah. He was head of the state reformatory there in Delaware. We were there for eleven years. It was a good place to learn to play. I was on the reform school football team and basketball team, and I played against my own high school. And I was on the right team, because those guys were rough. Whew! I wouldn't want to play against them.

CLINE: And how was the band there?

TANNER: At the reform school?

CLINE: Yes.

TANNER: It wasn't bad. They had a band, and I played in it.

CLINE: Did you play in the high school band as well?

TANNER: Some, but I played more in the reform school band.

[laughter] But it was a good place to learn to play. It

was a good place to grow up. The reform school kids were my friends. These are my associates, you know. But in those days, Alex, you could get put in a reform school for truancy and things like that. It's a little different today. They didn't have anybody in the state reformatory who had done serious crimes. They would steal things from the dime store and things like that and they ended up in reform school. Yeah, a lot different today. There were no narcotics or anything like that.

CLINE: So I would assume that your parents were encouraging, then, of your musical interests?

TANNER: Absolutely, yeah. They thought that that was just fine. They never said anything about "why don't you get into something more stable" or any kind of advice like that. But if you were going to get into music, practice and get doing it right. They thought that there were enough musicians who were bums--I mean financially, you know. So they said, "If you're going to do it, you've got to work hard." So we all did. We were glad to. We were glad to see some progress.

So there was no problem with that. I still enjoyed practicing up to the time I quit playing.

CLINE: Which was when?

TANNER: Oh, in the late 1970s.

CLINE: You said that you also had to learn piano.

TANNER: Yeah, that's right. I can't play the piano, so don't get that-- But I can play enough to where-- I write music a lot. I write a lot of arrangements and I've composed some things and so forth. I'll write something and go to the piano and check it and make sure I've got what I think I've got.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: So that's the only way I use it. I can't play the piano, never have been able to. When I was practicing a lot when I was little kid I could play some things, but that was about it. I've lost all that.

CLINE: But it did help you, obviously--

TANNER: Sure, absolutely. Pianoplayers who write music have an advantage, because there are a lot of things under their fingers that other guys have to search for sometimes.

CLINE: So going back to your brothers playing in Delaware now, these are, I presume, the other two brothers who have some ability that you are talking about?

TANNER: Well, four brothers were in the family band--the saxophone player, too.

CLINE: Oh, okay. [laughter] And I'm assuming that the drummer is one, and--

TANNER: And the bass player.

CLINE: --the bass player. Oh, great. So you had a rhythm section and two horn players.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And anyone else in the band?

TANNER: Well, actually it was a big band. We had full brass, full saxes, everything. But, see, that was the style in those days, Alex. You didn't go out with a little combo unless the people that were hiring you couldn't afford any more. They hired your band. And if you had a full band, you were competing with other bands in the city. So our band was a full band: brass, saxes, and rhythm. And a singer.

CLINE: And you said you were hot. You were the local hot guys.

TANNER: That's right. [laughter] I wouldn't think so if I heard them now. [laughter]

CLINE: What then lead to your further musical adventures outside of the family band?

TANNER: Well, my dad was a very strong-willed man and so forth, and politics started to enter into his job at the state reformatory. He said, "I don't like it," so he left, and we all went out on the road with the family band. I was on the road altogether about seventeen years. Now, that's a lot of travel. I hear guys say, "Gosh, I was out on the road for two months. Jeesh!" I thought, "Try seventeen years!" But I didn't know anything different.

So the family band went out on the road, and we got ourselves

booked in a lot of places down South, like Georgia, Florida and all. There were mainly gambling clubs, and they would hire the band. Some of those gambling clubs were really experiences for a bunch of young people like we were. There was a club, for example, in Atlanta that was raided by the police every week. That was a standard thing: everybody knew it. There was a guy out at the highway who would push a button, and things would light up inside the club, which was a little way off the highway, and it said, "Here come the police." So the bartender had all his booze in pitchers, and he would turn them all upside down. The gambling room would be converted into bridge and things like that in practically no time. These cops would come up to the front door, and they would shoot the lock off. Now, this was every week, so the locksmith down the street had a weekly gig to come and put a new lock on. Every week. The band, we were in a different room, because we were playing for people who danced and ate dinner and all. So musicians are kind of strange that way. We would hear these shots, and we would duck behind these little cardboard stands which were no help at all, you know. [laughter] But it was employment, and we didn't mind it, and the owners were good to us. We worked in different gambling clubs all over until we finally didn't have anyplace else to go, and we broke the band up.

CLINE: And what time period exactly are we talking about now?

TANNER: Oh, must be about 1937, around in there, yeah.

CLINE: So obviously when you were playing down in the South, things were heavily segregated at that point.

TANNER: Oh, yeah, definitely. I didn't know anything about politics; I just knew music. And the musicians, especially guys into jazz, you know, Alex, they don't care if the guy next to them is green. "How do you play?" They don't care.

If you're a bad player, you're a bad player; it doesn't help if you're some other color. But if you're a good player, then that's just wonderful. So we didn't have that kind of a problem. Black people couldn't come into these gambling clubs where we were working, but we never thought about it.

We would always go hear them play.

CLINE: What was the actual name of the family band, by the way?

TANNER: The Kentuckians.

CLINE: The Kentuckians from Delaware. [laughter]

TANNER: Well, the four oldest guys were born in Kentucky, and my dad from Minnesota somehow or other was a southerner. I'll never understand it.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. Maybe because he was the Colonel.

TANNER: Yeah. He's a real colonel. In World War I he was

active, and then in between the two wars he was the head of a regiment of reserve officers, and then in World War II, even though he was overage they took him in, and he ended up being the head provost marshal in Tokyo.

CLINE: Really?

TANNER: Yeah. He was very good, he really was. He was a good man. He had problems. A definite womanizer.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: And yet he stayed together with your mother all those years.

TANNER: Yeah, that's right. He denied everything.

[laughter]

CLINE: But she knew?

TANNER: Yeah, she knew.

CLINE: So what happened after the family band broke up?

TANNER: Well, we were playing in Augusta, Georgia, and Frank Dailey's band came into town for a one-nighter. Now, I don't know if you know that name, Frank Dailey, but he owned the Meadowbrook in New Jersey, Pompton Turnpike, New Jersey, a big supper club. You're on the air every time you turn around.

Always a microphone up there, you're on the air. So we wanted Frank to come out and hear our band. And if he could put us in the Meadowbrook, well, we knew we had it made. So he

came out and heard the band, and he said, "Well, I can't use the band, but I want to take the trombone player." Which is pretty tough because, you know, that's my brothers and all. But my brothers said, "We have nothing. We don't have a job to go to, nothing. Take it. Go with him." So I did. My brothers all went back to Atlanta and spread out and started doing their own thing.

CLINE: So they stayed down there for a while?

TANNER: Oh, yeah. They sure did. They stayed down there for a little while, and then they-- Eventually everybody ends up in Southern California. [laughter]

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: But I went with Frank Dailey, and I went back up to his Meadowbrook--gorgeous supper club up in New Jersey--and I was there a short while with him, and he came to us and said he had sold the band. Now, he sold the band to an old movie actor named Buddy Rogers. Okay, Buddy Rogers wanted to have a band. He could play a little bit on different instruments, and he would run around the band and play a little bit of this and a little bit of that. It was terrible, but people thought he was so great, you know--and a very good-looking fellow. So Dailey said, "I've sold the band to Buddy Rogers, but he wants it exactly as he heard it," which meant that Frank had to hire back a lot of guys he had fired and he had

to let some guys go that he had hired. And I wasn't on the band when Buddy Rogers heard it, so I had to be replaced by the guy who was there. But it worked just great for me, and I was very lucky that that happened.

CLINE: And why were you lucky that that happened?

TANNER: Well, because the next band for me after that was Glenn Miller.

CLINE: [laughter] And how did that come about?

TANNER: Well, if you're back East-- Now, you've got to picture 1937-38-- If you're an out-of-work musician back East in the summertime, then the thing you do is you go to Atlantic City [New Jersey], because in Atlantic City there were a lot of clubs where you could sit in and jam, you could earn your dinner, a place to stay, and so forth. That's about all, but what you hope for is that somebody will pick you up. Now, between the Steel Pier and the Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City, a half a dozen bands every week came through there. And if they're looking for what it is you can do, you can be picked up and get yourself a nice job. In the meanwhile, you're working in these clubs, you're jamming, you're keeping things going, you're playing, and so forth.

So I was playing in a place-- I had been around to several places sitting in playing, and I went into this one place

called the Swing Club. And it was a strip joint, Alex. The ladies were disrobing. So the guys and I would sit up there, and I would play some nice pretty tunes--you know, "Persian Market," "Love Your Magic Spell," things like that. You don't play "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody" anymore; those are passé.

So the guys in the band--there were five of them--they went to the owner and asked him, "Please hire this guy; it will make a big difference." The owner said, "I'll pay him fifteen dollars a week, but he's got to pay five of that to the union, because he's supposedly getting fifty dollars a week." The guys in the band were making eighteen [dollars] a week. And I'll never forget them, because eighteen a week, a dollar from each one of them was a lot. Each one of those guys chipped in a dollar and brought mine back up to fifteen.

And I told them, "Well, you know what I'm doing. I'm hoping that somebody will come through and pick me up." And they said, "Absolutely. We'd love to have you as long as we do."

So I'm sitting there playing, and I look over, and, by God, there's Glenn Miller sitting there. Now, I knew who he was; he wasn't a big name, but I knew who he was. He was doing exactly what I wanted to do: he was a big-time trombone player and arranger. And he was in there with his wife [Helen Miller], a charming lady. Two more

out-of-place people you never saw.

CLINE: I was going to ask, what were they doing at a strip club?

TANNER: Somebody told them, "You should go in and hear this kid play trombone."

CLINE: Oh, my. [laughter]

TANNER: So they were really out of place. She's sitting there with her white gloves on, and these ladies in the show have nothing on, let alone gloves.

So after we'd played the show, he called me over to his table, and he told me a couple of nice, complimentary things about my playing.

And I said, "Can I use what you say as a recommendation? Because that's what I want to do."

And he said, "Well, how soon can you come with me?"

And I said, "Right now!" I told him I was packed. I had my toothbrush in my pocket and it was the only suit I had. I said, "I can come right now."

He said, "That's it. You come with me tonight." And I stayed with him until he broke the band up.

CLINE: Now, you said that you knew him, that you recognized him.

TANNER: Yes, I knew who he was. I had seen pictures and heard things he had done and so forth, so I knew all about his playing

and about his writing and about his organizing and things like that. He was a big wheel to me.

CLINE: But this was before he really started to peak in popularity.

TANNER: Oh, yeah. In fact, he had had a band for a short while before that, and he broke the band up. Because he couldn't handle the guys, Alex. They were heavy drinkers, and he just couldn't handle them at all. So he broke that band up, and he was just starting a new band, and he thought, get some young guys in there who are ambitious, who will work and practice and so forth, and you could make a good band out of them.

So that's what he was doing; he was organizing a band then.

And he had gotten himself booked into the Million Dollar Pier. This was their first thing; they were just going. They just came out and put me in his band, which is awful nice, you know.

CLINE: Was having a rather temperate lifestyle sort of a requirement or--?

TANNER: Oh, no. Glen himself hadn't had too temperate of a lifestyle. [laughter] But he eased off, and he became a party drinker. The kind of thing as far as the booze is concerned that he was involved in in his band was you never let it interfere with your playing. If it interferes with your playing, you're out. If it doesn't interfere with your playing, then there's

no problem. One time at the Meadowbrook, we had one of those notorious band meetings which are always where you're being dressed down for something. He said, "The people here are so nice to you fellows, they want to buy you drinks all the time. And it's out of hand." He said, "One drink per night while you're playing." And one of the guys said, "You don't mean me too, do you, Glenn?" Glenn said, "The reason for the meeting is you." That guy left.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Yeah, and he left of his own accord. Because he didn't want that kind of thing to be held over him, that he had to ease up.

CLINE: So the problem with the first band, then, was that it was getting in the way of the music?

TANNER: Yeah, that's right. You know, if you see a guy fall off the bandstand and things like that, you can't have that.

Glenn figured that this was a business. If you had a law office or a doctors office, you come in and take care of business.

And he figured you come to work, you take care of business, and if you can't do it, somebody else will be there tomorrow night who can. And the union would hold him up on that--fire a guy on the spot. There was no problem with that.

CLINE: The union was a lot stronger then in that regard, I guess.

TANNER: Yeah, it was a lot different union. I don't know. I'm not a staunch union fellow, Alex, so I really don't want to get on that.

CLINE: Okay. So now you've joined Glenn Miller. How was his band situated in terms of work at that point?

TANNER: We did a lot of one-nighters. In fact, he had a tough time keeping it going. He called us in our hotel room one night in Boston, and he said, "Guys, I have nothing. I don't have Saturday night, so if you have anything, you should go to it." And you know, we were a bunch of young guys around twenty to twenty-five years old, most of them, and we said, "Gee, Glenn, this is the best band we've ever played with. Let's try it a while, let's practice some more, let's work on it." So he said, "If you guys feel that way, that's it." And within a couple of years after that, he was a millionaire.

CLINE: My.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So it's partly the band's dedication to the music and to that actual gig that helped him become so successful?

TANNER: I think so. It was an attitude. And that did it for him. He hooked up with a fellow up in the Boston area who-- If you were in New England at that time doing one-nighters, you were working for this fellow. His name was Sy Shribman. He was a booker, an entrepreneur. If you went into that area,

you were working for him. So he took a great interest in the band and the attitude of the band, and he said, "If that's the way it is, then I'll back you," and he gave Glenn a handful of money, and it took care of expenses.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: That's Sy Shribman. He had a couple of nephews who worked in his office, good guys, and they loved the band. Sy looked like Sydney Greenstreet.

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: The pockets were always bulging, but what they were, they were dollar bills. You know, it wasn't all that organized. [laughter] And if you needed something, "Yeah, Paul, here. Go eat." That kind of thing.

CLINE: And this was on the up and up?

TANNER: Yes, absolutely.

CLINE: Oh, good.

TANNER: Yeah. He was a good guy and a big help to Glenn. Glenn went into some investments with him, some orange groves in California and that sort of thing. So that association worked out well. But Sy was a big help to the band. As I say, he had faith in what we played, and he had faith in the attitude of the band, which makes a big difference.

Sy also had other things going. He had this ballroom in Boston, and he had a band that came in there two or three

nights a week called Joe Mack and his Old Timers, and it was the worst thing, Alex, you ever heard. They all--it was the whole band--played in unison. They played the melody.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Yeah, everybody except the drummer. [laughter] They all played in unison, and the people loved it. They crowded in there, and they clapped for them. And here the Miller band--Artie Shaw was up there at the time and some other bands--we couldn't get people in there enough to warm up. [laughter]

But they came to hear that band. But Sy saw to it that the band, that the Miller band, started to get some radio time.

CLINE: Is that what really was the key--?

TANNER: Yeah, that made a big difference. And then Glenn hooked up with RCA Victor records, and that made a big difference.

CLINE: So this began the meteoric rise--

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And I imagine as this started to happen, you started working more and more, to the point where you must have been extremely busy.

TANNER: Well, we worked all the time, anyway. That band got going, and we would have four nights off a year.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Yeah. You'd work all the rest of the time, and he'd give you four nights off a year. You were doing Chesterfield

[cigarettes] radio programs Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, so he couldn't give you them off. But he could give you four nights, so twice we had four nights off. And one stretch, Alex, we did 140 appearances in two weeks.

CLINE: How is that possible? [laughter]

TANNER: Well, we were playing the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City, and we would do three sessions there a night, six nights a week. We were working the Paramount Theatre at the same time, seven shows a day, seven days a week. So that's already forty-nine a week. And three Chesterfield programs for the East Coast, three Chesterfield programs for the West Coast--see, they didn't have tape in those days--three rehearsals. So add all this up together, it comes to 140 appearances in two weeks.

Now, Glenn got sick, but we couldn't. You know, we weren't allowed to. Our wives wouldn't allow us to, you see, because whatever you do you get paid for. And we did the top level of work, so we were doing just fine financially.

So Glenn took sick, so while we were at the Paramount--I mean, on those shows other people, whoever was in New York at the time, came in and substituted for him. Tommy Dorsey came in and substituted for him, Gene Krupa, Charlie Barnett, Dick Stabile. We ran out of bandleaders, so then we started to go to radio

announcers--Paul Douglas and people like this. And then after that we ran out of them. Then we went into politicians. We told them, "All you've got to do is bring your hand up and bring it back down again, and we'll start. We're not going to pay any attention to you after that. Bring your hand up and bring it down, and we're going to listen to the drummer to keep together with tempo and all." We said, "Turn around, shake hands with people, sign autographs, dance, do whatever you want to do. We're not going to pay any attention to you."

[laughter]

CLINE: So this sort of brings about the question of how important the person up there really is.

TANNER: Alex, after the rehearsal they're not important at all. Now, granted, if the tempo changes, then, okay, you've got to have somebody up there to keep you together. But if there is no tempo change, which is 99 percent of your music in the swing era, well, then, after they start you, you don't need them at all. Those guys are a show--and sometimes a bad show.

CLINE: I actually read that when you first joined Glenn Miller's band he put you in the bottom of the trombone section. Is that true?

TANNER: Well, yeah, actually he heard me play a lot of high, pretty things. That's why he hired me.

CLINE: That's why I wondered. You were known for your high, lyrical playing, yet he did this. Why was that?

TANNER: I asked him about it, and he said, "I'm going to make an all-around trombone player out of you. Which was a big, big favor, because afterwards I went on the American Broadcasting Company [ABC] staff in California, and I had to play everything. So it was really a big favor to me, and I eventually appreciated it very, very much. I didn't mind it too much then, because he had the pressure of the solos, not me. But I watched him all the time and listened all the time and tried to improve myself, as I should do. Eventually I got a lot better than I was when I first joined him.

CLINE: And since he was a trombone player, did you ever sense any sort of tension or rivalry between you or between him and any of the other trombone players in the band?

TANNER: No. I've read that some people have said some nice, complimentary things about me in that regard, about my playing.

He [Miller] was the best trombone player on the bandstand. He was a good trombone player, very underrated. He played excellent lead. Good tone. Very consistent. And so forth. He didn't feature himself, Alex, because he knew if he featured himself playing ballads he'd be compared to Tommy Dorsey, and he was going to come out second. He knew that. If he

featured himself playing jazz things, he'd be compared to Jack Teagarden and a couple of other guys; he was going to come out second. So he figured the heck with that. So he played lead over the section, and a good trombone player, very consistent. Yeah, he was a fine player, very underrated.

But you know, guys like to pick on well-known people.

CLINE: And you think he was a good bandleader, too?

TANNER: Yeah. He had a good ear. You didn't get away with a thing. If you hit a note that was a little out of tune, believe me, he knew it right now, give a glance over, "Jeez, shape up." It's a funny thing about Glenn's attitude about mistakes, especially in the brass. You could miss a note.

He figured that's human, and that's okay. But if you came in wrong, then that's goofing off, and he wouldn't stand for that, so you couldn't do that. But he handled those radio shows with all different tempo changes and things like that constantly, no problem, and the movie work and so forth.

He took a couple of lessons in conducting; it didn't make much difference to him. He had a baton in his hand one time.

I was sure he was going to stick himself in his eye with it. [laughter] You know, that just wasn't his style. He'd rather have a pencil.

CLINE: And who was doing a lot of the arranging and composing for the band?

TANNER: Well, at first Glenn did, but then, you know, you get too busy. So he hired a fellow named Bill Finegan, and he hired a guy named Jerry Gray, and they did most all of it. In the service he hired Norman Leyden, who did a lot of good arranging, and also Mel Powell did some things for him in the service. But in the civilian band, he kept those two fellows busy all the time. It's a funny thing, if they would write what would be called an original, well, then they came on as the composer, and they got composer royalties, and Glenn saw to it. Now, all bandleaders didn't do that, but Glenn did. So everything that they are given credit for they didn't really invent. Like you take a silly thing like "A String of Pearls," if you know that piece, Alex.

CLINE: Yes.

TANNER: That's actually an arranger's gimmick that is called a "string of pearls." Glenn studied that from a teacher who said, "You do this and call it a string of pearls." Two parts stay the same, and a third harmony moves, and that was called a string of pearls. So he said to Jerry, "You're going to do a piece called 'A String Of Pearls.' Here's how you do a string of pearls." He sat down at the piano and showed him, "Here's what you do." And then for the solos in that particular piece, use the blues chord progression. So then Jerry gets credit for composing "A String Of Pearls," but

Glenn sat down at the piano and showed him "Here's what you do." You know, this kind of thing went on all the time. He oversaw every note you did. So he's responsible entirely for how well or how poorly the band played, and it's his responsibility.

CLINE: Right. What about "In the Mood," which, of course, has to be--? To this day you can't escape that piece of music.

TANNER: No, you really can't. I do a lot of cruises, and, boy, all you've got to do is the band plays "In the Mood," and people are on the floor in no time.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Arrangers would bring things around to the band, and he would try them, and in a minute or so he could tell if he wanted to buy it or not--stop the band, pass it in, or we'd go on. He bought "In the Mood" from a fellow named Joe Garland. He's a saxophone player. Now, Glenn changed that thing all around, and if he hadn't changed it around it probably wouldn't have caught on. Artie Shaw tried it without changing it around, and it didn't catch on.

We were playing at the Glen Island casino, and Glenn thought that the dancers would get a kick out of it if that ending kept repeating over and over again and kept getting a little softer and softer--

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: And then at first they thought, "Well, the piece is over," and then you'd hit them with the loud part, and they thought that was just really exciting. So it caught on, he recorded it, and it became a national anthem.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. It still is.

TANNER: Yeah. And the funny thing is, I see where people who write about this kind of music say, "Glenn Miller made so much money off of somebody else's work." That's not true at all. Joe Garland got the composer royalties, and that's what he did. Even though Glenn changed it all around, the other guy got credit for composing and got the money for it.

His estate now gets money for "In the Mood" royalties. But where Glenn made his money was off the records. He sold a mess of records on "In the Mood," so he made a lot of money off of Joe Garland's work that way. But if he hadn't recorded it, nothing would have happened.

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CLINE: You were talking about "In the Mood." I wanted to say, wasn't Joe Garland a black musician?

TANNER: Yeah, a black saxophone player.

CLINE: Did you have much interaction with the black bands at that time, which was obviously still during a segregationist period?

TANNER: Alex, the public would not stand for a mixed band on the bandstand. That's what happened to Billie Holiday, that's what happened to Lena Horne, that's what happened to Roy Eldridge. The guy who stood up to them was [Benny] Goodman.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Absolutely. And then it was a different story. Glenn wanted to hire the lead alto [saxophone player] out of [Count] Basie's band [Earle Warren], but he looked white. And when I was playing with Charlie Spivak, Willie Smith was playing lead alto, and he was out of Jimmie Lunceford's band. But he looked white, so the people didn't know the difference.

But if they found out that even the singer, like Billie Holiday, was a black girl, they wouldn't stand for it. And boy, it must have been hard for them, just terrible. Well, Glenn had his eye on a buck, and he wasn't going to fight it, you know. But he wasn't also going on that type of a crusade.

He would have later probably, but I don't know that. I only know what did happen. Did I tell you I have a book?

CLINE: Right. I saw that when I was here doing the pre-interview. We want to make note of that as well.

TANNER: I'll plug it.

CLINE: Okay.

TANNER: It's called *Every Night Was New Year's Eve: On the Road with Glenn Miller*. How about that? [laughter]

CLINE: Perfect. [laughter]

TANNER: Commercial.

CLINE: Right. So when you were traveling around, obviously, at this point the black bands and the white bands would stay in separate hotels and play in different places. But usually musicians tend to sort of run into each other anyway--

TANNER: Absolutely.

CLINE: And was that the case with you?

TANNER: Sure.

CLINE: Did you run into people say from Basie's band or Jimmie Lunceford's band or Ellington's band?

TANNER: Absolutely. Yeah, and we went to hear them every chance we got. In fact, we always knew when Glenn had heard Lunceford or Basie, because he came back with some new tricks for us. [laughter] Especially throwing the horns around and throwing the derbies around and things like that, because

those fellows were not only good musicians, they were showmen.

But that's actually how you learned was to listen to other bands. And, boy, Fifty-second Street in New York, you'd go from club to club, and you'd hear all kinds of players play and so forth. In New York City it was a fantastic thing.

You could go hear Louis Armstrong at one theater and go right across the street and hear Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club, you know, things like this. And you did this all the time.

And most of the time the guys knew you and you knew them, you were friends. You didn't play in the same band, but-- It's a funny thing. You take like the Savoy Ballroom right in the middle of New York's Harlem. Do you know who had the record there? Guy Lombardo.

CLINE: Really? [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah. So it's hard to tell about people's tastes and all. But we'd play up there a few times, and when we played up there we broke the record then. But you didn't want to follow the Savoy Sultans, which was the seven-piece house band, because they'd outswing everybody. There would always be like a name band, semi-name band like Erskine Hawkins or something like that, and the Savoy Sultans. And what you tried to do was not follow the Savoy Sultans, because, as I say, they'd outswing everybody. We'd start out over on the side of the ballroom--and the Savoy Ballroom was on the

second floor, Alex. We'd stand over there and look up at the piano, and the piano was going up and down, and we knew that someday the Savoy Ballroom was going to be on the first floor. [laughter]

But in those days you could go around the clubs in Harlem and so forth and there wasn't a problem. You weren't in any physical danger or anything like that. You could go hear Art Tatum and Fats Waller and people like this in all these clubs.

CLINE: Who were some of the people you heard that influenced or affected you in any great way?

TANNER: It's a funny thing. I remember once when I first joined Glenn's band, he had me ride in his car, and he asked me that, and almost invariably it was the last guy I had just heard. [laughter] Because there were so many good players around that if you kept your ears open you could learn a lot, you really could, and if you were willing to spend a lot of time on it yourself.

CLINE: What about trombone players? Were you keeping up with anybody new and hot at that point?

TANNER: Yeah. Of the white guys who played pretty there was Will Bradley. Of course, any of the guys with Lunceford or Basie or Ellington; you had to admire those guys. And they would have the best black players because they could afford

them better than some of the other bands. So you always heard those guys, paid close attention to what they were doing. But you did with the white guys, too, like Will Bradley and Tommy Dorsey and those guys.

I'll tell you a funny story about Bradley. I don't know if you know that--

CLINE: I know the name, but I've never heard him.

TANNER: Well, I asked Glenn-- You see, when I first joined Glenn's band, we rode in three cars. I'll get back to that in a minute.

CLINE: I was going to ask you how you traveled around.

TANNER: I asked him, "Well, okay, Glenn, outside of Tommy Dorsey, who's the best trombone player?"

And he said, "Wilbur Schwichtenberg."

I said, "Who is that?" I said, "I would have heard of him." [laughter]

And he said, "You will."

He changed his name to Will Bradley.

Later on, we were playing Madison Square Garden, and they put our band and Tommy Dorsey's band and Will Bradley's band together, put all the trombones together and all the trumpets together--Bunny Berigan was in the trumpets--and put the three drummers together and all that. And somebody had written this hard thing for trombone trio, and there's

Dorsey, Miller, and Bradley, and they were to play this trombone trio. When they came back from playing it, we said to Glenn, "Who was playing lead?" And he said, "Bradley." He said, "If it hadn't been for him, Tommy and I would never have gotten through it." You see, because he could play anything, you know; he was that good. Now he doesn't play anymore.

But when I knew that I was going to leave New York and not come back, that I was going to settle in California, I called him on the phone. I told him who I was and what I was doing, and I said, "Can you come spend a little time with me so I can make sure I'm practicing on the right things and so forth?" He said, "Sure. Meet me down at the studio," one of the recording studios. I went down there, and he spent about three hours with me. He'd play something, and I'd try to play it and so forth. He'd give me things to practice.

And I asked him-- I figured it's worth it no matter what he charges me. So I asked him after it was over, "What do I owe you?" He said, "Oh, go across the street. You can buy me a drink." He was a real nice guy. He doesn't play anymore, you know.

But as you get older, these muscles around your lips are just a set of muscles, and you've got to give in to them.

It's not necessarily the same with saxophone, but it certainly is with trombone and trumpet. And I hate to hear guys who

can't play as well as they used to and they're still playing.

That's too bad, you know.

CLINE: With singers it's the same kind of thing, too.

TANNER: The vibrato gets a little wider on the singers, doesn't it. [laughter]

CLINE: [laughter] Exactly. So going back to Glenn Miller now, you said you traveled around in three cars. That's how you drove?

TANNER: That's right. When I first joined the band, he couldn't afford a bus, so we had three cars: Glenn had one, the piano player had one, and Glenn had another one which the saxophone player named Hal McIntyre drove for him. Well, the one that McIntyre drove, they called it the "viper special."

They were kind of the hot guys in the band, and they would have a couple of drinks as they were going down the highway.

[Chalmers "Chummy"] MacGregor's car was called the "death trap," because he didn't have any brakes and no heater, no nothing, and he was always in trouble with the law for speeding.

And then Glenn's car, because you had to have the proper attitude and so forth, that was called "solitary confinement."

That was Glenn's car. I was the youngest guy in the band when I first joined, so he wanted to keep an eye on me, so I rode in his car for a while.

CLINE: How old were you?

TANNER: Maybe nineteen, around in there.

CLINE: Was life on the road pretty wild at times?

TANNER: Not for me. I slept and ate and played trombone and that was about it. I was a tremendously big eater, but other than that I just wanted to play music. Eventually, it got to where I played a lot of golf. In

fact, stories about musicians are widely exaggerated.

Most of them spend their spare time on the golf course.

[laughter] They really do. In fact, when I left Tex Beneke's band, the back of all my music was covered with rows and rows of figures, and what they were, they were golf handicaps.

The guys in the band every night would turn in their scores to me, and I would keep the last ten scores. The trumpet player wanted to know how many strokes he had to give the guitar player the next day for their betting, you know, their ten-cent bets, things like that. So my music was loaded with all these rows and rows of golf scores. The band was a very avid bunch of golfers. And it was nice, because we got to play the best courses. Like we'd go into Augusta, Georgia, and they'd let us play on the [Augusta] [Golf Club] National course where the Masters [Tournament] is, and we were guests of the pros, you know, all that sort of thing. It was really nice.

CLINE: The reason I asked about the road stories is because

people look at someone like Glenn Miller, who has become somewhat of an American icon and certainly has a sort of all-American, squeaky-clean kind of image to most people, and people either will take that at face value or they will assume that, like most musicians, there had to be sort of a dark side to this, an underside to this that was more sordid. But you're saying basically it sort of ended at golf, then?

TANNER: Yeah, Glenn was very straight.

CLINE: He really was, then.

TANNER: Yeah. Now, in days gone by, he used to do his share of boozing, he really did. That was before he had a band.

He did his share of that plenty. But when he got down to serious business, like I said before, he became a party drinker and that was about it. He and his wife would have a drink at a party; that was about as much as he would go for. And he was terribly busy; he couldn't afford to louse himself up physically. A lot of people don't understand how busy people like that get. They don't have time to sit and talk to a disc jockey, which is a shame, because he felt badly about that. He wanted the disc jockeys to play his records, and yet he was doing so many things, he was doing almost everything but sleep. Sometimes at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York we'd have an all-night rehearsal at least once a week, and he'd try out other people's arrangements and so forth, and

then he'd get up early in the morning and take care of business.

He was a conglomerate, and that had to be taken care of, everything had to be taken care of as far as the band was concerned. And he oversaw everything--what you wore, everything. So he was a very busy fellow.

CLINE: I was going to say, it's partly all due to the fact that he had to have been a good businessman--

TANNER: He was a very good businessman, very good, a very astute businessman. Some other bandleaders were good businessmen. Lawrence Welk was a businessman, but Lawrence Welk was very stingy. Guy Lombardo was a good businessman, people like that. Well, Glenn didn't figure he had to go that far into commercial music in order to be a success at it, but you sure had to take care of business. And you had to do records. For example, he put his wife on \$600 a week salary.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Well, she was taking care of some of the business of the publishing company, so that comes into the family. He was thinking all the time. But also he'd take care of you. A lot of people say he was cold and so forth. One year the band gave him a car. The guys in the band chipped in and gave him a car and had it all wrapped up and had a tag on it and everything, and it was in the lobby of the Hotel

Pennsylvania in New York. And we snuck around and watched him go over to the car and open up the car, and the guy cried.

Now, you know, this is not a cold fellow.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: And if you asked him for something and you weren't taking advantage of him and you deserved it, he had no problem with it.

CLINE: So your life changed pretty dramatically, then, in four and a half years?

TANNER: Well, I stopped being broke. [laughter] That was a big help.

CLINE: [laughter] Right.

TANNER: Yeah. Because you know as a musician, you can sure be broke. When my brothers and I-- If it hadn't been for those poor-boy sandwiches down South, we wouldn't have made it through. [laughter]

CLINE: And what about your personal life or the personal life of the musicians at this point? Since you were so busy and obviously traveling a lot and doing all this playing, how did that suffer or how didn't that suffer?

TANNER: Well, it didn't suffer. I got married very young.

CLINE: When was that?

TANNER: Well, to tell you the honest-to-goodness truth, Alex, I got married twice to the same lady, because we told so many

people we weren't married that we finally had to do it again.

CLINE: Ah, yes. [laughter]

TANNER: [laughter] So we got married on Glenn's band in 1939.

We had been married since 1936, and that-- We were way underage.

But we got married on the band in '39. And I drove, bought a car and drove. My wife [Bunny Smith Tanner] was with me all the time. So we had no problems with that. She understood I had to play, and that was just fine, you know. Keep playing, bring home the check.

CLINE: So you not only had supportive parents but a supportive wife.

TANNER: Very much.

CLINE: And what was her name?

TANNER: Bunny. And a very supportive wife now [Jeanette Steele Tanner]. Bunny passed away in 1981, and I was a widower for a couple of years, and now I've been married almost nine years.

CLINE: Wow. What was her maiden name?

TANNER: You mean Bunny's?

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: Smith.

CLINE: And where was she from? How did you meet?

TANNER: Wilmington, Delaware. We went to high school together.

CLINE: Oh, so childhood sweethearts almost.

TANNER: That's right. It was all the way back there.

CLINE: And where was she when you joined Glenn Miller? And how did that affect her?

TANNER: Well, she was in Wilmington and she was working for the Du Pont company [E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Company] trying to support her mother and sister. And her mother was in a sweatshop there in Wilmington. Just as soon as we got married, I told her, "You're quitting that job and never going back." So I was the fair-haired boy as far as she was concerned.

We had a very good marriage; it lasted forty-six years.

CLINE: And you had children?

TANNER: No, never had any kids. It would have changed what we were doing if we had, so we never had any kids. And when we settled in California, Mother Nature said it's a little late now. We never had any kids in all that time. I marry this lady, Jan, and I'm an instant grandfather.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Yeah. I never had any kids, but I have two beautiful granddaughters [Briana and Lindsey Darnall]. I understand that's the easy way. [laughter]

CLINE: [laughter] Yeah, I was going to say that sounds fairly painless.

TANNER: It was for me.

CLINE: Right. So going back to Glenn Miller now, obviously there comes a major turning point when he goes into the service.

TANNER: Right. I went to him and asked him, "Please don't request me," because I knew if he requested me that he would get me. Well, I was at the age where I knew that I was going in. I didn't have any kids. There were 13 million guys drafted, so I was ripe. So I asked him, "Please don't request me," because there was a big air base right there in Wilmington, Newcastle Air Base, which asked me to come down and be in charge of the jazz band, stay there the rest of the war. Walter Hendl, who eventually conducted the Dallas Symphony [Orchestra], was to be in charge of the concert band, and I was to be in charge of the jazz band. And then Bunny got a job running the rationing board for Wilmington, Delaware, which for a young lady was quite a job. We had it pretty well set up.

So I said, "Please don't request me."

And he said, "Okay." And he said, "Will you work for me for at least a year after the war?"

So I jotted down what Glenn had for after the war. It's pretty unbelievable. He believed in seven-year contracts, because he figured that's long enough, and you can really do a lot with it. He had a seven-year contract with the Statler Hotel chain. Now, that's like the Hotel Pennsylvania and

others like that. He had a seven-year contract with the Paramount Theatre in New York, [inaudible] there three times a year. He had a seven-year contract with the Chesterfield cigarette people. He had a seven-year contract with 20th Century-Fox movie studio to make a couple of movies a year. He had a seven-year contract with the Hollywood Palladium, and he had a seven-year contract with RCA Victor records.

Now, he said to me, "Now, I've got these contracts, Lightin'--my nickname was Lightin'--so he said, "How about working for me? How about signing a contract where you work for me for at least a year after the war?"

I said, "Jeez, Glenn. Where do I sign?" You know, "Right now!" [laughter]

This is an ego thing, and I'm sorry to get into this, but he didn't ask everybody in the band to sign.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: So I was really highly complimented.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: And then after the war--you know, because he didn't come out--after the war his office held me to the contract, and they didn't hold everybody to the contract who had signed.

So once again I was very highly complimented to be held to those contracts. That's very nice, you know. It's nice to be

thought well of. But he had an awfully good thing going. He said, "You'll live in New York five months, one month of one-nighters; you'll live in California five months, one month of one-nighters. So you can sublet your place half a year each time." Whew! Boy, that would have been really nice at a top salary. Because of the things that he had set up to do-- The union says you've got to pay so and so, you know, so it was a nice thing to look forward to. But he didn't come back.

CLINE: Yeah. And how did that make you feel?

TANNER: Well, I felt very sorry for him, you know. I figured I'm okay, I wasn't worried about it. By then things were going well for me. But you felt sorry for him, you felt sorry for Helen, his wife. And he had two kids [Steve Miller and Jonnie Dee Miller], two adopted kids, one he had never even seen. I'm good friends with both of them now. But it was a sad thing. It was a shock. They kept thinking for a while that he'd show up one way or another, a lot of stories about it.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: I have to go along with the one that Steve, his son, believes in. Do you want to hear that one?

CLINE: Sure.

TANNER: Glenn was a very impatient fellow. He went in the service, gave up country-club-type living and went

into the service, because he thought he could bring a piece of home to the guys who were drafted, taken away from home, taken away from their jobs, sent out to some other part of the world. He thought he could bring them a piece of home.

And he actually felt he was a super patriot.

CLINE: He had to be.

TANNER: Oh, he really was. He gave everything up. Now, granted, money's flowing in. He broke up the band in September.

If he had kept the band until the end of the year, he would have made another million [dollars].

CLINE: And what year is this?

TANNER: 'Forty-two. You know, that's how fast he was making it. But, now, while he was in, you know there were royalties and everything, so his family was never hurting. But he felt if he could bring them some piece of home-- So he went in and he had to fight the army brass like mad, because he wanted to be sent overseas where the guys were who needed what he had to offer. And he really fought it. They didn't want him to do it; they wanted him to stay here and do radio programs.

But he finally got to go overseas. Here he is over there, he's playing for the British, and the British adopted him.

He played for them so much of the time that I think over there--and he died while he was over there--they think he's British. Over there they really adopted him. But he's over

there, and he's doing all these programs and everything, and he wanted to go to the Continent, where the guys were getting shot at.

So they were finally going to let him go, and he had to go over himself alone to set up the billeting, where they were going to live, where they were going to play, and things like this. And he kept waiting for the weather to clear up, and it never cleared up. So he hopped a ride on a plane that was going over on a very bad day. They went into an area they really shouldn't have gone in. And they're getting to the Continent, they're heading toward Paris, and a group of our planes was coming back from an aborted mission, and they couldn't land with those bombs, so they had to drop them in the English Channel. Well, he was in an area he shouldn't have been in, and they dropped those bombs. I'm not saying they hit the airplane, but if they hit near the airplane, the concussion could drop this little tiny plane right on in. And that's the only thing we can figure. There are stories about him being a basket case somewhere and having a woman in Argentina and dumb stories like that, which wasn't his style at all.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: But, you know, the English Channel has got to be loaded with airplanes. After World War II it must be full

of airplanes. People are still going down, think they know where Glenn Miller's plane is. Would you believe, Alex, some guy said to me, "Imagine if he had a piece of unplayed music with him in a briefcase in the English Channel." There's not going to be any briefcase left.

CLINE: No.

TANNER: People come up with these weird things. I think they're trying to make a name for themselves or something, you know, "I found Glenn Miller" or something.

CLINE: How did you feel about *The Glenn Miller Story*, the film?

TANNER: I worked on that, you know. That was a lot of fun. With Jimmy [James] Stewart. He's a nice fellow. Hollywood took some liberties, of course, but the one real interesting thing in that picture that nobody realizes was true is they were playing over there in England and the buzz bombs were coming over. And the real worry with the buzz bombs was, if the motor kicked off, well, then you look out, because it's coming down. You know, as long as the motor stays on, well, it's going on over. These guys were out there in the middle of a landing field, and they were playing "In the Mood," and the buzz bombs came over and conked out. Everybody, thousands of GI's, just scrambled, and the band kept on playing.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: And fortunately it didn't hit them, but I talked to the guys, and they said, "Yeah, that's what we did." But they said, "It has to be the dumbest thing we ever did in this whole lifetime, because we could have been wiped out."

Now, that actually happened.

CLINE: It makes you wonder if they really started rushing the tempo at that point.

TANNER: [laughter] No, no, that's unforgivable. You don't do that. [laughter] You know as a drummer, you get that tempo in there and you're locked into it.

CLINE: Right. So as an aside, how did you get the nickname "Lightin' "?

TANNER: At that time I talked very slowly. I'm rambling on and on now, but I talked very slowly then because I was a terrible stammerer. In fact, I could hardly talk at all until I was about eighteen or so. So I talked very slowly, I moved very slowly. In fact, Glenn said I was the slowest guy he ever saw. The first night on the bandstand-- You know, those big ballrooms are set up so that the band is up at one end, and then there are chairs that line the other three walls of the ballroom where people sit down in between. Well, I walked in there and I wanted to hear this band warming up a little, this band I'm joining, you know. So I stroll in, and all of these chairs all around the ballroom, the seats

were pushed back, all but one. So the guys had taken bets about how this long, lanky, slow-moving guy is going to walk over and sit down in that one chair-- They had taken bets on it, and they had fixed the chair--

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: --so that as soon as I sat in it, I was all over the floor. And they all just roared. And Glenn looked out there and said, "Okay, Lightin', get out your horn and come on and play with us." And then that was it; I was Lightin' from then on. In those days I got mail that just said "Lightin': care of the Glenn Miller Orchestra." That's all. No address, no nothing. Somebody in the post office knew where we were. It worked out to where everybody called me Lightin'. All the autographs I signed were Lightin' and so forth.

CLINE: So Glenn Miller broke up the band, he went into the service and didn't come back. Where did that leave you?

TANNER: Well, Glenn went in before I did, so I went with Charlie Spivak's band up until the time that I went into the army. It was a good band. Whew! Willie Smith, Davey Tough was playing drums--

CLINE: Oh, wow.

TANNER: Yeah, it was a good band. And then I got out before the Glenn Miller office with Tex Beneke got started. So I went with Les Brown. And then, as I said, his office held

me to the contracts. I left Les, and I went with Tex. The contract was for a year, and I stayed with Tex for six years.

And I really enjoyed it. Alex, I kept trying to quit. I wanted to go to school on the GI Bill. I knew I was running out of time, so I kept trying to quit. Every time I tried to quit, he gave me a raise, and I was never asking for a raise. I just figured, man, I've got to go. And you know, that's how to keep a fellow; if you keep giving him more money, he's going to stay. So I ended up being the highest-paid guy on the road, which was terrible. I was trying to leave. So I stayed with him for six years.

Tex and I are good buddies. He has a problem now, a physical problem, so he can't play anymore, but he sings. He goes out and does appearances and sings "Chattanooga Choo-Choo," and everybody's happy. [laughter]

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: I used to clock all his radio programs. I'd pick out the shows for him and things like that. He figured that he needed an older, more experienced guy with him, so he kept me there. Finally I left. The summer of '51 was the last moment you could get the GI Bill--summer of '51--so I told him I had to go, and I finally did.

CLINE: How long, before that, did you play with Les Brown?

TANNER: I was with Les about, oh, maybe six months or so,

something like that. Les and I are friends, you know. I used to kid him about "I'm playing with Les Brown for less money," you know. But we're good friends. He's a good guy. He's a nice fellow.

CLINE: And the Charlie Spivak band before that, how long was that for?

TANNER: Maybe nine months or so.

CLINE: What was that like? You said it was great.

TANNER: Yeah, it's kind of funny. Glenn's band was so precise that to go play with someone else who was not precise made the band sound a little shabby to you, but the band swung so hard that you enjoyed it. You know, there were good guys in the band. Nelson Riddle was playing fourth trombone.

CLINE: Oh?

TANNER: Yeah, so by the time I came to California, he was doing well. He really put me to work.

CLINE: That's great.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Was part of the reason that it swung so hard because of Dave Tough?

TANNER: Yeah. Absolutely.

CLINE: And what was he like?

TANNER: Dave was quiet, yeah. He could play delicately as much as he wanted to, and still without playing real loud--like

a guy like Buddy Rich or somebody--he could swing the band like it was unbelievable, as he proved with Goodman and other bands. So he was a good, good player. Little guy. Weighed about ninety [pounds], you know. But he was a good guy to work with.

And there were some other good guys in the band, too, good players, good writers. So it was a very enjoyable band. Charlie played beautifully on trumpet, good trumpet player. I had come across his name before; Glenn had talked to me about Charlie.

This would be a reverse in our chronology. Does it matter?

CLINE: No.

TANNER: Glenn was an organizer. He organized the Ray Noble band from England when they came to this country.

CLINE: Oh, right.

TANNER: The union wouldn't let him bring his band in, didn't have any exchange going then. The union let him bring in his drummer, Bill Hardy, and his singer, a guy named Al Bowly, and that's all. So he contacted Miller and said, "Put a band together for me." So Glenn put a band together that was a world beater. Really good guys, and they went to work in Radio City, the club up top of Radio City [Music Hall].

So Glenn had been searching for this sound, this lead clarinet sound. He hadn't really found it.

CLINE: I was going to ask you about that.

TANNER: Yeah. And there are a lot of stories about this, and Hollywood picks up some things, too, you know.

CLINE: [laughter] Yeah.

TANNER: But he told me this himself, so I know it's a fact of life. With the Ray Noble band, there was this trumpet player in there, a guy named Pee Wee Irwin, who was a very flexible trumpet player. So Glenn wrote some things for Pee Wee to play over the saxophones, and they came off very nicely.

Pee Wee left Noble, and then they got in Charlie Spivak, who was a good, good, beautiful-tone trumpet player, a nice, solid player, but he didn't have Pee Wee's flexibility. So these things over the saxes didn't come off at all. So Noble hired a good clarinet player named Johnny Mince. He came in, and he started playing these things, and Miller thought, "Man, that's what I've been looking for." Here's this clarinet playing over the saxes. So he told me, "I never wrote another note of it for him; I saved it for myself."

CLINE: [laughter] Interesting.

TANNER: Glenn also organized the [Tommy and Jimmy] Dorsey brothers' band for them. And then, when they broke up-- They had to break up to keep from killing one another. Oh, the tempers, especially Tommy. When they broke up, Jimmy took that band, and Glenn organized another one for Tommy, mainly

out of Joe Haymes's band. But he was a great organizer. He could do that just so easily. Some guys scramble with it, but he was good at it. Very bright fellow.

CLINE: You say that as a person Glenn was not as cold as some people made him out to be?

TANNER: No. He played some jokes on me that kind of proved that, too.

CLINE: So going back again to the point that he has become this American icon, what would be your general assessment of what the real Glenn Miller was like?

TANNER: Well, he was a fine, fine musician, there's no question about it. He was a constant student; he studied all of the time. He had some good training in New York City from Dr. Joseph Schillinger, and some other people like [George] Gershwin and some of these other fellows did, too. He was bright, he was a good musician, a good ear, a good trombone player.

He was a heck of an organizer, he was a very good businessman, he was a good athlete, and a super patriot. And also, as I say, he had a good sense of humor. Boy, he played a couple of gags on me that embarrassed the devil out of me, but they were good gags.

CLINE: [laughter] Sounds like there was a lot of that going around.

TANNER: Well, yeah, but other people couldn't get away with

it. It was his band, so he could--

CLINE: Uh-huh. [laughter]

TANNER: For example, he had me sit on the outside end, because he knew that I would talk to the fans out there--you know, "Go ahead and talk to them." But you listen all the time so that you're not goofing up. Well, we were playing "In the Mood" one night, and it gets softer and softer, and then the drummer hits the cowbell and you know that next time you go full blast. Well, he saw that I was talking to the kids, and he had the drummer hit the cowbell and told the guys, "Don't play." I was standing up and boom! And he just roared. He did that to me also on this thing called "Pennsylvania 65000" where you stand up and yell. I stood up and yelled, "Pennsylvania 6--," and I was the only one up, you know.

CLINE: [laughter] Making sure you were awake over there.

TANNER: Yeah. But he also let me know that he wanted me to keep talking to the kids, because that was important to him. It was PR [public relations].

CLINE: Right. So in a sense, when people talk about big music stars now--like rock stars or whatever--having this incredibly busy lifestyle in the public eye and maybe having product endorsements and big companies behind them, this is obviously not something very new. You were sort of the stars of your

day. He was obviously planning some very big sort of business arrangements for himself and the band.

TANNER: Yeah. In fact, if you wanted his advice or to come in on an orange grove or something like that, he'd talk to you about it. We were doing the Chesterfield programs, and that's three times a week for each coast. You see, there was no tape in those days. So you'd do them three times a week for each coast. And then whoever sold the most records that week would be on the Coca-Cola program. Now, we were on the Coca-Cola program all the time, [laughter] so that the Chesterfield people finally said to us, "You've got two commercials, and we want you." So Glenn, being true to them, said, "You're absolutely right," and stopped doing the Coca-Cola program, which was money in his pocket. But he was very loyal like that. Also, there were other program offers that would come up and things like that.

People wondered why he stayed on the thirty-five-cent record, the Bluebird record for RCA Victor. The Bluebird was thirty-five cents; the Victor was seventy-five cents. So he said, "I'll sell three Bluebirds before I sell one Victor," and he knew what he was doing. So he was a heck of a businessman but also very loyal to them. He had lots of offers to do other things, but he'd stick to the guys who gave him a break.

He was loyal to one-nighter entrepreneurs, anybody whom he thought deserved it. If you had a ballroom and there was a chance you were going to lose money that night because of the weather or some other attraction near by, he would give you a chance to change the contract. He'd come in and get 60 percent and \$1,000 dollars. He'd say, "Okay, let's change it. I'll take seventy-five percent and \$5,000." The guys would say okay, good deal. He would alter it. Of course, he knew that he was going to pack them in. But if the guy was losing money, Glenn saw to it that he was rebated money so that he didn't lose money on him, because he thought we need these fellows, we need these entrepreneurs.

Now, if he found a guy cheating him, whew! That was another thing. Like some guys would let people into the one-nighters in doors where they weren't clocked off. So Glenn started carrying an ultraviolet ray, and you had your hand stamped so that it didn't show until you put it under the ultraviolet ray, and then it showed. If you didn't have that stamp on there, you didn't get back in.

CLINE: Amazing.

TANNER: And he had his guys on the other doors, so you absolutely weren't going to cheat him. And if he ever found out you were cheating, you could never hire him again. He would just say, "No, you aren't worth it."

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TANNER: People often ask me, "What were the biggest thrills playing with the band?" and it's always kind of hard. You know, the Paramount Theatre in New York, when the pit goes up and the people are screaming because you're there, that's a big thrill. You can't even hear the band because they're screaming. It was a big thrill, a tremendous thrill, to play in Carnegie Hall. Funny thing: I remember sitting there playing, and I wasn't thinking about the classical musicians who had played there. I was thinking, "God, [Jack] Teagarden played here with [Paul] Whiteman." [laughter] Things like that, you know. [tape recorder off]

You know, Alex, the band was so important for the country that at one time the La Scala Opera Company was in financial trouble. So what would they do? They hired the Glenn Miller band to play in the Philadelphia Convention Hall for them so they could get out of financial problems. [laughter] That tells you something about the--

CLINE: Yeah, it does.

TANNER: Gee. And I don't mean to put down the opera company either, but, I mean, they were sure having problems, and they hired somebody who was going to bring in a few folks.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: Where do we go from here now?

CLINE: Okay. Did you have any other memorable experiences that you wanted to mention while playing with that band? You mentioned the Paramount Theatre a moment ago. Anything else?

TANNER: Well, the first record date with the band; I was sure thrilled to be doing that. The funny thing is we did a tune called "My Reverie," which is Debussy; we did a tune called "King Porter Stomp," which is Jelly Roll Morton; we did a thing called "By the Waters of Minnetonka," which is really "Indian Love Call."

CLINE: Oh, my. [laughter]

TANNER: How's that for a combination? [laughter]

CLINE: Right. Multiculturalism at an earlier stage.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: Okay, what I wanted to ask you was, since you were a musician, first off, oriented in the music of the swing era, big band jazz, and you said that was the music you grew up hearing and that's what you were interested in playing first, was there any other music that you grew up hearing that you were interested in?

TANNER: Well, I loved all kinds of jazz. Now, this was before bebop.

CLINE: Right. This is what I'm leading up to.

TANNER: Yeah, so there were-- I certainly enjoyed and still enjoy all kinds of Dixieland music. My wife [Jeanette Steele Tanner] and I take off for New Orleans every now and then and have a wonderful time hearing all the stuff down there.

I'm doing a book now that involves country music, but, you know, a publisher hired me to do it, so--

CLINE: What book is that?

TANNER: It's the music of the Piedmont area, which goes from about Philadelphia down to about Atlanta, and goes from the tidewater on over to the mountains. So my wife and I took off for a month and went down there and listened a lot and taped a lot and xeroxed a lot in the libraries and so forth.

And what it is is country music.

So can you imagine me doing a college textbook on country music? The world is becoming interested in it.

CLINE: Yeah, that's true.

TANNER: So this publisher at the University of Tennessee Press said, "We need a textbook." I'll tell you the truth, Alex: I like almost anything that's played well. If it's played well, I'll like it. If it's not played well, it doesn't matter what it is.

CLINE: Right. When you were in Kentucky, what kind of music did you hear around there other than music on records?

TANNER: Well, I left Kentucky when I was about a year and

a half old.

CLINE: Oh, so you don't remember that. Did your parents listen to classical music?

TANNER: Sure. In fact, when we first started to play together around home, we played light classics--nothing very heavy, just the lighter things. My dad [Archibald Tanner] worked his way through college playing piano. But he was also a ragtime player, and he played for strip joints long before I knew what they were, you know.

CLINE: Right. So there was no conflict in terms of the type of music you played as being not, quote, "legit- itimate," unquote, or any of that?

TANNER: No. You just play your instrument well and it's acceptable, that's all. No problems there.

CLINE: And when jazz started to evolve away from the big band and into the smaller combo and the advent of the bebop era, how did you feel about that? And what were you doing then?

TANNER: Well, that would be in the bottom of the forties.

I had been with Glenn when we first started to hear about Dizzy Gillespie, people like this, and then there's the army, and then with Tex Beneke afterward. You have to admire what those guys are capable of doing. Good grief. And they think so fast. I had a feeling for a long time that it was not

for trombone--you know, that it just couldn't get around that much. And then I heard J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding and a few other guys, and then I went back to the practice room.

[laughter] But I think what they do is really exceptional.

It doesn't move me as much as a guy like Teagarden would.

CLINE: Is that because of the slower, lyrical playing that puts more emphasis on melody and tone and less on technique, fast technique?

TANNER: I suppose so, yeah. Teagarden had a beautiful feel--whew!--whereas some of these other fellows, especially that have a little more technique-- Teagarden had technique, but it very seldom came off on his records.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: You know, it was always there as a spare.

CLINE: And what were you doing at the time that--I guess especially economically--it started to become difficult for the big bands to keep going?

TANNER: Well, I left in '51 to-- I got off the road in '51, settled down in California.

CLINE: Right. And bebop was starting to really hit at that point?

TANNER: In fact, it was getting a little older then, you know. It really came in around the middle forties. But you start to get into cool [school], which is very nice for trombone.

CLINE: Right, right.

TANNER: But bebop, I don't know if I ever really had the technique to handle it well. I had to do everything that was asked of me on the American Broadcasting Company [ABC] staff orchestra, but they very seldomly asked me to play any bebop-type solos.

CLINE: Right, right. Well, so many of the big band players went into the studios eventually, and, of course, being a team player, that seems like that would make sense.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: During the time that you were playing as a sideman--and I'm saying before you actually went back to school and made that particular change--did you ever have any interest yourself in being a bandleader or doing any of that?

TANNER: No, in fact, Glenn's secretary, Polly Haynes, was a very good friend of ours, and she said that Glenn backed Hal McIntyre, he backed Tex Beneke, and she said, "And you're next." I said, "Not me." I'm just no leader of men; that's all there is to it. I'd rather work for somebody. But as I came out here, several things came up that-- I had to take the bull by the horns in order to accomplish them. But I never wanted to have a band or anything like that. I'd always rather work for somebody else. And I've always felt that if a band makes money that the guy who takes chances and so

forth, he deserves the money. A guy like me, sitting back there, getting paid whether the band makes any money or not, I don't deserve it like the leader does. But I have never felt badly about it. It's fine.

CLINE: You didn't have any great ambition in any direction like that, even though you said you were arranging and doing some composing?

TANNER: Yeah, that's right. No, I never had any aspirations to be a bandleader.

CLINE: But you did get some of your music performed?

TANNER: Oh, yeah. Most of my compositions are classical things.

CLINE: Interesting.

TANNER: Yeah. I started to be asked to play a lot of concerts and all, and there was very little repertoire, so I had to start writing it. And then I had a couple of publishers that would publish whatever I'd write down, which was nice for me, you know. So I wrote trombone concertos and things like that, mainly because I needed something to play. [laughter]

CLINE: You said that despite the up-tempo freneticism of bebop that you did enjoy the cool school stuff that happened shortly there after. Did you play in any of those musical situations yourself?

TANNER: On the recordings for the movies and TV backgrounds

and things like that, yeah, quite a lot of it. Of course, as I said, on the American Broadcast Company you had to play whatever you were asked to play. That's the reason for having a staff band, to have a minimum of rehearsals. Whatever they need, they need it now, you know, like the second time through you're on the air.

CLINE: Right. Were there any young players that came up during that period that you enjoyed particularly on your instrument or any other instrument?

TANNER: Well, as far as bop was concerned, I enjoyed working with Frank Rosolino.

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

TANNER: Of course, then afterwards you started to get used to hearing the wonderful things Urbie Green and people like that can do on their instrument. They're very talented people.

It's a different time and a different business, so you don't have the type of soloists and all that you used to have before, like a Tommy Dorsey or something.

CLINE: What about someone like Miles Davis and his band?

TANNER: Well, I was never a real fan of Miles Davis, of his playing or him personally. I realize what all that guy accomplished, and I say that's wonderful, it truly is. We needed him, and he needed music. But he didn't play the instrument well enough to satisfy me. I was used to guys

who were so good on their instruments, and I always thought that he was kind of fighting it a little bit. I thought he played better when he played with [Charlie] Parker than he did later. At least he handled the instrument better.

CLINE: Did you ever hear Charlie Parker?

TANNER: Yeah, on Fifty-second Street in New York.

CLINE: How did that sit with you?

TANNER: You just roll over, you know. Jeesh. And if you realize, as a person who is really into the technicalities of music, what the guy is doing, well, then you've really got to be a fan of his--you know, what he's doing harmonically and melodically, how far away from the chords he would get without losing you. He was quite an artist.

CLINE: Right. And of course, at this point the chords started to become even more sophisticated. Did you or any of your fellow big band musicians see this as something sort of threatening? Or was there any tension that was created because of this new music that was coming and becoming popular?

TANNER: Alex, I think we felt more of a threat from rock and roll than we did from bop.

CLINE: Oh, so then later on--

TANNER: Yeah. You had to understand what Dizzy Gillespie was doing as far as chords are concerned. You know, he's a good piano player--he was before he died--so he could actually

see things that other people had to sit and fool with for a while. To him they were chord extensions. But we admired what he did as much as what Parker did. Parker died first, so he became the guiding light. If Dizzy had died earlier, he would have been the guiding light, I think. That's just conjecture.

CLINE: Funny how that happens sometimes.

TANNER: But you have to admire what these fellows could do harmonically, what they could do on their instruments, the technique and so forth. You had to admire their ears. They could hear things the rest of us couldn't hear until we sat down and analyzed what they were doing, and then, "Oh, yes, that makes sense."

CLINE: With all your background and the discipline--and perhaps in Glenn Miller's case very extreme discipline--of the big band, how does it strike you when you hear a lot of the big bands that are playing now? Since bebop and cool school and fusion and all these other things have happened and influenced the way people play, do you hear a difference?

TANNER: Most of them aren't as precise as they should be.

You know, being a player yourself, you have to listen intently to yourself, and you must listen intently to everything that's going on around you, to how your part fits in with what's happening. You've got to listen to both aspects of it very,

very hard all the time. You can't just get through the night or something like that. So I think there is a little bit of a lack of concentration, which may be the fault of the leaders. If the leader has real good guys-- And there are some good bands around now. The present-day Glenn Miller band, they're good guys. They need a little work here and there, you know. A couple of the best bands are service bands now. The Airmen of Note is a good big band today; they're stationed in Washington [D.C.]. There are good bands like that, but they've concentrated on it. There are too many pickup bands now.

There for a while, after I settled in California, I was still doing a lot of work for Tex. And Beneke would go on out into an area, and there would be a pickup band. Well, they couldn't possibly have things come off. They could sit there and read the music for you, but kind of lacked a lot.

I think there's not enough concentration on playing real well and how your part fits in.

CLINE: Sort of an egolessness that you need to have in a big band?

TANNER: I suppose so, yeah.

CLINE: Do you think that one of the reasons for the success of the amazing group sound of some of these big bands from that time was not only because of the great leadership of

the bands but because of the amazing tenure that some of the people had in these bands? Where they were able to work for so long developing that sound and that association that led to such a unified sound?

TANNER: Yes, I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. In Glenn's band when anybody changed, it got written up in all the trade papers. It was a big issue.

But one thing that is kind of hard is the difference in recording technique then and now. That was, in comparison to now, really primitive. You know, I remember when they first started to do-- A few years ago they started to do direct to disc, and I kept saying, "That's what we did all the time, direct to disc." And if you missed a note, even the very last note, you had to do the damn thing over again.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: You know, nowadays, so often the most talented guy is the fellow in the booth with the Scotch tape and scissors.

You can make a part of a record and then three or four months later add strings to it and three or four months later add singers to it and things like that. You didn't used to be able to do that sort of thing. And they do a balance in the booth, whereas we balanced ourselves a lot of the time. So it was really very primitive alongside today. It's a wonder that we got so much nice stuff recorded. You know, you take

a listen to Glenn's "Rhapsody in Blue" and things like that, they're beautiful, and you wonder, "Well, how in the world did we ever get that down on record?"

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: You know, alongside of today's techniques.

CLINE: Right. Well, perhaps the answer lies in the question.

[laughter]

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So we're getting to the point where you're going to decide to take up your opportunity with the GI Bill and go back to school, which is going to take you out to the West Coast.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And I think what we'll do is we'll start with that period tomorrow morning. How's that with you?

TANNER: That's just fine.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

JULY 8, 1993

CLINE: I had very few follow-up questions from yesterday's discussion. We were talking about your childhood and your experience growing up with your musical family and how you toured around, eventually leading to your meeting Glenn Miller and having a successful career as a professional musician.

And since you're a teacher, that's what we're going to talk about today, your teaching. I wanted to ask you who some of your teachers were on your instrument or otherwise.

TANNER: I had one lesson with Will Bradley.

CLINE: Oh, uh-huh.

TANNER: And that's it.

CLINE: That's it?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: You were self-taught?

TANNER: Yeah. But you know how it is, being a player yourself, Alex: you learn constantly by listening and seeing how things are done and why things are done that way and so forth, and you try to do it yourself. And you practice a lot.

CLINE: Did you have teachers in the reformatory school or in your high school or anything?

TANNER: No. The kids in the reform school showed me how to hold the horn and the different slide positions.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: In the high school, no, the guy didn't know anything about trombone.

CLINE: You mentioned that--that the kids at the reform school taught you--and I wasn't really sure if you literally meant that, but you do. They actually knew these things about the instrument?

TANNER: Yeah, the trombone players in the reform school showed me, got me started on the trombone.

CLINE: Amazing. That's truly learning in the streets, as it were. [laughter]

TANNER: Almost. [laughter]

CLINE: Well, this actually brings to mind a very crucial and interesting point that I think will be pursued on and off throughout this morning, which is the idea of learning this music that way, say, as opposed to the way so many people learn it now, which is in college. You can actually go to college now and learn how to play jazz. And I was wondering, since you not only had to learn the basic rudimentary techniques of your instrument, not only in terms of the slide positions and how to hold your horn, but your embouchure and all that stuff-- You also had to learn how to improvise in order to play jazz. Did you just do that by ear and by imitating these other musicians that you admired?

TANNER: Yeah, that's exactly right. With my brothers you took your chances and played your solos. And we didn't put each other down; we encouraged each other, and my dad encouraged us. So that's a big help. And you keep listening to other people and hear what they're doing, and you try to do some of that eventually. The funny thing about it is--and I know it's true on the trombone, and it may be true on the other instruments, I'm not so sure--on the trombone your style of playing comes from two things: it comes from what you can do well and what you can't do well, and you develop a style out of that. You avoid the things you can't do and lean heavily on the things you can do.

CLINE: And in terms of being able to solo over chords, this was just purely a sort of a trial-and-error thing that you developed?

TANNER: No, I learned chords very quickly because I was arranging for my brothers.

CLINE: This brings us to the next question. If you were arranging and composing at the same time, where did you learn that particular skill?

TANNER: Well, mainly--not composing but arranging--trial and error. I could make mistakes with my brothers and get away with it. And eventually you make fewer and fewer mistakes. I still make my share of mistakes.

CLINE: But in terms of learning, say, the different registers of the instruments and--

TANNER: You just ask questions.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Yeah. But that goes on constantly. At UCLA I have a piece of manuscript now that Roy Harris brought to me and said, "Now, how would this be for trombone?"

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: "Would this be a nice, logical ballad line for trombone?" So you keep asking all your life. And I kept that because it's such a nice thing.

CLINE: Wow, that's great. And what about in transposing? Is it the same thing in terms of--?

TANNER: Yeah, it's very easy. That's mechanical.

CLINE: Oh, okay.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So someone basically said, "This is how you do it," and you just--

TANNER: Yeah, that's right. You go up a tone for trumpet.

CLINE: [laughter] Oh, okay. And when you were playing with your brothers in this family band, the Kentuckians, exactly what kind of music were you playing when you went out on the road?

TANNER: Swing. It was a swing band.

CLINE: Were you playing original tunes or mostly other people's music?

TANNER: Mostly the pop tunes of the day, which-- You know, a lot of the tunes came from shows, from movies, and so forth. You played the popular tunes of the day because you were trying to please the people, you were trying to hold your job.

CLINE: Yeah, right. It's like garage bands in the sixties would play rock and roll, all the popular tunes they call cover tunes.

TANNER: Yeah, but they didn't have to please anybody but themselves. Whereas we had to please anybody who heard us. And we wanted more and more people to hear us, be happy with us, so we'd play whatever was popular.

CLINE: Right. Also I wanted to know, you mentioned that when you were playing with Glenn Miller you lived in New York during that time?

TANNER: I lived in New York quite a lot of the time, long enough to have an apartment there and I could sublet it some and so forth. With Glenn we worked in the Hotel Pennsylvania every winter and you'd go in there for about three months. Well, that's enough to have an apartment. And then came out here to California a couple of times and stayed out here for a couple of months. And you'd do a lot of road work, a lot

of one-nighters. You got to stay a week or two, or maybe a month, in Chicago at the Sherman Hotel and places like this.

A lot of theater [engagement]s were one week long, so, well, you just stayed in a hotel.

CLINE: Was New York even at that point really the place to be if you were a musician?

TANNER: It really was. It really was. When I do clinics I often start out--with people who want to know about swing--telling them what was happening in New York around 1940-42, around in there. It was unbelievable all the bands you could go hear that you could just walk to in an evening.

Spend an evening and you could go hear a dozen bands easily, just walking to them. It was the place to be, no question about it.

CLINE: Because there's so much that's still talked about with regard to how happening New York was during the bebop era and all that.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: But obviously this was well established before that, during the swing era.

TANNER: There were so many places for bands to work. And they all survived, all the places survived, so they all did business.

CLINE: And if you were an aspiring musician, was New York

really the mecca still at that point?

TANNER: In the summertime you went to Atlantic City. Other than the summer, you went to New York.

CLINE: Right, because you mentioned Atlantic City; that's why I was curious.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: Okay. I have a sort of a trivial question based on something that you discussed last time. You mentioned at one point that the members of the Glenn Miller orchestra bought Glenn a car.

TANNER: Yes.

CLINE: Whose idea was that? Do you remember?

TANNER: Probably Hal McIntyre and "Chummy" [Chalmers] MacGregor's.

CLINE: The drivers.

TANNER: Yes. [laughter] But actually Glenn was awfully good to us. As soon as he could afford it we would get bonuses constantly--you know, besides our salaries. So it was just a chance to show appreciation. We were working Christmas Eve up in the Savoy Ballroom. We had finished the job at the Hotel Pennsylvania and went up to the Savoy Ballroom and played after that the same night. And while we were up there they had the whole thing arranged. The car was set up in the lobby of the hotel, and it was all wrapped up with Christmas

wrappings and everything. It was quite a deal. So we came back from the Savoy Ballroom to the hotel, even though we didn't tell Glenn we were coming back. So it was quite an evening, and it showed you a lot about Glenn and how we felt about him.

CLINE: Yeah, definitely.

TANNER: There are guys, Alex--there always will be, I guess--who complain about their boss, complain about the leader of the band and so forth. And I would keep saying, "If you're unhappy, leave." And they'd say, "I can't leave because of the money," and that sort of thing. But there are still a couple of fellows who fuss, saying, "Glenn was a hard man." He truly wasn't if you did your job. They all had affection for Glenn, no question about it.

CLINE: That's great. What kind of car was it? Do you remember?

TANNER: I don't know. It was either a Buick or a Cadillac or something.

CLINE: Something slick.

TANNER: Yeah. But the two fellows worked out a deal where they traded in his car and he didn't even know it. But you could buy a car for a lot less than you could buy it today.

CLINE: But it still must have seemed like a lot of money.

TANNER: Yes, that's right.

CLINE: Okay. We're going to go on from this point now and

discuss your decision to go to school.

TANNER: Okay.

CLINE: You wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill, and you were telling the story of how your tenure as a musician kept getting extended and extended, as your fee kept getting higher and higher, by your desire to leave and this being construed as a request for a raise. You finally did break away from that and decided to go back to school. Aside from the GI Bill and how opportune that was, what really prompted you to be so adamant about this decision?

TANNER: Well, Alex, I knew a lot about music, especially certain aspects of music, but I knew I had terrible holes in my knowledge about music. So I knew I had a great deal to learn. If I was going to be in music for the rest of my life and competing in some field other than playing with a dance band, well, I had better learn some more about it. So I figured that that was the way to go. I really didn't think much about teaching, not at that point. I just wanted to fill up some of these holes. And I have to tell you that I went there and I got interviewed by a counselor to enroll. Then I went back out on the road for a little while, and then, when the time came for classes to start, I was back. I don't remember what the fellow's name was, but he told me, "Okay." He looked at me and said, "Traveling musician,

thirty-five years old. You're not going to last." So he said, "You can come this summer, and if you get B's in these two courses that you'll take, you can stay. We'll make a deal. If you don't get B's, don't stay." I said, "Okay."

So he had me enrolled in a French class and American history for the summer session. So I worked real hard, because I was concerned. I knew that kids coming in from high school were in the habit of studying, and I wasn't. So I really worked hard, I studied like a dog, and I came out with a couple of A's, and they let me stay.

CLINE: You said that before, in your early life, you weren't really a student.

TANNER: No, I wasn't. I didn't apply myself at all.

CLINE: Was the idea of going back to school and getting into that somewhat intimidating to you?

TANNER: I had heard about courses and tests being graded on a curve and all that sort of thing. I was worried about the other kids. But it didn't work out that way, because I was there because I wanted to be, and some of them were there because dad and mom said go. So it didn't work out where the competition was any concern. But I was worried about it at first, so I worked awfully hard. I eventually had to stop for three years because I was on the American Broadcasting Company [ABC] staff orchestra, and they said,

"Paul, we're going to need you now five days a week, from ten [o'clock] till two o'clock," which meant I could go to a three o'clock class and I could go to an eight o'clock class and that was about it. So I had to stop. And it was a terrible show, a radio show, and it stayed on for three years. So I had to lay out of classes for three years, and when it went off the air I went right on back.

CLINE: What show was that?

TANNER: There was a piano player-singer named Ronnie Kemper. It was a real Mickey Mouse thing. But being on staff, you have to do anything. So it was a terrible show, and it stayed on three years.

CLINE: This is on the West Coast now.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So what prompted you to come out here for that experience?

TANNER: Well, we had come out with the Miller band and made a couple of movies. I wasn't offered anything as a player.

In New York I was offered a staff job when I got off the road. But I knew, having been here, that this was where I wanted to live. You know how it is.

CLINE: The climate.

TANNER: The sunshine is out here.

CLINE: Right. That's happened to so many people. [laughter]

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And you decided that you were going to go to UCLA.

TANNER: I could get a place to park there. I didn't know the difference between UCLA and USC [University of Southern California]. [laughter] But in those days there was nothing but an empty field between the art department and Wilshire Boulevard, and everybody parked there, so you'd get a place to park. At 'SC you're on the street. So I thought, "I'll go to UCLA and get a place to park."

CLINE: Really?

TANNER: How's that for a choice? [laughter]

CLINE: And with the GI Bill, the tuition wasn't really an issue, then?

TANNER: Oh, no, no issue at all. Not with the GI Bill.

CLINE: Because usually that's an issue between USC and UCLA.
[laughter]

TANNER: That's right. Well, I had the G.I. Bill going for me, so that was no problem.

CLINE: Right. So you had to juggle this life now as a student and as a studio musician.

TANNER: That's right. I'll tell you, it takes you-- Now, I don't know how it is now, I really don't, but in the 1950s it would take you six months to get your union card. Has that changed?

CLINE: I don't know. I think as long as you can pay you've got it. [laughter]

TANNER: Well, it took you six months to get your card. You could do certain kinds of work right away, like you could do a one-nighter in Pomona or something like that with some band, those kinds of things. You couldn't do movies, you couldn't take a steady job; that took you six months. So two days after I got my union card, I went on the American Broadcasting Company staff orchestra, and I stayed there sixteen years. I always have a tendency to stay on jobs until the jobs go away. The union eventually bartered it off, and they should have. We were, you know--

what do you call it?--"featherbedding" or something.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: So they should have bartered it off. But I was there sixteen years. And I had conflicts first as a student and then as a faculty member that you wouldn't believe. Because ABC paid me whether I played a note or not. They paid me a full week's salary. So when they say be there, you're there. That's all there is to it. So when I had something else I was supposed to do, it was a problem.

CLINE: And how did you manage that when you were a student?

TANNER: I just scrounged all the time. A lot of classes I didn't show up in for quite a while. But also I was very

busy doing what you call freelance studio work. I had a lot of friends out in California. [Henry] Mancini, for example, was the piano player in Tex Beneke's band, so we were good buddies. Nelson Riddle was the fourth trombone with Charlie Spivak; we were good buddies. A guy [Sonny Burke] who was the vice president of Decca [Records] used to write some nice things for me to play with Spivak. Frank Comstock was very busy doing several shows, wrote for Les Brown. And all these guys were now-- And Billy May from the Glenn Miller band was out here. So when I came out, these guys kept me unbelievably busy with records, TV, movies, and so forth. And you're allowed to do that while you're on staff. So if I'm not playing on staff, I'm doing some freelance playing, and I'm supposed to be in school.

CLINE: And what were you actually studying then in school?

TANNER: Well, I was a music major, which made it pretty easy for me in a lot of courses. I was stealing.

CLINE: But you probably still had to learn mostly classical music?

TANNER: Oh, absolutely, yeah. I had a lot to learn.

CLINE: Right. Counterpoint and all that.

TANNER: There were things like how you write certain minor scales, things like that. Well, after I once learned something, I was fine. I remember being in a class, and the fellow said,

"Now, I want you to write an A minor scale." This was on a test. And I said, "Which one do you want? I've got five of them."

CLINE: Oh, no. [laughter]

TANNER: The other kids in the class looked around and said, "Fine, thanks a lot, Tanner."

But they would call roll in those classes, Alex. It would be like, "Bill, Frank, Jim, Mr. Tanner, Fred, Roy--" [laughter] Because I was about thirty-five and enrolled as a freshman. I was the oldest freshman in captivity.

CLINE: [laughter] And was your major in composition, then, or performance or--?

TANNER: Well, at that point, you know, working toward the bachelor's [degree], well, you're just a music major, you know.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: I eventually had a Spanish minor, but I was a music major. And then I got the master's in education, and I got the doctorate in music composition.

CLINE: Oh, I see. Who were some of your professors that you remember? Any memorable ones?

TANNER: Well, Roy Harris and I were good friends, and I learned a lot from him. Most of the guys there were very bright. And I don't put them down at all. They have blocks, but they're

very bright in their specialized fields. So I learned a lot from a lot of people.

CLINE: Was there any sense of chauvinism because they knew that you were a so-called jazz musician?

TANNER: Even while I was on the faculty I was, truthfully, on the outside, because I was so terribly involved in a music that most of these people were only peripherally interested in. So I was kind of on the outside. I was never a buddy or anything like that, you know. And that didn't matter to me, because I was a bit of a loner anyway at that time. But I learned an awful lot from all those fellows whom I took classes from. I don't put them down at all.

CLINE: I take it, then, that despite whatever they may have thought, you actually excelled in their classes, so you were able to hold your own.

TANNER: Well, I ended up a magna cum laude. [laughter] And even though there was that odd separation of feeling while I was on the faculty, I was awarded the title of distinguished professor, which is a very high compliment.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: It's quite an ego thing for me to even mention it now, you know.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. So when you got your degree in education, at some point you decided that you wanted to teach,

then?

TANNER: They hired me the day I graduated with a bachelor's.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Yeah, which is a nice compliment, because they seldom hire their own. And here's a guy with only a bachelor's, so that was against their ideals, too. But just as soon as I graduated, they-- You know it's that old thing of you're where someone wants what it is you can do. CLINE: Right.

TANNER: That's how you spell a career. They wanted a guy to teach brass to the people who were going to be music teachers, and I taught trombone. But in almost any major university, the music departments have at least four fields that they get into: they get into musicology--you know, the history--they get into performance, they get into music education, and they get into theory. And the guys on the faculty have specialties that they are into, and they're expected to stay in those fields, and they do. I was the only guy that I know of that they used in all four fields.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: I liked that, because that way you don't stand up there and teach from your thirty-year-old notes or anything.

And my subject matter changed all the time, and I enjoyed it that way. It kept me from getting quite so stale.

CLINE: That must have been incredibly hard work, though.

TANNER: Oh, it wasn't so bad. I usually taught them what it was I knew. You get into advanced scoring and things like that, and, gosh, I've been writing scores for a long time. It truly wasn't that hard.

CLINE: Did you ever have to explain to some of these academics that your knowledge actually didn't come from any sort of academic source? Or was that just something you decided it was better they didn't know?

TANNER: [laughter] I didn't bother them with it.

CLINE: Uh-huh. [laughter]

TANNER: I'll tell you one funny thing that happened about the jazz classes [the Development of Jazz]. The enrollments got to be so heavy that-- You know, they had a rotating chairman in the music department. This particular chairman made some aspersions about "Well, the tests must be easy."

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: So I took exams to him, because I heard that he had said something about that. I took exams to him, and I told him, "If you can get 50 percent on these exams--which is 10 percent below flunking--"well, then I'll change my way of operating." And he took a look at them and apologized.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: Yeah. So they aren't that easy, you know.

CLINE: Can you say who that was?

TANNER: Well, he's passed away now. I remember his face and I remember him, but I've blocked him out.

CLINE: Okay. Because I was going to ask you who the head of the department would have been at that point, and--

TANNER: Well, as I say, it changed every year so-- They had some good people who didn't care to be chairman, and they had some people who weren't quite as communicative in the classroom who were good administratively, so it varied a lot.

There was one lady [Barbara Bevis], who now lives across the lawn from me, who was the secretary for the different chairmen, and she had to break each one of them in as they came in. [laughter] What a job.

CLINE: So what do you remember, if there is anything interesting to remember, about UCLA at that time? Obviously you weren't spending a whole lot of time on campus if you were working as a studio musician as well, but is there anything that stands out?

TANNER: Well, I was spending as much time there as I could possibly spend. For quite a while I couldn't afford not to accept work as a player, but then there comes a time when you've got to decide, well, what is it eventually going to be. So then you make a decision that you aren't going to let the playing interfere with the teaching, because you're going to stay there for a while. And I did. I stayed there

twenty-three years on the faculty. So when that time came, then I-- There were things I couldn't send substitutes on. Teaching things like the jazz class, things like that, I couldn't ask someone to go take my class for me. So when that time comes, well, then you've got to do a whole turnaround and say, "I'll make my classes." And people called me for work, and I told them, "I'm sorry, I have a conflict," and most everybody understood, and it was okay.

I have to tell you two of the nicest things that happened to me at UCLA, and these are ego things again, Alex, I'm sorry.

CLINE: [laughter] That's fine.

TANNER: At a football game, when the team was still playing in the [Los Angeles Memorial] Coliseum, they had a big high school band here, something like that, and they spelled out my name on the football field.

CLINE: Oh, really? [laughter]

TANNER: And what a gas that is. [laughter] You know, good grief! That's awfully nice. They did a whole halftime program on me and spelled out my name on the field. Now, that's overwhelming, I tell you.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: And the other thing is, when I left, the students threw a party for me. And I hear that's never happened before or after. About three thousand students came down in between

Royce Hall and the [Powell] Library. They came and got me after one of my classes and walked me on down there, and I didn't know what was happening. They said, "Please come with us." Okay. They came down, and they said, "Do you recognize the music?" And I heard music being played: I heard "MoonLight Serenade" being played. I said, oh, somebody's got a tape machine going. I walked around the corner down there, and they'd hired Tex Beneke's band.

CLINE: Oh, no. [laughter]

TANNER: And as many of the ex-Glenn Miller guys as they could find. They're playing this party for me. And there were lots of nice gifts and food and all like that for everybody. Gee, what a thing, you know.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: Now, that's another huge compliment. How nice it was.

CLINE: Yes. So did you ever have any regrets about doing this when you could have kept playing, say, in Tex Beneke's band and continuing that whole lifestyle?

TANNER: No, I really didn't. I was getting a little old for all that traveling--that is, I felt so. I felt as if I had to think about the future a little more.

So as I say, I hadn't really thought much about teaching. As close as I thought about it was when I got the master's

degree, and I got that in education. I thought, "Well, I may want to teach at a junior college or something, and they'd like you to have that." So that's as close as I got.

But, you know, you don't play as well as you used to when you were a lot younger. You just don't have the muscles for it, you don't have the excitement built up so easily, and things like that. So I've never felt badly about it. And I got into a whole different thing. I got into writing books and things like that, and that-- You know, your royalties keep going for years. So I've always been very happy. And I didn't know, for about the first ten years that I was there, that there was a retirement plan.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Yeah. All of a sudden someone said, "Well, you're heading toward getting a retirement." I said, "What is that?"

And, gosh, that's worked out nicely. [laughter]

CLINE: Yeah, I'll bet.

TANNER: Yeah, I didn't even know anything about it.

CLINE: Oh, man. So since you were so, it sounds like, overwhelmingly busy, how did that affect your personal life?

We've talked about how understanding your wife [Bunny Smith Tanner] was when you were on the road playing. What about now?

TANNER: You mean the lady I was married to at the time?

CLINE: Yes.

TANNER: She liked money enough to where, when the phone would ring, she would say, "Yes, he'll take it. What is it?"

[laughter] So there was no problem about it. In fact, when I didn't have time in between studio calls, she would sometimes meet me and bring me some food, things like that. Very cooperative, very understanding. A very nice lady.

CLINE: Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about the studio work. You worked mostly with the ABC orchestra for a while, as well as these freelance things.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And you mentioned some of the people who got you work, who are obviously extremely huge names--at least with hindsight they're huge names now. How did you like playing in the studios as opposed to the excitement of live concerts that you had been doing before?

TANNER: Well, playing live is a lot more enjoyable. You're a lot freer, and you can even experiment some if you want. You can take a crack at a thing you want to do and get away with it. In the studio, time is money.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: And it's pretty ultra clean, and everything's got to be just right or you're costing them a lot of money, and so forth. And you're hired in the studio because you play

well. You're not hired because you do a certain thing--very seldom. That happens on occasion, but usually you're hired because you play well, and they'll tell you what they want you to do. So it was usually a little antiseptic in the studio.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: And a little cautious. You know, I liked it better a littler freer, a little looser.

CLINE: Did you find that a lot of your former contemporaries from the big bands wound up in the studios as you did?

TANNER: Absolutely. Warner Bros. was loaded with Les Brown guys, and so forth and so on with other studios. I knew a lot of these guys anyway from being on the road. I didn't have any trouble making friends and making connections. You have to have connections, there's no question about it. But if you've got a good connection and you go on a job and you don't produce properly, that connection's not going to help you.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: The next time someone else is there.

CLINE: What did they think of your academic aspirations?

TANNER: At first some people didn't understand it, and pretty soon they started to think, "Man, I should have done that."

CLINE: Oh. [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah. There's so much more security to something

like that than there is to playing, especially nowadays, Alex.

I say "nowadays"--the last decade or so. There have been young players that are coming up that are just world-beaters, and, man, I'd hate to be competing with them.

CLINE: [laughter] Do you think that part of the turning away from live concerts and going into the studios or going into other lines of work or teaching for a lot of these musicians was due to the fact that jazz had evolved away from the swing era style and the big bands?

TANNER: Well, that's not the reason that I went over to it, and the other guys, they wanted to settle in California.

You keep saying concerts. Swing bands didn't do many concerts.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Yeah, we played dances much more than concerts.

CLINE: Yeah. I guess what I mean is public performance. TANNER: But the guys wanted to come to California and live.

CLINE: Oh, I see.

TANNER: This is the place.

CLINE: Right. And this certainly is the place for studio work.

TANNER: Of course, that doesn't hit you so much because you were raised here.

CLINE: Yeah, it's totally foreign to me. I always think about

when I'm going to leave. [laughter]

TANNER: Oh, you should try some other place in the country.
You'll come back here in a hurry. [laughter]

CLINE: Yeah. [laughter] And since we're on that particular topic--and we talked a little bit about this yesterday--how did you feel about where jazz was evolving by that time? By now we've come into the peak of bebop in the late forties, and moving into the fifties we had the cool school, and moving into the sixties, of course, after hard bop you start getting freer forms of jazz and all this. Did you have feelings about this as you were now in teaching and a studio musician?

TANNER: Well, as a player in the studios, this didn't affect me much, because you found very little bebop or cool or free-form and so forth in the studios.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Because it wasn't commercially viable.

CLINE: I don't mean just in terms of what you had to play but just in terms of what you felt about the evolution of the music.

TANNER: I think it should go ahead. I like big sounds, so there's no question about that. But with the small groups it gets terribly exciting, it really does. There's a chance for a lot of motion in the music and so forth that I think is very interesting and very exciting. I don't put that down

at all. Cool things like, gosh, the way Paul Horn played flute, you know, things like that, that's just beautiful. And Stan Getz on tenor, guys like that, that's gorgeous. There's no denying that. You get into free-form and that's a little harder for me to accept, because I think sometimes guys will do that when they can't do something else very well. Not always. Don't misunderstand me.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: A guy like Cecil Taylor, someone like that is very talented. But a lot of guys who aren't quite so talented will very often get into that when something else doesn't work for them. That's my opinion.

CLINE: And how did you feel about some of the big bands that were actually able to keep going like Duke Ellington and Count Basie? Did you still follow them at all?

TANNER: Absolutely, absolutely. Ellington's band continued to experiment. And even though he featured individuals in his band, it always sounds like Ellington. And they continued to experiment. Count Basie continued to outswing everybody.

So naturally you followed them; they're exciting. I also was a good friend and a fan of a guy like [Stan] Kenton, who would try things-- In fact, I got a trombone player for him in a hurry when he needed a guy. But if Kenton had gone a little more commercial he would have made more money. I don't

say he didn't make money, but he could have made more. But there were bands like that. Buddy Rich's band was a good, swinging band. Don Ellis-- Did you tell me you played with Don?

CLINE: Oh, no. My music teacher [John Magruder] played with Don.

TANNER: I see. Because Don tried some things that other people hadn't that were really fun, you know. When he was getting started, he had me down to a union [American Federation of Musicians, Local 47] rehearsal and said, "Would you come down and help us?"--you know, just a rehearsal. And it was a lot of fun. He was a very avant-garde type fellow.

CLINE: Would you say that it was actually somewhat necessary to think in terms of, as you say, being somewhat more commercial in order to economically survive with something as expensive as a big band?

TANNER: If you were a little bit commercial-- I don't mean go overboard. Everybody doesn't have to be a Lawrence Welk.

But if you went a little bit more commercial and appealed to your audience a little more, you did have a better chance of survival. Because I think a lot of people look at the big bands at one point as being somewhat outdated and sort of like the dinosaurs. And yet there were these bands that you mentioned that were still experimenting and still pioneering,

like Duke Ellington.

CLINE: Do you think that if more of the bands had been more pioneering that some of them would have had a longevity that wasn't merely based on a nostalgia for the swing era?

TANNER: I don't know. That's guessing.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: Alex, I truly don't know. I know that Miller had some things set up that he was going to do after the war, which we've talked about. And he was going into bigger sounds all the time, as witnessed by his service band. He had a huge band there. But I don't think he would have gone as far as to play bop.

CLINE: No, no.

TANNER: But if you think the swing bands are dinosaurs, then don't go to Iowa in June or they'll drum you out.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. Well, we wouldn't want to incur the wrath of the Iowans. [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah, you wouldn't, believe me. [laughter]

CLINE: Okay. I want to talk more about the teaching end, unless you have anything else you want to add about the studio period.

TANNER: Oh, no, that's okay.

CLINE: Okay. I did also want to mention--maybe this would be a good time--that you've mentioned that you worked with

some very big names from the classical field that most people don't realize that you've done. Who were some of these people?

And how did those particular experiences come about?

TANNER: Eugene Ormandy, [Arturo] Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Walter Hendl, Mehta, of course. Both Mehtas [Zubin Mehta and Mehli Mehta]. André Previn and people like that who weren't really into the jazz mode at all. But the thing that was happening to me--it happened to me in New York before I left there, and it happened to me when I got to California--is there would be programs, like maybe Gershwin programs and things like that, and they needed someone on first trombone with a little different interpretation of the music than someone who's strictly classically trained is going to give it. So I would be called in, and I would work with these fellows then. They were always very nice to me. In fact, they offered me a steady job on the Los Angeles Philharmonic [Orchestra].

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: But I couldn't afford to take it.

CLINE: [laughter] That's right. And what did you learn from working with some of these people?

TANNER: Just play my horn well, that's all. You keep listening.

Like sit there alongside a fellow like Bob Marsteller, trombone player with the Philharmonic, and you hear what he does, and you try to do that. And you practice a lot.

CLINE: And did you have any impressions of note about any one of these rather major individuals?

TANNER: Well, the only thing that you're aware of is you don't get away with anything. They know what you're doing.

[laughter]

CLINE: So this was all for classical work, then?

TANNER: Yes, that's right.

CLINE: I see. Do you know how they would find your name among all the other musicians?

TANNER: Oh, word of mouth, you know, somebody's suggestion, that's all. Someone would suggest you to what is known as a contractor, and he calls you in. And the conductor has to have faith in the contractor's opinions. So they call you in to do a job.

CLINE: Do you remember any of the particular pieces of music, the kinds of pieces that you were asked to play?

TANNER: Gosh, there was-- Oh, no. I'm afraid to try.

CLINE: I was just wondering if they wanted somewhat more of a jazz feel or if they really just wanted you to play straight classical trombone.

TANNER: Oh, you just play straight, yeah. I remember one thing. Gosh, I forget what it is. The whole second movement is a trombone solo. And I asked the fellow, "You want me to use vibrato?" He said, "Yeah, a lot of vibrato." "Okay."

Which scared some of the rest of the band, because I'm standing up there imitating Tommy Dorsey.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: But that's another thing. The New York Philharmonic would hire Tommy Dorsey whenever they played Ravel's "Bolero."

He'd come in and play the trombone solo and then pack up his horn and leave. Because it goes up to a high D, and the classically trained trombone players at that time, B-flat was about their top. That they were sure of, and they wouldn't play anything they weren't sure of. So "Bolero" goes up to a D. It was no problem for Dorsey. He'd come in, play it, pack up his horn, and leave. So those kinds of things happen in classical music sometimes.

CLINE: And you were known for your upper-register playing, too.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: Do you think that was one of the attractions, perhaps?

TANNER: I don't think so in those situations. It got me on a lot of record dates and a lot of things like that, but not with the classical groups.

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TANNER: Should I tell you why I left there?

CLINE: Left where?

TANNER: UCLA.

CLINE: I don't know if we would be getting ahead of ourselves or not.

TANNER: Oh, okay.

CLINE: But we'll get to that for sure.

TANNER: All right.

CLINE: But I did want to ask you before we continue on this teaching subject, when you decided to go back to school and take advantage of the GI Bill, obviously at this point you were pretty financially secure. The job that you had playing was paying you pretty well and it was pretty secure. Did the thought of going to school and doing all that make you feel insecure financially? Did you know you were going to walk right into doing all of these sort of big-time studio jobs?

TANNER: No, I honestly didn't. It's hard, Alex, when you're earning a good living, earning a good weekly salary, to all of a sudden chop it off to where you have nothing coming in.

That's hard. But it worked out very well for me, and I was very lucky. As I said, I was offered a studio thing in New

York, and I turned it down. I was offered nothing in California, and I came on out and took my chances.

CLINE: And your wife was still supportive at this point?

TANNER: Absolutely.

CLINE: Great.

TANNER: Yeah, well, she wanted to live in California.

CLINE: Ah, that was certainly an attraction.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Okay. You said as soon as you had gotten your bachelor's you were asked to teach at UCLA.

TANNER: Right.

CLINE: How did that come about?

TANNER: The guy who was the director of bands--his name was [Clarence] Sawhill--he happened to be a big wheel in the [music] department, and he said, "We need this fellow," and they said okay. So I taught brass to the prospective music teachers, and I taught trombone.

CLINE: And so it started with teaching trombone and brass.

TANNER: Yeah. See, if a person's going to be a music teacher, they've got to work up a certain amount of proficiency on brass, strings, and percussion.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: It has to be on their résumé.

CLINE: Right. And you were going for your master's in

education simultaneously?

TANNER: After a little while. I was busy: this was a new world to me. So I went on into it later.

CLINE: So at this point were you pretty well accepted by maybe most of the music faculty then?

TANNER: Not much.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: But it didn't bother me. I didn't worry about it.

I knew that I was on the outside. I didn't have a degree from Yale [University] or something.

CLINE: Right. How did this sort of outsider attitude manifest?

Were these people just rather cold to you? Or did they actually say things to you that--?

TANNER: Oh, no, no. Everyone was very congenial and very nice. I was just never real good friends with any of them.

We didn't socialize.

CLINE: Oh, I see.

TANNER: But I guess I didn't have time to, anyway.

CLINE: I was about to say, when would you have done that?

And now you decide that you're going to get your master's in education. Can you sort of explain the decision-making process there?

TANNER: Well, I figured I was doing pretty well with the knowledge of music, but I didn't know much about teaching,

so I figured I'd get the master's in education. That was my thinking then.

CLINE: And once you accomplished that, you got your master's, did you think that was going to be it for you in terms of academia?

TANNER: I thought so. In fact, the department never asked me to get a master's or never asked me to get a doctorate or anything. They were just going to let me stay there the way I was. But I was thinking ahead a little bit about what I was going to do later. I figured I'd probably end up teaching at a junior college or something, and you should have that degree, you know, that extra degree.

CLINE: I see. And what happened then once you got the master's?

TANNER: Nothing. I just kept on doing what I was doing. And then eventually I figured, well, gosh, I'm this far, so I started to investigate about the Ph.D. It wasn't much trouble.

CLINE: And this was in composition, then?

TANNER: Music composition.

CLINE: Right. What was your project for your Ph.D.?

TANNER: For the dissertation?

CLINE: Yes.

TANNER: Well, the dissertation involved writing a symphonic-length piece. I wrote a trombone concerto, of course, a concerto accompanied by a symphony orchestra and also wrote

the same concerto accompanied by a concert band. Then you write out in words--explanation of each bar--why you did this, why you did that, and so forth.

The one thing that I was told was "Please do not bring in anything that you have published," because I had so much stuff published by then. I had a thing [*Porgy and Bess*] I was already playing that I couldn't publish because it was [George] Gershwin. [laughter] So once again I stole from him. I had it already written for concert band, already had it written for symphonic orchestra, so all I had to do was analyze it.

CLINE: Did you ever have any personal feelings of frustration based around the constant need to conform to the so-called "legitimate" musical style?

TANNER: No one ever pressed me on that at all, no.

CLINE: You didn't get to write music with any sections for open soloing or improvisation or anything, I take it.

TANNER: No, I wrote things that I was asked to write by publishers.

CLINE: Oh, I see. Did you ever get this dissertation piece performed?

TANNER: Oh, I played it a lot, yeah. There was no problem writing something to play; I just couldn't publish it because it was Gershwin.

CLINE: I see. So once you had accomplished that, what happened then?

TANNER: Nothing. I just kept right on teaching.

CLINE: You kept working.

TANNER: Yeah, kept right on working, right on teaching. No problem.

CLINE: And your teaching duties didn't change in any way? They were still pretty much the same?

TANNER: Yes. The thing that changed my teaching duties was that the jazz classes got bigger.

CLINE: Okay. How did the jazz classes happen? Because we were talking about how you were teaching brass and all this.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: What happened that caused you to move into jazz?

TANNER: Well, I taught other subjects, too, as I said. I was in all the fields that they offered. My wife went to a [UCLA University] Extension class where the guy was teaching the history of jazz. He was a disc jockey. And he was doing such a poor job that she said, "Oh, it's just a shame."

So I went to the Extension people, and I said, "Do you know what's happening over here?"

And they said, "We've heard rumors."

So I said, "I can teach it better."

They said, "Okay, you're on next time."

So I started teaching it in the Extension, and then they asked me to teach it in the summertime, in the daytime, because they wanted a course that would bring in some students in the summer. So I did that. And then they wanted me to teach it in the regular session. All in all I ended up with seventy-five thousand students in the history of jazz.

CLINE: Do you think the decision to start this class was really just to have a class that would be somewhat well attended, then?

TANNER: During the daytime, yes; in the Extension, no. They'll settle for twenty or thirty people in Extension.

CLINE: Did they see, then, that it was well attended? Is that what started to get them to think this way?

TANNER: The first summer that they put me in the band room, or in the choral room, there were students hanging from the rafters.

CLINE: Do you know how that happened?

TANNER: I don't know. They saw a course called the Development of Jazz and they came on in. We didn't call it the History of Jazz because history puts some people off. So we just called it Development of Jazz.

CLINE: I take it the disc jockey didn't have people hanging off the rafters.

TANNER: [laughter] Do you know, that poor guy sat up

there and fell asleep. You know, he'd had a hard day. He'd put a record on, sit down behind his desk, and doze off.

CLINE: Do you remember who he was?

TANNER: I do, yes.

CLINE: But you'd rather not say?

TANNER: Yes. [laughter]

CLINE: Is he someone who's still a disc jockey?

TANNER: I don't know what happened to him.

CLINE: Oh, okay. [laughter]

TANNER: Isn't that something?

CLINE: Yeah. So you wound up teaching the Development of Jazz during regular class time at UCLA. And this was a class that was not restricted to music majors.

TANNER: No, it was accepted as one of those things that covered a requirement for culture, but it was open to the students.

If there were music students in there, I gave them separate tests.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Yeah. You call that unfair?

CLINE: No, I don't know. How did having the general student body in your class affect the philosophy of your teaching of the class?

TANNER: Well, I got more technical than I should have. I realized that, but I figured anything I taught them in the

class I could ask them on an exam.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: They ended up-- The whole football team could write the blues--I mean write the notes to it on a music staff. They could write the chords to it and so forth. So I had to make sure that I really made myself understood, because music sometimes is a different language.

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

TANNER: The grades were high in the jazz class, no question about it. But I leaned hard on them. One time I was going to go down to the athletic department to make sure those guys were studying what they should, but, boy, the athletic department wanted no part of me hanging around there. It looked bad.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: They said, "No, don't come around here at all."
[laughter] Because it looks bad. It's like special treatment or something like that.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: You can't do that. I did give makeup exams when they had to be out on the road, like the basketball team had to go play someplace on the road. But I would for any other student, too. But I was very interested in athletics. I was a fan of the sports department, but I couldn't give them special

treatment. I flunked them. There's a golfer now who's doing very, very well--his name's Corey Pavin. I had to flunk him.

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: I saw him down here [Rancho La Costa] at a tournament, and he said, "Well, if I don't make it on the pro tour, I'm going back to school." I thought, "If you go back to school, you'd better go to classes, fellow."

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: But he's making it. He's about the tenth in money earned this year.

CLINE: So I guess you know where he was instead of class.

[laughter]

TANNER: Yes, he was on the golf course. [laughter]

CLINE: That's something you know a little bit about too, golf.

TANNER: Yeah, I loved it.

CLINE: So you didn't find anything frustrating about having to teach football players instead of music majors, then?

TANNER: No. In fact, I was always much more student oriented than I was faculty oriented. The only thing I really minded was exams. You think students object to exams? Boy, the faculty objects to exams. We hate them. You must understand, I corrected the exams myself.

CLINE: And these were essay exams?

TANNER: There would be some essay on an exam, some technical stuff, some true and false. I mixed it all up.

CLINE: Oh, I see.

TANNER: On one exam it would be all mixed up. But I corrected them myself. TA's [teaching assistants] at the college level very seldom know much about jazz. They know about classical music because that's what they studied. So once I tried to have them help me correcting them. And I gave them check sheets. Boy, they would look at the exams and if it didn't say exactly what it said on the check sheet, they would count it wrong. So I had to go over all of the exams all over again and redo them. That was much more work than doing them myself. So I did all of the exams myself.

CLINE: So this obviously cut into your time in a fairly big way, then.

TANNER: Yeah, but along about that time I was starting to realize that I should give that a priority, give the teaching a priority. And teaching was fun to me.

I had guests that were unbelievable in the jazz class.

CLINE: Yeah, we're going to get to that in a minute. I wanted to ask you how you generally approached the class? What did you do in a class?

TANNER: I taught it chronologically, that this music came from Europe and came from Africa and came together in this

country, and from the very beginnings of it. I understood and tried to convince them that they played today because of the way they played yesterday and so forth, and that if you show them the continuation of the development, then it all comes out very naturally.

CLINE: So you were playing a lot of records, but you also had people come and play live in the classroom, right?

TANNER: Yeah. And I would sit down at the piano and show them things. I'm not a piano player, but I could do that enough. And I could do some things on the trombone to demonstrate things. You know, the trombone was always sitting open on the piano. And a lot of records and a lot of guests.

In fact, I didn't know from one day to another what was going to happen the next day, because I'd get a call that evening.

And the students didn't know either. So attendance was always up because they didn't know what was going to happen.

CLINE: And how did you feel about their comprehension of what you were giving them?

TANNER: Well, the scores showed that they were understanding it.

CLINE: Do you think it's partly because their interest was so high and not just the way you taught it? Because there was this sort of immediate and spontaneous unpredictability factor involved?

TANNER: Well, let's face it, it was a hot subject, a communicative subject. It wasn't the love life of an ant.

[laughter] So it was easy to get them really into it, because they were already pretty much into it by the time they walked in the door.

CLINE: What about during the sixties, and during the periods when jazz sort of started to wane in popularity to some degree?

You still saw the same type of interest coming in?

TANNER: Absolutely. Jazz has always gone up and down. All different styles have gone up and down depending upon your own background. But this was never a problem.

CLINE: Right. Obviously I'm referring to its waning popularity with people of the age of the college students but not as much in the world at large.

TANNER: Well, you know, here it is supposedly waning, and they bring in a guy to play in Royce Hall who plays nothing but ragtime, and they pack them in. So it's pretty hard to figure.

CLINE: Yeah. So who were some of these luminaries who came into your classroom?

TANNER: Well, Stan Kenton would call me on the phone and say, "Paul, I haven't been down to your jazz class for a little while."

I'd say, "Okay, when do you want to come down?"

He'd say, "Tomorrow." [laughter]

I'd say, "Okay, I've got a nine o'clock and a ten o'clock.
Come to both of them."

And what we'd do is we'd stand up there and have an open conversation in front of the students. They would ask questions, and we would play things, and we would talk about them, and so forth. John Hendricks had a show in Westwood, the Westwood [Playhouse] theater, called *The Evolution of the Blues*.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: John brought his whole show over and played for classes.
[laughter] Isn't that wild? He brought his whole cast over.
Now, isn't that really something?

CLINE: Yeah. Did you have room for that? [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah, we made room. [laughter]

CLINE: This is a pretty big class, right?

TANNER: Well, we were in the auditorium in the music building, in Schoenberg Hall.

CLINE: Oh, right.

TANNER: Five hundred and fifty seats.

And, oh, gosh, Paul Horn and I were doing a record date one night--this was during the time when they made "music to read by," "music to sleep by," and so forth--so I said to Paul, "Want to come out to my jazz class?" He said sure. He came out the next day. And I had a record going of his.

It was going, and Paul and I walked in and put on the microphones--you know, the lavaliers--and I said to him, "Paul, we were working on an album last night. What was the album for?" He said, "Music to ball by."

CLINE: Oh, no. [laughter]

TANNER: I said, "Oh, no, hold it. Next subject." [laughter]

Later that day I came across a guy who was the new chairman of the fine arts school [College of Fine Arts], or dean of fine arts [Robert Gray], and he said, "Paul, I had to be over in the music department this morning for a meeting, and I got lost, and I went into the auditorium. You and this fellow walked out, and you asked him what was that album for. What did he say?"

And I said, "Music to ball by."

And he said, "I thought that's what he said." He said, "I'll come back again sometime." You know, straight ahead. [laughter] Oh, gosh.

But also complete Dixieland bands, black and white, would come out there for the jazz class. I mean professional guys--no money involved. Supersax. Do you remember them?

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: They asked if they could come out and play for the class. I said, "Of course you can." You know, they came out

and played.

Johnny Guarneri.

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

BOTH: Piano player.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: John came out, and he was on a crusade then. He thought that jazz players should play a lot more in five-four [time].

CLINE: I think I've heard about this.

TANNER: Yeah. So he would sit up there at the piano, and any tune that they asked for he would play for them, imitating anybody they wanted him to imitate, but he would play it in five-four.

CLINE: I've heard about that. Someone in another one of our interviews talks about that.

TANNER: Is that right?

CLINE: I think Gerald Wiggins talks about it.

TANNER: John was something else. His son was on the faculty, a singer, opera singer [Mario Guarneri].

A guy named Clare Fischer--

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

TANNER: I was doing a date with Clare, and Clare has a master's from Michigan State [University]. I said, "Clare, come on out and tell these people that a good education doesn't hurt your jazz playing."

He said, "Okay." He said, "Well, you want me to play?"

I said, "Yeah, sure."

So he said, "Okay, I'll bring a bass player."

He came out there, and they played for a while. And then I said, "Clare, explain to the class about your educational background."

And he talked about his master's at Michigan State.

Now, here we are in front of the class, and there's this little guy, little black bass player, standing there.

Obviously I've got to ask him about his education. You know, he could have dropped out after the fourth grade; I didn't know him at all. And the students saw that I had to ask him.

So I said, "Bobby, do you want to explain about your educational background?"

He said, "Well, after I graduated from Indiana, I went to the London School of Economics, where they take four Americans a year."

And the students saw that I was so relieved that they broke out laughing, you know. [laughter]

CLINE: Wow. [laughter] So do you remember any others who came?

TANNER: Let me see. I jotted down some names. I can't think of any of the others right now, no.

CLINE: That's okay. Were you aware of any other similar classes going on in the country at that point? I'm not talking about, obviously, classes aimed at music majors at universities known for their music, but general classes like this.

TANNER: In 1970 I took off a semester--or a quarter, whatever we were on at that time--and took my tape machine and went around the country and selectively stopped at several colleges and investigated how jazz was taught and how trombone was taught. And then I came back and wrote a lot of articles.

In some of these, when I showed up on campus they immediately would have me come in and talk to their classes. Some were classes of general students, and some were strictly music majors who wanted to be professional musicians. Gerry Mulligan was teaching a class on down in Carolina [of students] who were going to be studio musicians. So it varied quite a lot.

None had this kind of size. But then, UCLA is a big, big school, you know, so you could get a lot of students. If you have someone who communicates with them okay, you'll have as many students as you can handle. But you've got to be able to communicate with them.

CLINE: Right. Do you remember what year you started teaching this as a day class, a regular class on campus?

TANNER: Oh, it must have been in the sixties, the mid-sixties.

CLINE: And how long did this class continue?

TANNER: Up until I left.

CLINE: Which was--

TANNER: 'Eighty-one.

CLINE: In the seventies, didn't Gerald Wilson teach a similar class out at Cal[ifornia] State [University] Northridge?

TANNER: That's right, he did, yeah.

CLINE: Did you ever attend his class or hear anything about what he was doing?

TANNER: No, I had time conflicts. But I'm sure he did well. He was a bright guy.

CLINE: Yeah, I just wondered. So you didn't really know of too many similar situations around--

TANNER: Well, in these articles that I wrote, I pointed out different situations where it was going on. You have to be supported by your department in order to be able to get away with that. When I say "get away with," I mean teach something other than classical music.

CLINE: This brings to mind what my next question was. How did you view this particular conflict at that point? Did you see in your travels a lot of this situation where jazz would be viewed as something not exactly legitimate and therefore there would be resistance to this kind of a class?

TANNER: Alex, I didn't see nearly as much of that as I saw there were people teaching it who hadn't really been involved

in it themselves. All of a sudden the college would need a course, and here's a guy who didn't have a full load, and they said, "It's yours." I found that a lot more than the other. You know, it's kind of too bad. But that needn't happen in California, it needn't happen in New York, but it would happen in some town out in the middle of the country somewhere.

So I found that a lot more. I didn't see situations where the faculty looked down on it or anything like that.

CLINE: And you continued, despite the popularity of the class, to be treated like an outsider at UCLA?

TANNER: Well, there was a funny situation. Let me see. The easy way to explain it is a department gets its money from the university according to how many students are taking how many units. The jazz classes were four-unit courses. The room held 550 people. Now, they could only take about a third that tried to get in, and I had two classes. So what is that?

Eleven hundred? So you're teaching 1,100 people four units.

Now, for a while there they talked me into three classes, but I got tired because of exams and all. Two's enough. So here I am bringing in all these units being taught by the music department. So the music department, the faculty itself, the people decided, let Paul alone. Let Paul do whatever he wants. He's really bringing in the money for the department. That way they can

teach their little small classes of two or three, which are very important.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Terribly important. And they can get away with teaching them because enough money is coming into the department through the jazz classes. Therefore it was "Let Paul alone."

I finally told them, "Don't put me on any committees. I don't work well in groups and things like that." They tried a couple of committees, and they didn't work out. I figured they wasted their time. I said, "Take me off the committee and don't put me on any more." So that's fine. "Let Paul alone." That was nice.

CLINE: Did that sort of perpetuate your outsider status, not being on any committees or any academic councils or anything?

TANNER: It didn't bother me one way or another.

CLINE: But did it bother them, though?

TANNER: No, they just let me alone.

CLINE: Well, that's good.

TANNER: Yeah, I liked that.

CLINE: Because that can be very time-consuming, too, can't it?

TANNER: Yes, very. And they knew that I was still playing--up until 1978 or so.

CLINE: Yeah. So was it your experience in this classroom that necessitated you writing a jazz history textbook [*A Study of Jazz*]?

TANNER: Right. At first I didn't have the students use a book because nobody's book satisfied me. Then they'd have to buy half a dozen different books, and that's really unfair to the students, you know.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: So I said, "No textbook." And, you know, the students didn't like that, because they had nothing to go back to for reference. They didn't like that at all. So a publisher walked in--the biggest textbook publisher there is, William C. Brown--and their representative walked in and saw the size of the class, and he started to drool, you know. He said, "What do you use as a textbook?" I said, "Nothing. Just my notes." He said, "Write them down. We'll publish them." So that's what I did on the first book. That was the first edition.

But I did more than that. I got guys in the studios and recorded examples of all different styles and put that on a record that they put out with the book. And now the seventh edition is doing very well. We're told it's used in over four hundred colleges. Which is nice for me.

CLINE: Yeah. Did having this class and also writing the

textbook help you keep very current with what was happening in jazz at the time?

TANNER: You bet, absolutely. You've got to keep right on listening, keep right on studying, keep right on analyzing and so forth. So you're absolutely right; it does help you.

In fact, I've always felt one way to learn a subject is to teach it.

CLINE: So did you find yourself listening to a lot of music that was current as you were going through the class?

TANNER: Absolutely.

CLINE: And considering your own predilections and your own opinions about things, how was that for you?

TANNER: That was fine. People have a tendency to associate me so much with the swing era. Gosh, it isn't just that with me. You know, if people play well, I like it.

CLINE: The reason I ask is because there's such a non-bias, I felt, in the book. It's extremely open and accommodating to all of the different forms that jazz evolved into and doesn't really come across as having any particular bias, whether stylistically, nationally, racially, or anything else, which I think would have to be crucial for any jazz text.

TANNER: Yeah, I think so too. And of course, you don't want to turn off your potential students by saying, "Such and such is not as good as so-and-so."

Now I've hooked up with a young fellow [David Megill]--I say young, he's forty; he's young to me--and we're doing the book together, the last couple of editions. And he keeps me hopping. He's a player, and he's deeply into free-form, and he's deeply into the electronics, which is a big help, because that's hard for me.

CLINE: And who is Maurice Gerow?

TANNER: Maurice Gerow is on the faculty in music education. He helped me with the first couple of editions. At the end of each chapter there were things you could do to help you study what the chapter was, and Maurice made these up for me.

CLINE: Oh, I see. Okay.

TANNER: Nice fellow.

CLINE: There are some things you talk about in the book that I wanted to get into. First, I wanted to mention how your resistance to categorization, I thought, was really commendable in a music that really means all things to all people. The old question, "What is jazz?" after all isn't very answerable, is it?

TANNER: No, it really isn't.

CLINE: However, particularly in the beginning of the book, I was wondering--this goes back to what we were talking about earlier about your posture in academia--There's somewhat of

a defensive tone in the sense of really wanting to point out that jazz is not some kind of illegitimate music that can be looked down on from some ivory tower. Did you feel that it was really a necessity to have to make that point, maybe not just for students coming to it with some sort of an attitude but for academic institutions as well, or academics?

TANNER: Yes, I think so, Alex. I've been told that I've been defensive about this all the time. And I think because in academia there's so much of an emphasis on music other than jazz that I have been defensive about it. I feel that music is an art form, and jazz is part of music, that's all, but being a pretty good example of American art, you know, the way it came together in America--not the basic roots but the way it came together in America--it's certainly our most important cultural export. I think that more people who consider themselves good, knowledgeable, well-rounded musicians should know a little more about this.

CLINE: Right. Did you find it daunting to take this on? To write a book about something that is really so amorphous and multifaceted?

TANNER: You mean as far as the textbook is concerned?

CLINE: Yes.

TANNER: Oh, no. I thought there was a need for a textbook. The publisher certainly thought so, not just because of the

class at UCLA but because nobody else had a textbook, either.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: So this just explains it. I shouldn't be apologizing for it in the textbook but just try to explain it as best one can. You know, you can't explain it really thoroughly.

CLINE: Well, especially since it is aimed at the uninitiated and actually is not a two-thousand-page tome, either. It's really very concise.

TANNER: Yes.

CLINE: Was that a challenge for you, as well? Did you want to write more?

TANNER: No, I don't think so. I think that was the way I explained things and that was the way it came out in the book.

CLINE: Perhaps you would prefer there to be more musical examples and fewer words?

TANNER: Probably so. The present textbook they just call *Jazz*. They don't even call it *A Study of Jazz*. They call it *Jazz*. And it does have CDs with it if you want or cassettes if you want. And it's very thorough.

CLINE: You're very open and generous towards the various stages of evolution of jazz music, and some of the things we've talked about here regarding your own taste have me interested, because obviously you did have to listen to a lot of these things to keep current. And you said you like

anything that's well played. The book pretty much--at least the edition I read--stops at electronics in jazz music and jazz-rock, that being, I guess, sort of what the current stage of evolution was at that time.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And you said earlier that you had trouble with some of the free-form things. What about that last stage there?

How did you feel about what maybe at the time you thought was the place where jazz was headed at that point?

TANNER: I don't know where jazz is headed. If you could figure a thing like that out, you could make a lot of money.

CLINE: Right. I'm going to come back to that in a minute, but before I do I wanted to mention that I also thought that there's an interesting emphasis on the influence of the church and its music on jazz in the book.

TANNER: In the beginnings.

CLINE: Right. I wondered if there was any personal experience that entered into that section, or if that was something you just wanted to stress academically.

TANNER: I think I just wanted to stress it. It didn't all come from the whorehouses.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: And I was trying to give it a little bit of respectability. But it did come from that kind of music.

So much of it did come from church music and still does. Gosh, our place in Maui is right next to a church, and the services-- I can lie in my bed early Sunday morning and listen to the services. They really move musically.

CLINE: Another thing you said in the book, you called jazz "not a composer's art so much," and I was wondering if you could elucidate that a little bit.

TANNER: Well, there are jazz composers, but they're a little rare. It's mainly the players. It's a performer's art, I think. Gosh, you look at the top fifty people you can name in jazz, they're almost all going to be performers. But there are people who can write good jazz things, and inside of these jazz things are some improvisations and so forth.

CLINE: Were you ever following any of the trends in the early to mid-seventies avant-garde? The influence of European contemporary classical music or so-called "new music" on jazz forms as they became much more compositional, obviously spearheaded by Anthony Braxton and people like that? How did you feel about that with regard to that idea of the composer?

TANNER: I think some of these works these fellows have done are going to eventually be a good case for arguing about whether they're into jazz or not.

CLINE: Ah, interesting.

TANNER: Including Braxton. Now, Braxton has been involved

in some real avant-garde jazz things. He's also been involved in some things that are awfully hard to associate with jazz.

CLINE: Yeah, there's almost very little improvisation in some of his more recent work.

TANNER: Or he can stand there for a half hour with a woodwind in his hand and improvise for you.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Now, who's saying that because it's improvisation that it's jazz? Not so.

CLINE: Oh, interesting.

TANNER: Improvisation was going on long before jazz.

CLINE: Right, and that's something you talk about in the book, as well.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: That's an interesting point, and that's something that's been discussed somewhat recently that I'm aware of: when improvisation isn't jazz. What do you think? When isn't it jazz?

TANNER: I don't think I can draw a line. Lots of things come into play. Interpretation of the line, rhythmic feeling--if there has to be one--you know, all sorts of things like that come into play. And you've got to decide for yourself, are you listening to jazz or not? And you can argue with anybody about it.

CLINE: Right. Since you were teaching jazz, what about the idea of the need for more of an education about jazz in the American educational system? You talk in the book a lot about American education and jazz, and I wondered, how do you feel about, first, the movement, particularly in the last decade or so, to increase the level of jazz study in American schools?

Why don't we start there. Have you seen an increase in jazz education? And how do you feel about where we are in terms of jazz education in this country?

TANNER: I think there is an increase, because I go to conventions of jazz educators, and they're packed. I do have a feeling that many of the teachers emphasize performance much more than anything else, and they do it from a competitive nature, like "My group is better than your group," and I feel that that's a little too bad. I think there should be more emphasis on history--which is kind of wild, because, you see, I was a player, and I think they should spend more time on the history, and these guys were not players, and they want to spend more time on performance. But they're after status themselves. If they have a real good group they look good as individuals. And I can understand that. But I think, as I said before, you play jazz today because of the way it was played yesterday, and I think there should be a better understanding of that. I think it would help out a lot. They

would get more people involved in it as an art form if they taught more of how it developed instead of just how it's played.

CLINE: It's a sort of a putting-the-cart-before-the-horse kind of a situation, you think?

TANNER: Yeah, except the playing of it is the exciting part, you know, and you can't argue with that.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: Like the guys down in North Texas State [University, now University of North Texas] in Denton, Texas.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: They've got about eleven jazz bands there. Each one is better than the other one. And that's the exciting part, that's the fun part. So I can understand it. But I think they should put more emphasis on other aspects of it, put more emphasis on writing.

CLINE: Even though it's mostly a performer's art?

TANNER: Yeah, but they can write things and leave spots open for improvisation.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: You know, take a band like Kenton, Stan Kenton.

CLINE: And what do you think of a lot of these people who are teaching jazz but who aren't really players them-selves?

TANNER: They eventually get into enough to where they know the capabilities of their students and so forth, and they

probably do a lot better job of it than I would. I talked to-- Do you know the name Leon Breeden?

CLINE: No.

TANNER: Well, he was really going well down there in Denton, Texas, and I stopped in there, and he was scared. I said, "What are you scared about? You've really got it going here. You've got eleven jazz bands." And he said, "I have to prove myself every semester." Now, that's too bad to have to have that kind of an attitude.

CLINE: Yeah. What about people who were players but were never very good players? Obviously you were a good player. What about some of these other people who never really got there but are teaching people how to play? Do you think they can still be good teachers?

TANNER: Yeah, I think so, if they know the fundamentals. Like I know you've probably come across fellows who can teach percussion who weren't the greatest at it themselves, but they know what you're supposed to do.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Make you practice.

CLINE: Well, I've heard that actually many of the best players make some of the worst teachers, and I was curious if that had been your experience, as well.

TANNER: I hadn't thought that, because, as I said before,

you come across guys like Gerry Mulligan and people like that who do both very well--you know, Gerald Wilson.

CLINE: Right. Do you see it as being somewhat different talents?

TANNER: I think so. One is you're communicating with your horn, and the other is you do a lot of verbal.

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CLINE: We were talking about jazz education. I wanted to ask you also, since there seems to be so much more jazz education now than there was even when you were teaching your class at UCLA--and as you say, so much of it is based on performance--how do you feel about learning how to play jazz in college as opposed to the way that you learned it yourself back when you started?

TANNER: Alex, the people who teach it and have groups where their students are doing the playing argue this point quite a lot, between having a big band and having lots of students involved in a big band and the things you have to learn to play in a big band. You've got to listen to yourself, you've got to listen to what's happening around you, you've got to fit in, all that sort of thing. The difference between that and having a small group, where you're a lot freer and can do a lot more, improvise solos and so forth, they argue constantly about which is the best way to operate.

You know, I've never been involved in having a school group myself. I've just been a fan of the different groups in schools, that's all. But I've never involved myself in teaching groups like that. As I told you before, I went down to Don Ellis's rehearsal, and I remember one suggestion I

gave to a guy that he was featuring quite a lot on sax. I said, "You're just running chords. You're not playing any melody, no melodic thought at all. You're just running chords."

The guy took it very seriously and said, "I'll work on it."

That's nice. But other than that, I kind of stay out of it.

CLINE: There is a controversy about whether jazz is something that you can really learn academically or whether it is more of a street music, and there are a lot of musicians who have very passionate feelings about this one way or the other. This could be brought on partly by the fact that in order to call attention to the legitimization of jazz as a music, one must put it at the same level as other musical traditions that have become academic, and in this case that would be European classical music. Do you see jazz as being more of a street music? Or do you see it as being something that can be successfully academic?

TANNER: Well, a fellow can take lessons on an instrument all his life and really get to where he's a virtuoso on the thing and never be able to handle jazz at all. So you've got to be in there and be playing it and experiencing it in order to be able to handle it to where it comes off. Otherwise it comes off so artificial it's ridiculous. In that sense it is a street music. There are people on the street-- Have you ever been to New Orleans?

CLINE: No.

TANNER: Oh, there are lots of street musicians down there.

There are people on the street who don't have any idea what they're doing on the instrument and are playing jazz really well.

CLINE: Oh, interesting.

TANNER: Now, imagine the combination. The guy can handle his instrument well and still has experience playing with a good jazz feel with other people with a good jazz feel. Well, then that comes off. You've got to look at people like Wynton Marsalis.

CLINE: Right. Which brings up something I'm going to get around to in a little while. But there's been some criticism that in a lot of these institutions they teach jazz sort of by formula or by the numbers as opposed to the way you learned it, where you just basically had to try and play what you heard and to learn things that way. Do you have any feeling about that?

TANNER: Well, imagine a guy who can play just how he feels yet knows his chords and so forth. That's a big help.

CLINE: So you're saying a balance is best.

TANNER: Yeah, I'm convinced of it. He's got more going for him. You know, some tunes have tough chords, and yet if he knows chords and he's got a good ear too, he's got it made.

CLINE: Related to what I was asking about earlier, some people like to emphasize that to them jazz is really a folk music, considering where it's come from, and other people are approaching it much more as if it's a classical music. In fact, some people have gone as far as to say that they'd prefer to call it African American classical music rather than jazz.

Do you think that that particular movement was the result of a need for acceptance and being considered legitimate in academic circles so that jazz education can go forward? Or do you think that as a folk music that it's actually irrelevant?

TANNER: If you're going to call it Afro-American classical music, you're ignoring Europe, and there's where you get your melody and your chords, and you don't have 99 percent of jazz music without melody and chords. So you can't really do that if you're going to think it through. But as far as folk music is concerned, like Louis Armstrong said, "I never heard no horse sing it," you know. If it's something that comes from the people-- Okay, a lot of jazz did just come from the people.

A lot of it came from European classical music. But the people who came to this country brought some of that with them and, without really realizing it, adapted it to what was going on here. So it's just a combination, that's all.

CLINE: So you don't really see it as being one or the other?

TANNER: No, I really don't.

CLINE: It's really a blend of these elements?

TANNER: Absolutely. And that happened in this country.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Although some of our biggest steps forward have been in other countries, in Europe.

CLINE: This is what I was going to say. We were talking about educating people in our country about a music that is really indigenously American, and yet this music continues to be hugely popular in places like Europe and Japan.

TANNER: Yeah, absolutely.

CLINE: Obviously, aside from just the communicative nature of the music, how do you view that enthusiasm and the degree to which these people are educated about the music in these countries?

TANNER: Jazz music, when it's played well, even just the rhythmic aspect of it, communicates wonderfully, and it can communicate to almost anybody. People who were growing up with nothing but polkas can communicate with the polka rhythmic aspect, you know. Jazz rhythm communicates beautifully. You add some guy doing some spectacular things to it one way or another--I don't mean virtuoso--but then it just becomes something that anybody can enjoy, they really can. And that's happening the world over. There are jazz festivals all over the world, and they're well attended. So it's a communicative

music, that's all.

CLINE: A lot of people, I know particularly in Europe, attach a lot of socio-political significance to some jazz music. Do you think that enters into it at all? Or do you think that's pretty much irrelevant or a personal bias?

TANNER: I think it's pretty much irrelevant. I don't think it has very much to do with it. There have been times when to play a certain way was politically unsound and so forth.

In fact, at first guys playing a very rough type of jazz were considered-- They were a little on the lower echelon of humanity, you know. But that's long, long gone. It doesn't really mean so much. You hear a lot of jazz in the White House.

CLINE: Right. Just recently we did, in fact.

TANNER: Even before this new president [William J. Clinton].

CLINE: Right. Since your book sort of stopped at what was then the current phase of the evolution of jazz, which was the electronic phase, there has come up what some people call a new traditionalist phase, or other people just call a retro phase. You mentioned Wynton Marsalis, who has become one of the figureheads of this particular movement, a movement that has generated an entirely new generation of players who are playing a much more traditional form of jazz, mostly based on the bebop and hard bop of the fifties and somewhat music

of the early to mid-sixties--in Wynton Marsalis's case, certainly references to the Miles Davis Quintet of the sixties.

You said you couldn't possibly guess where jazz was headed, but how do you feel about that development since you stopped teaching? Could you have foreseen this at all?

TANNER: No, I don't think so. Marsalis and, you mentioned yourself, the traditional jazz. But you say the traditional is bop.

CLINE: Right, right. "Traditional" is usually Dixieland in most cases.

TANNER: That's right. It goes back a lot farther than bop.

And I had to cope with that when they first started saying traditional, because they were talking about Dizzy Gillespie.

CLINE: Yeah, right. More traditional than fusion or free music.

TANNER: Oh, yeah. That's right. I don't see anything wrong with playing in fusion. I don't see anything wrong with mixing this in with that, and so forth. That's perfectly all right.

I don't really know what's going to happen next. I really don't.

CLINE: A lot of these musicians pretty much have decided--since we're talking about the evolution of the music--to ignore or even denounce this stage of evolution where electronics came into play, where fusion music was

developed, in favor of something that they see as being purer or something more honest and more directly tied to the roots of the music, to the point where they even take on the fashion of that time. Do you see this as being something that is truly a revitalization? Or do you see this as sort of being an enacting of a sort of a museum mentality?

TANNER: [laughter] A museum mentality?

CLINE: Yeah, or as they used to say for the show *Beatlemania*, "Not the real thing but an amazing simulation."

TANNER: Yeah, right.

CLINE: How do you feel about that?

TANNER: I'm not sure exactly what you're asking now.

CLINE: I guess I'm asking if you see this neo-traditionalist phase as being something that's a revitalization of something that is truly pure and meaningful in jazz or something that's just in a sense window dressing?

TANNER: Do you mean fusion and electronics and so forth?

CLINE: No, I'm talking about people like Wynton Marsalis and people who have come since him, like Roy Hargrove and the various players who are playing music very much in the style of the late fifties and early sixties.

TANNER: I don't know. I think you have to play what appeals to you. Now, what that means to the individual is going to be a different thing. Marsalis is so versatile on his instrument

that a lot of things must appeal to him. I can't see him ever playing like Louis Armstrong, because that just isn't in his personality. You know, Armstrong never went along with bop.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Dizzy probably would not have gone along with electronics and so forth. But I see nothing wrong with these things. I think a lot of problems came in with the amplifiers.

For example, if a guy isn't a good player and he's amplified, now the world knows he's not a good player. But as far as it being any conflict, I can't see that, Alex. I think things will change as guys look for things. Now, to change sometimes means to go back. Now, if you go back and you play well what was back there, well, then that's just fine. But if you go back and make a farce out of it, that's another thing.

CLINE: Right. Well, interestingly, it seems like now you could almost say that there's more of a balance in the sense that perhaps before there was more of an emphasis on so-called contemporary jazz. Now, it isn't like that music has died out. It's still going, but at the same time you have this music that's acoustic music that's more in the style of an earlier period.

TANNER: Like [John] Coltrane or something?

CLINE: Or even earlier than that. We're talking, say,

Coltrane when he was playing with Miles and Cannonball Adderly, those groups. And you have young musicians actually able to make a living as musicians playing a style of music that was very difficult to survive playing even ten years ago.

TANNER: Well, an awful lot of publicity will bring guys back into earning a living again, you know, and good records and so forth--I mean records that sell.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: I don't think they have to change their playing that much. Oh, gosh, I don't know. I have a tendency to have more feeling for people who play a nice line, like Coleman Hawkins or something like that. Although Coltrane played lines, very good lines.

CLINE: People forget that, since they just try to re-create the "sheets of sound" thing.

TANNER: That's right, yeah. The guy played great lines. In fact, I always considered him a linear player.

CLINE: When you joined Glenn Miller and really started your professional career as a musician, you were really quite young.

And now a lot of these players that are generating so much press and attention in this so-called new traditionalism are also quite young. How do you think this affects players when they're at an age where perhaps they're still earlier in their evolution and are getting so many accolades and so much press

attention?

TANNER: Well, that's perfectly all right as long as they're playing well. If they're just jiving around on their horns, that's another thing. But as long as they're playing well-- There are a couple of guys whom I've never appreciated who have pretty good names. You know, you take a fellow like Roswell Rudd. I've never appreciated his playing. But on the other hand, Carl Fontana, I think, is one of the greatest trombone players I've ever heard. You know, he's around today.

CLINE: Yeah. As you were following some of the younger trombone players in your class or whatever, did any of these younger players playing newer forms of jazz on the trombone interest you at all, aside from those?

TANNER: Yeah, we had a couple of guys who could improvise pretty well and so forth, and I'm kind of waiting to see what happens with them. But, you know, you've got to stick with it. You've got to practice. If they lose interest in that, they lose energy. Well, then it's out the window.

CLINE: Any young players whose names we would know that you enjoy?

TANNER: I don't think they've made national reputations yet.

CLINE: So say someone like Ray Anderson, have you heard him or--?

TANNER: No.

CLINE: Okay. So let me think.

We're talking about the book [*A Study of Jazz*] again and how it is still being used in schools. Would you say that--?

TANNER: But I have to keep updating it.

CLINE: Yeah. But despite that, would you say that perhaps its openness and lack of bias could be one of the reasons for its longevity?

TANNER: I don't know. I always thought it was more the organization of it, you know, because that's what the teachers needed. They need to have some way to organize their thoughts for them and to set it up so that they could go from one thing into another logically.

CLINE: It just seems that as things socially and politically go in and out of acceptance or being so-called correct that approaching it as openly and generously as you can in the beginning avoids something--at least even during a certain period of time--being considered dated or no longer relevant.

Do you think that that actually could have entered into its longevity at all?

TANNER: You mean the early parts of it?

CLINE: Yeah, just the descriptions of jazz and where it came from.

TANNER: I never thought about that when I was writing. I

just thought, "Here's what I think happened," and then I just wrote that, that's all. And whether it's accepted or not, I'd be willing to argue my points with anybody who wanted to. But that's all. I just wrote what I thought happened. And if it tends to be, as you say, forgiving or something, then that's just fine.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. It's just that for a lot of people there is a lot of sort of racial charge to the issues surrounding jazz.

TANNER: Of course.

CLINE: And I just wondered if this was a major consideration to you when putting the book together.

TANNER: No. No, it wasn't. And I've never been pressed on that either. In fact, some of my students told me I was color-blind.

CLINE: Well, you mentioned earlier how you didn't experience much racial tension as a musician and that most musicians just cared about whether you could play or not.

TANNER: That's it.

CLINE: That was really generally your experience?

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: That's great.

TANNER: That's right. I used to sit in with bands like Blanche Calloway and all-black bands. In California there was a band

going for a while, and I was the only white guy. But I knew why they wanted me in there: because I was the only guy who could play pretty ballads for them. [laughter]

CLINE: Right. Speaking of racial issues, were you in Los Angeles when the two musicians unions [American Federation of Musicians Locals 47 and 767] became amalgamated?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Do you remember anything immediately in your life surrounding that particular occurrence? Anything memorable?

TANNER: No, nothing at all. It didn't bother me one way or another, you know.

CLINE: Did you start to see black players gradually come into the kind of studio work you were doing?

TANNER: Well, yeah, but only rightly so. You hire a guy like Benny Carter, you're hiring a good player.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: That's the end of it, you know.

CLINE: Do you remember any of the other players whom you started to see enter into the studio scene?

TANNER: Well, a lot would depend on the type of call, the type of studio call that it was. An awful lot of movies now for a couple of decades have used jazz-oriented backgrounds.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Well, then you hire people who can play jazz-oriented

music. And it doesn't matter. It doesn't even matter to the leader. If you got a solo spot, well, you may tell the contractor, "Get so-and-so because I want him to play this solo," and that's another thing. But it was a gradual thing. You take a guy like Ray Brown, bass player, he was always working for all the studios.

CLINE: You don't remember any of the activism going on to bring about the amalgamation before it actually happened?

TANNER: No. I'm not politically oriented anyway.

I'll tell you a funny story about Ray Brown. We were doing a date for-- What's that Detroit company that was doing so--?

CLINE: Motown [Records]?

TANNER: Yeah, for Motown. And the guy in the booth--he was a black guy doing the date--kept saying to the drummer, Victor Feldman-- And he called him something else besides Victor; he called him John, or something-- "Would you do so-and-so?"

"Okay." And "John" would do so-and- so. Victor probably said to him, "Look, my name is Victor Feldman." Ray Brown was standing over there and said, "You all look alike."

[laughter]

CLINE: Oh, man. Okay. I think those are most of the things I wanted to discuss with regard to the textbook. Perhaps now you should tell us why and how you decided to quit teaching

your class at UCLA [the Development of Jazz].

TANNER: Oh. The lady I was married to [Bunny Smith Tanner] had a heart problem. She had rheumatic fever when she was a kid, so she had a heart problem. It kept getting worse and worse, and they weren't going to be able to do anything for her. So they thought that they could try surgery. They tried to replace a valve or something, and she died in surgery. But when they explained that they weren't going to be able to do anything for her, I said, "Well, then, I'm going to leave UCLA and we're going to go have some good times together, some quality time." And we had about a year. And it was well worth it. We came down here [Rancho La Costa]. That was the reason I left, so that my wife and I could spend time together.

Now, the funny thing about replacing me-- It's an interesting story up there. I had a guy, a young black drummer, older than most of the students, a real sharp guy, had plenty of experience, had been out playing with Nancy Wilson and these other people, a good, experienced jazz drummer. I can't think of his name. But I thought, "He's just graduated, he should come in and take my place. He's good, he's sharp, communicates well, and everything." So I went to the chairman, and he said, "Well, no, we usually don't hire our own." So he put out the notice or whatever you're supposed to do that there's going to be an opening. He said that he'd interview

these half a dozen people, he decided.

So I said, "Well, you know, the hardest thing is to talk in front of an auditorium full of people. Some of these guys are really glib with their interviews, and they don't come off in front of an auditorium full of people." So he said, "What do you suggest?"

"Have them come in and give lectures, just one lecture."

And he said, "Okay. When do you want them to do it?"

I said, "Well, we'll have them come in at different times before the midterm. And we won't let them lecture on their favorite type of jazz. We'll tell them where we are in the chronology and let them lecture on that particular issue, that point."

So he said, "Okay."

We did that. And I told the students, "You are going to have the chance for the first time in your lives to vote on who comes on the faculty."

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: So on the midterm I put each guy's name and a sentence so they could remember which guy was which. So I let them vote in the midterm on who they thought did the best job. A couple of them were black, a couple of them were white, and so forth. There were six people. So I counted up, and

afterwards I went into the chairman and said, "Here's your guy." And they said, "We've already hired him, we've already hired the guy we wanted." And he was the one who ended up on the bottom.

CLINE: Oh, man.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: How could they do that if they'd already discussed this with you?

TANNER: Stupidity. They hired the guy who was on the bottom of the students' list.

CLINE: And that was who?

TANNER: The guy who followed me in. So the classes came apart, and they've cut down.

CLINE: Do you remember what his name was?

TANNER: No.

CLINE: Do you remember the name of the guy who was actually voted the most popular?

TANNER: No, I don't. That was a while back. That was a good dozen years or so. I never told the students that they didn't get their choice.

But the next guy came in, and he was a sharp-looking guy, black fellow, stood up there all the time with his thumbs in his vest and just talked. That's all. No activity, no coming across at all.

CLINE: Right, right. No involvement.

TANNER: Very few records or anything.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: And the classes just dropped right out.

CLINE: It became a purely academic lecture course.

TANNER: That's right, so they dropped out. But he didn't care, because he didn't like big classes anyway. I don't know why he ever auditioned for the job. Big classes were too much work for him.

CLINE: Do you know if he ever saw you teaching the class?

TANNER: I doubt it. I doubt it. But I was all over the place. I sang and danced to them.

So the class came apart. I don't think there's a class up there now, or someone else has come in.

CLINE: So you had your big party. They gave you the big send-off.

TANNER: Yeah, they really did. It was very nice.

CLINE: And you had your time with your wife.

TANNER: Yeah. We had a year together, and then she passed away. Then I was a widower for two years. Now I'm married almost nine years again [to Jeanette Steele Tanner].

CLINE: Did you miss teaching the class?

TANNER: The dean of fine arts had me come up there-- And this is another ego thing, I'm sorry.

CLINE: Oh. [laughter]

TANNER: He tried like mad to get me to come back after my wife had passed away. And I said, "I'm living down there now. Commuting would be terrible." He offered to have a helicopter pick me up twice a week, fly me up there, have me teach the class, and fly me back. Would you believe that?

But after you're outside of the classroom it's hard to go back. So I didn't do it. But that was a real nice ego builder.

CLINE: And you were wondering why they wanted to have an oral history done with you. [laughter]

TANNER: Boy, I thought that was--whew!--really something.

So I never did go back. I do lectures now all over the world.

I can't go back in the classroom. That's too confining.

I'm too loose now.

CLINE: Right. And during that time you also decided to quit playing the trombone.

TANNER: I stopped playing around 1978, or so I'm told. I asked somebody the other day when I stopped playing. He said, "Well, about 1978."

CLINE: And do you miss that?

TANNER: Only when I hear something that I enjoyed doing or that I thought I did well or something. [laughter]

CLINE: You're not tempted to drag it out and--?

TANNER: No, I don't even have one anymore.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: No.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: There was a big meeting here in La Costa, big business people from Japan and big business people from this country.

They were having a meeting about the imbalance of trade and so forth. And this fellow from Japan was a real Glenn Miller nut. So he called up through an interpreter and asked if he could come over and meet me. I said sure. So he came over, and everything went through an interpreter, and he asked if I still played. I said, "No, but I have a horn back in the closet, but I promised some fellow in Wisconsin he could buy it." So he said, "I'll pay you twice what the fellow in Wisconsin will pay you." So I let him have it.

CLINE: That's pretty typical, I understand.

TANNER: So I asked him, I said, "What are you going to do with it? You don't play." It's on exhibition over there.

CLINE: This brings that back to mind again. Why do you think there is such a more demonstrably noticeable appreciation for jazz music in these countries as opposed to the country it came from? Any ideas?

TANNER: No, I don't. It could go back to the guilt feeling of slavery. I don't know. But it could be that they are just looser with their academic attitudes over there. I don't

know that.

CLINE: Do you think they're just more culturally inclined to begin with?

TANNER: More culturally inclined in music from the people, and yet, gosh, classical music, what we think of as classical music, is European.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: So that shoots that theory. I really don't have an answer for you. Japan I know is trying to catch up, but in Europe I don't really have an answer.

CLINE: It just seems to me that--and this goes back to something you talked about in your book, as well--the art of listening is so crucial to understanding not just jazz but almost everything. Do you think perhaps they're just better listeners and that culturally they were trained to appreciate the arts in a way we haven't been?

TANNER: That's very possible, Alex, it really is. I know that listening is terribly important in Japan. But I should think so-- That may be a good answer in Europe, too. I'm not sure, but that sounds logical.

CLINE: Do you have any ideas about what we can do in this country to encourage the art of listening more?

TANNER: Well, you have a different attitude here. Here the dollar is so very important. People are not going to sit

around too long and listen; they're going to go out and earn money. It's a bit of a shame. After you get older and you stop worrying about earning your supper, then you take time to listen. I do a lot of listening now. You know, I don't do any playing.

CLINE: What do you like to listen to?

TANNER: Anything at all. Anything. I like some pop things-- I guess anything that's played well just fine. Somebody asked me on a panel the other day, "What would be your all-time favorite piece of music?" Now, that's really tough for a musician, you know.

CLINE: Sure.

TANNER: I said, "Well, I think I would feel very badly if I were told I would never again hear Chopin's E minor prelude," if I would never again hear those beautiful chords in the beginning of [Wagner's] *Tristan and Isolde*. But I would feel very badly if I never again heard Glenn Miller's "Rhapsody in Blue," if I never again heard Ray Charles sing "Georgia on My Mind," and it goes on and on and on.

CLINE: Yeah. Well, one of those things is something that you actually played on, then.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So does that give you sort of a sense of accomplishment?

TANNER: Oh, no. I have a feeling of distance from that now,

because I'm not really responsible for how that band played.

CLINE: [laughter] Did you ever wish that you had become more of a well-known instrumentalist or a jazz star, so to speak?

TANNER: No, never thought about it. I just earn a living and go along my merry way. I never had enough aspirations to be a big deal. And it's just as well. [laughter]

CLINE: You mention in the book that you saw the ingredients to make a good player as being ego, ambition, and talent.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: Do you still think so?

TANNER: Yeah, I do think so. I think it's a combination.

If he hasn't got an ego, then he's not going to worry about how he plays. If he hasn't got drive, he is not going to end up playing very well--ambition. And of course, he's got to have the talent. Some people learn to play well so easily, and they have a talent for it. CLINE: And you were pretty much content, then, not to be the guy everyone was writing and talking about and flocking to see with your name on the marquee?

TANNER: No, that never bothered me.

CLINE: Okay. [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah. And I've got an ego. But that never bothered me.

CLINE: Well, that's good.

TANNER: I've had enough accolades to take care of the rest of my life, so I'm just fine. Yeah.

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JULY 9, 1993

CLINE: Yesterday we were talking about your teaching career at UCLA, and we discussed your decision to give up teaching.

You mentioned at that point you and your now late wife [Bunny Smith Tanner], the first wife, decided to come down here.

Why [Rancho] La Costa?

TANNER: It's quiet, and with her heart problem we just wanted a place where we could relax. It was very pleasant with good weather and so forth. She could have a nice comfortable time.

She wasn't thinking about passing away, but that was on my mind a lot. But there were nice places down here to walk on Moonlight Beach, so we decided to come down here. And I had to look for a place with no steps and things like that.

CLINE: Oh, yeah. It is nice and flat here.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Okay. I did have some more follow-up questions from yesterday's session which I want to get out of the way before we continue to talk about what you did after your UCLA teaching career. You mentioned that during your teaching career you were simultaneously involved in the L.A. studio scene, but obviously at some point you gave up your studio career. At one point you did mention that you decided that teaching was more and more of a priority. When did you give up studio

work? And what was your thought process and feeling about it at the time?

TANNER: Well, actually, Alex, I didn't give up studio work until I stopped playing entirely. It was a gradual thing, as the more you turn down contractors the less they will call you. So when I was saying, "Oh, sorry, I have a conflict with that time," gradually they understood that I was less available, so I was called less and they called someone else.

There's so much talent in Los Angeles that they're never hurting for good players.

CLINE: So this was because of your teaching?

TANNER: Yes, that's right.

CLINE: So you felt okay about that?

TANNER: Oh, sure, yeah, because I had a whole new direction going in life, and I was enjoying it.

CLINE: And when you felt that it was time to give up playing-- As you said earlier, you get to a point where things just aren't what they used to be, and did you notice a decline in your own playing that helped you make that decision?

TANNER: Yes, I did.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: In fact, I packed the horn up one night and never took it out of the case again.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Yeah. And the fellow I was working for said, "Gee, that's pretty drastic. You just made a couple of mistakes."

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: But you're expected to do certain things, and if you can't do what you're expected to do, what you've been doing all along, well, then it's not worth-- You know what I felt: you stand a chance of making a fool of yourself. So I thought, no, I don't want to do that anymore. I didn't have to, so I just decided that's a good time to stop, so I did. And besides that, my wife was having more troubles, and I wanted to be home and not out in some ballroom or in some studio or something like that. So all those things came together one night, and I put it in the case and never took it out again.

CLINE: Wow. Well, aside from that being an obvious sacrifice, I would think that takes not only a certain amount of objectivity on your part but a certain lack of ego attachment to the idea of being a trombone player. Was that easy for you?

TANNER: No. After I heard myself make a couple of mistakes it was easy to stop. [laughter]

CLINE: Oh, okay.

TANNER: Now, there's ego. You can't stand to hear yourself do something wrong.

CLINE: Okay. Boy. [laughter] Also I wanted to ask you,

since you were mostly a big band player, aside from the work in the studios, did you ever do any smaller group playing of any note?

TANNER: Yes, I did an awful lot of it--very little on records, but I did a lot of it in the studios. Los Angeles is funny, Alex. You hear real good music all the time by players who are probably the best in the world, and yet you don't even know or pay any attention to who they are. For example, there was a [television] program called *Designing Women* that came on a little while back, and they used "Georgia on My Mind" as their theme. And at first they had Doc Severinsen playing it on the trumpet. Now they've changed to other people; he only did about thirteen weeks. And you know, you don't even know who these people are. You hear this wonderful music coming out, and you don't pay any attention, and there's no credit. They just got paychecks.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: And that's the way it is with a lot of smaller combination things. Like we would be doing a show, and they'd say, "Paul, we need such and such here," and I'd play something for them, and, okay, you hear it on the air, and that's nice. You hear yourself, but there's no credit involved.

CLINE: Evidently, as I'm sure is always the case, you would have had to have played a lot of pretty unsatisfying music

in the studios, as well. How do you feel about--?

TANNER: Some of it was tacky.

CLINE: Did that bother you at all? Or did you just kind of take it in stride and approach it with a sense of humor?

TANNER: You have to approach it with a sense of humor. If you don't leave yourself available to play all kinds of music in the studio, well, then you're not going to earn a living.

CLINE: Yeah. This is going back to the big band subject again, something that you brought up in an earlier session that I thought was very important. You said that I kept saying that the big bands were playing concerts, and you said, well, no, actually you were playing dances. I think sometimes people now, especially jazz players, forget that big band music was the dance music of the day. And since we were talking at one point about bebop coming in and I was asking you about whether or not you felt threatened by the advent of this new music, it occurred to me that bebop was not dance music.

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: And nothing in the evolution of the music after that point was actually dance music. In fact, it was not popular music in that sense at all.

TANNER: You're right.

CLINE: And that the popular music and the dance music that replaced it was rock and roll, and at that point you said

it was rock that you really felt threatened by. Was it because you saw this parallel in terms of rock taking over as being the sort of major popular music and the dance music?

TANNER: Yes, that's true, but there's still a big enough group of people, an age bracket, who much prefer what you're calling dance music than anything else. There's no way it's going to fade out for a long, long time. But as far as rock and roll is concerned, an awful lot of people from, oh, age fifty on have qualms about rock and roll music. They think it's too loud, they think it's too simple, they think it's too raucous, and so forth. So the only way that we felt threatened was because it was drawing crowds, and they were drawing crowds that could have come to hear the other kind of music, that's all. What people have to remember is that swing bands, for about a ten-year span that was the "in" way to play jazz.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: At that time. Jazz wasn't invented later. That was the most popular way to play jazz at that time, just like before that Dixieland was the popular way to play jazz, and afterward other styles.

CLINE: Right. We were talking yesterday a little bit about the schism in some people's minds between the idea of jazz being more like a folk music and jazz being more like a classical

music. You felt that it was somewhere in the middle, that it wasn't an either/or. But do you feel that the changing of jazz into a more concert music and away from a dance music is what inevitably led to its being approached more in a classical-type manner?

TANNER: Are you saying that bop was approached in a classical manner?

CLINE: Well, see, I guess what I'm saying is nowadays some people, especially in academia, approach jazz almost like a classical music in the sense that it has particular kinds of formats, there are particular kinds of approaches, and it's being sort of codified in a way that it couldn't have been earlier, especially during the bop era and when this was a new and revolutionary music. I'm just saying that a music that becomes a concert music where you have to really understand a musical language and listen attentively to quote "understand" what's going on versus a music that's a dance music, which is inevitably more of a popular music form that could be likened more to the folk music form or the folk music stream-- Inevitably it seems there could be a division in approach at that point, moving away from that popular music and into something that's a little more rarified and cerebral. Do you think that happened? Do you think that's part of what's caused this?

TANNER: Well, a couple of things occurred to me while you were saying that.

CLINE: While I was struggling through saying that? [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah. One is the terms that you use are going to be tough for a lot of people to understand. When you say folk music, boy, a lot of people are thinking of Burl Ives singing "Blue Tail Fly" or something.

CLINE: Yeah. [laughter]

TANNER: So this is a problem. They find it very hard to compare that vision of folk music to the Woody Herman swing band, you see. Therefore you've got a big gap in between there.

One of the reasons that you stopped playing dances and started playing concerts when you get into bop is there was a war going on. Thirteen million guys were drafted. There wasn't anybody to dance with. Therefore you sit and listen most of the time. Another thing is so much of bop music was very fast and not applicable to dance.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: So this cut down. Another thing is that the audiences for bop were comparatively small, so therefore you think of a club. You don't think of a concert in a concert hall, you think of a small club. The concert hall thing came later as far as bop is concerned. But you think of a small club for bop--Fifty-second Street in New York, for example. Whereas

very seldom did you find a big band on Fifty-second Street.

I remember one time Count Basie was there in the Famous Door, but that was rare. Therefore you have these situations that don't meet up with the expectations that you're outlining here.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: The swing bands had huge crowds. One night in Kansas City we played a fifteen-minute radio program to fifteen thousand people, and then they turned those people out and another fifteen thousand came in and heard another fifteen-minute program. Then we hopped in a bus, went down the road to Saint Joe [Saint Joseph, Missouri], and played a ballroom that night. Now, the ballroom would have eight or nine thousand people. It was nothing for the Miller band to have ten thousand people a night.

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Now you have a rock concert and they say they had a hundred thousand people. Well, we could cover that in ten nights.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: So they expect in those big bands to have big ballrooms for people to dance in. You know, you don't expect that from bop, because it wasn't danceable.

CLINE: Right, right.

TANNER: So as far as comparing one to folk music and one not to folk music, the term folk music is a problem.

CLINE: Yeah, okay. But it was certainly the popular music of the day in the way rock and roll is now.

TANNER: Yes.

CLINE: I guess this also goes back to what I was struggling through yesterday when trying to deal with describing this neo-traditionalist phase in jazz that's so rampant right now.

Because these young musicians who are playing much more of a classic bop-type style, I think they're reacting to this sort of popularization of jazz music as it happened in forms like, quote, "fusion," unquote, and what people now call contemporary jazz. And I guess what I wasn't making clear yesterday was that for some of these musicians it doesn't seem that they've just chosen to do this because they like it more or because it suits them more, which, as you said, is absolutely fine. It's more like a crusade to return jazz to what it "should be" in a sense of a dogma almost. They think this is better: this is the way to really do it. Do you think that there is one way that jazz should be played?

Or are you accepting of everything that's happened in jazz's evolution as being valid?

TANNER: I don't think there's a specific one way to play jazz. Furthermore, with what you're saying, I have to say

that I think that a person should play, if they can get away with it financially, what they really enjoy playing. And that's what they're going to play best, you know. If a guy is a Dixieland player, he really should steer clear of bop.

CLINE: [laughter] Uh-huh.

TANNER: And on and on and on. When I say steer clear of it, if finances come to a point where he is asked to play bop or he's out of work, then he'd better try to play bop or do something else for a living. I very seldom find someone who's really on a crusade. I think that's more people who write about jazz than people who play it. I think that is journalists more than the actual players who like to say, "This is the way it ought to be." That's just fine, because they're not out there competing. But I think players should play what they really enjoy, because they're going to do that best.

CLINE: How do you feel about jazz critics?

TANNER: I only have three or four of them that I pay any attention to at all.

CLINE: [laughter] Okay. With regard to your own playing, you were talking about how everybody bases their playing on two things: what they can do well and what they can't do well. What were those things for you? And how did you develop your playing around those things?

TANNER: Well, I found out it was easy for me to play pretty

ballads, especially in the upper register. And this was harder for some other fellows. I'm not really sure why; it's probably something physical in the lips, in the teeth and jaws and so forth. So as a consequence I was asked to do that a lot.

And the more I was asked to do it, the more I'd do it, the more proficient I became at it. I wasn't a very fast trombone player. Now, when I first heard Frank Rosolino on records, I thought, well, he's got to be playing on a valve trombone.

And then the next thing I know, I'm sitting in the studio alongside of Frank. He's got the same horn I've got. You know, that will send you to the practice room in a hurry. But Frank lacked the--oh, let me see--Tommy Dorsey type of approach that was so accepted for playing ballads. Frank lacked that. But he had so much speed and technique that it amazed everybody, and he was a joy to play with, besides being a very funny fellow.

CLINE: And this would naturally lead to what you repeatedly refer to as the things you enjoy most in other people's playing.

You seemed to like people who played more lyrically, more thoughtfully, more melodically.

TANNER: Well, I enjoy people who can play fast, but I do like to hear them play a line. I don't like to hear a virtuosic set of exercises; I like to hear some sort of a line. And that takes me back to people like Coleman Hawkins, people

like that.

CLINE: Right. Did you ever think of investigating the valve trombone?

TANNER: No, things were going pretty well for me. I could play on a valve trombone but not very well. I have intonation problems that I could correct with a slide that I couldn't with a valve.

CLINE: Did you ever listen to Bob Brookmeyer?

TANNER: Sure. In fact, Bob replaced me in a band once, you know. I left and he came in. He and I were good friends. A very talented guy.

CLINE: Yeah. When you were talking about New York just a moment ago, about Fifty-second Street and how happening it was, obviously when you came out to the West Coast and embarked on your student and then teaching career along with your studio music career, you were very busy, but how did you feel about just the music scene altogether in L.A. as compared to what you were used to?

TANNER: It was different, believe me. [laughter] It was a lot different. But New York is in a category by itself, you know, just like New Orleans is in a category by itself. New York is different from any other. That's really where most all the action was. And if you were going to play for a living, that was a good place to be, unless you were going

to settle down to a nice Southern California lifestyle. Then you've got to be in Southern California.

CLINE: And that was important to you?

TANNER: Yes, it was. I was getting a little old for traveling around the country.

CLINE: Did you do any just hanging out and going to hear live music when you were first here?

TANNER: No, I started working so darn much that a night off meant spending it at home. But also I was doing some writing.

CLINE: Perhaps it helped that you didn't have the same expectations for L.A. that you did for New York?

TANNER: Well, I knew what it was like out here. I knew of eight or ten clubs out here that were fun. When you say eight or ten clubs you're comparing it to a hundred in New York.

CLINE: Okay. I have one more question about your teaching. We discussed when you taught your Development of Jazz class at UCLA that you were teaching to a mixed class; a non-music-major class. Actually, I have two questions about this. Did you prefer teaching a general class that way as opposed to a class for just music students?

TANNER: Well, I don't say I preferred it. It's different, that's what I'm saying. You do teach differently. When you say a chord, if you're talking to non-music people they think of a piece of string or something. You say it to music students

and they want to know what notes are in the chord. So it's entirely different. You can get a lot more technical with the music students. I just gave a lecture in Iowa. Some of it was on arranging. And I was advertised as giving a course, fairly technical, to non-music people. The place jams so badly--it was like a huge auditorium full of people--that I had to level off a little bit, because I knew a lot of those people had no idea what I was saying. You know, it is another language. If you say a B minor ninth chord, they should understand which notes you're talking about.

CLINE: Right, right. With regard to the furthering of the education about jazz in this country, do you think there should be more mixed classes like that?

TANNER: Oh, I don't think that's necessary. Jazz, like any other music, needs listeners. Everybody's not going to get deeply involved enough to understand the techniques of it past the very elementary level.

CLINE: You said that you had separate exams for the music majors in your class--

TANNER: Well, I used to stick it to them a little bit.

[laughter]

CLINE: What was different about them? How would you contrast the two exams?

TANNER: I would ask more technical questions, musically

technical questions, that's all. Questions about the individual people in the development of jazz would be pretty much the same. But we got into writing some music, and I would have the music people compose some things during an exam. No chance to go home, no chance to talk to someone else, no chance to get to a piano. Compose something right now.

CLINE: Without using a piano at all?

TANNER: Absolutely.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: Well, that's not that hard.

CLINE: And would they be doing this in a particular style? Or any style that was appealing to them?

TANNER: I usually let them set their style. But if I was being mean enough, I could say, "Do it in such and such a style."

CLINE: Oh, man.

TANNER: No, it's not that hard when you know the elements, the fundamental elements.

CLINE: But knowing those fundamental elements for somebody whose whole experience is classical music must have been pretty challenging for some of them.

TANNER: Except that they'd been listening to lectures, so I'd supposedly taught them something.

CLINE: Right. Well, at least you didn't have them improvise any solos. [laughter]

TANNER: Well, that's not bad.

CLINE: Did you ever have that happen? Did you ever have to say to these people, "Here's what's involved in blowing a solo. Here you try it?"

TANNER: No, I didn't. [laughter]

CLINE: Okay. Since we're talking about your teaching now-- Actually, before we go on, I have one more question which we already cleared up off tape but I want to get on the record.

You mentioned last session somebody who is helping you with your more recent writing projects, and we wanted to get his name in the record.

TANNER: Oh, that's Dr. David Megill, and he teaches down here.

CLINE: Where?

TANNER: Well, he's at Mira Costa College right now. But they're setting up a new California State University at San Marcos, and he'll be over there. In fact, he'd been offered a very nice setup over there. His problem is whether he wants to leave his twin brother, who also teaches at the same college where he does. That's hard for them; they're very close.

CLINE: And what's his twin brother's name?

TANNER: Donald [Megill].

CLINE: Okay. So we've now talked about your Development of Jazz class at UCLA and its extreme popularity. You even mentioned how the music department wanted you back so much that they wanted to fly you in a helicopter there and back twice a week, and you turned them down. You told us why and told us about the problems with your wife's health. After all that, after you decided not to go back into the classroom, what did you do with your life at that point?

TANNER: Well, Alex, should I tell you a couple of other things that happened while I was at school?

CLINE: Yes, please.

TANNER: A couple of other projects I was in?

CLINE: Absolutely.

TANNER: All right. This was while I was still there but wasn't involved in the university. Although I used university people; I hired them. A representative from CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] came to me and said, "We want to make this film on jazz called *Discovering Jazz*." They had done one on discovering folk or discovering something else. They wanted to do one on discovering jazz. They had a script and everything, and they asked me if I would come on as a consultant. I took a look at the script, and I turned it down flat.

I said, "No way will I be involved in this."

They said, "Why?"

I said, "Well, look, you've got this fellow who is born with a trumpet in his mouth." I said, "I sure hope it was a cesarean." [laughter] All kinds of dumb things like that.

So they said, "Well, what would you say?"

So I wrote the script. And then in order to make the script come off, I wrote the music. And in order to make the music come off, I hired the people and played in it myself.

So now CBS has sold it to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. And it's still doing quite well. It's called *Discovering Jazz*, and that's doing just fine.

Incidentally, for the swing band I used Gary [G.] Gray from UCLA and I used the UCLA jazz band except for the sax section. I used Stan Kenton's sax section.

CLINE: Oh. [laughter]

TANNER: Well, I couldn't show them. All the sax players at UCLA in the jazz band had beards, and I couldn't show them with beards.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Because it had to look--

CLINE: Oh, it had to look like the time.

TANNER: Like the swing bands. So I hired Stan Kenton's sax section, because they didn't have beards. [laughter]

CLINE: They were still sporting the look. [laughter]

TANNER: Yes, that's right. And then also ABC [American Broadcasting Company]--I was on the staff there, as I told you before--they had me do a big, monstrous special on jazz.

So I wrote that. They hired Les Brown to do the narration, which I had written, and they used the staff band to do demonstrations, plus they had some good individuals on the show and a big choir and everything. It was a lot of fun.

CLINE: Do you remember who some of the individuals were?

TANNER: Gary something or other, good flute player. Oh, that's terrible.

CLINE: That's okay. So this was shown in prime time on television?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: And what year was that? Do you remember?

TANNER: In the early seventies, I guess.

CLINE: What else did you do?

TANNER: So what else have you done? [laughter]

CLINE: Yeah, what else did you do? Anything else during that time that you want to talk about?

TANNER: Let me see. Gosh, that's about all I can think of at the moment.

CLINE: Okay. So then where did your life go after UCLA?

TANNER: Well, I came on down here, and I decided not to go back. But I kept writing. And one of the first things that

I did when I came down here is-- Well, you've got to picture, I had ten thousand records. Now, that's a lot of records.

What you do when you move is you move the records into your new place and you try to get in, you know. I had these ten thousand records, so I spent a couple of years cataloging these records, and then I donated them to the music library at UCLA. What you do when you catalog a record is, besides the record company and the number of the record, it's whose record it is and the name of the record, the name of each tune that's on the record, who wrote each tune, where each tune was recorded, when each tune was recorded, who plays solos on each tune. And that goes on ten thousand records.

And I did most of it by ear.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: Yeah. But I knew the records quite well, you know.

CLINE: I guess so!

TANNER: And I could tell-- You know, you say the personnel of a band while you hear it, and you hear such and such a guy playing a solo, and you say, "Well, he was with that band such and such a time. That means that this guy was with it, this guy was with it," and so on, and you end up being able to name the personnel of the band. So that was a monstrous job. Of course, I taped the things I couldn't bear to part with, so I have a huge tape collection. I'm still cataloging

part of it now.

CLINE: Do you still listen to some of those things?

TANNER: Absolutely, yeah. In fact, I have tapes that I leave in Maui, duplicates of some of the things I have here, so that I can lie around there and have nice music going--all kinds, not just something specific. All kinds. I have to be a little careful that I don't blast out all my neighbors with something they can't stand, so I'm aware of that.

CLINE: Well, that's good. You mentioned previously that you still do lectures.

TANNER: Yes.

CLINE: Can you describe what it is you do?

TANNER: The thing that's easiest for me is people will contact me and say, "We want a lecture for so-and-so." For example, not long ago there was an organization of World War II pilots-- They have an organization and they meet once a month in this huge hanger, and they wanted a speaker. So I said, "Well, I'll come if you yourself will host and interview me, questions and answers." Then all I've got to do is answer the questions, and that's easy, because you get started on something, and you'll babble, and then after you're through they ask you something else. Now, that's the easy way.

But I have lectured in universities overseas, in London and in Paris, at universities. They'll hire me for a few

days as a guest lecturer, that sort of thing. Gee, that's kind of neat; you and your wife get nice vacations. The thing that keeps me busiest are cruises. I end up on a lot of cruises now, because--and I don't know if this is on an earlier tape or not--most of the people who can afford to take cruises are people for whom the swing era is nostalgia to them. They like to have somebody come in and talk to them about the swing bands. So I play a tape, and I say, "Do you know who this is?" And they say, "Yeah, that's Tommy Dorsey." So I say, "Well, now, let me tell you about Tommy Dorsey." And I tell them what a terrible temper he had and on and on about that.

And then there are places I go to regularly, like the Glenn Miller Festival in Iowa. There's a college there that has me come in a day ahead every time and give a lecture at the college and so forth. But I go all over the country. I have a cruise coming up in December that will start in San Francisco and end up in Saint Petersburg, and I'm like the guest lecturer. My wife [Jeanette Steele Tanner] and I get free cruises, and that's nice. So we enjoy that a lot.

CLINE: So this is all about the swing bands, then?

TANNER: Mainly, because of the age bracket you're talking to. Now, if they want me to talk about jazz specifically, well, then you get into lots of questions: "How long do I

talk? Do I explain everything that ever happened in jazz in an hour or what? Do you want me to do three, four lectures?

How do you want to work it?" In these universities overseas--and they've been after me to come to Japan and do this, too--you like to take a few days, and you go back and explain the whole development of this particular art form.

Then that's not just swing; swing is only a little part of that.

CLINE: Yeah, right. So you were talking about swing with these World War II pilots, as well?

TANNER: Yes. And the funny thing was, there was one guy there, a persistent fellow, who wanted to know one thing: he wanted to know how much money did one make. And of course I never did say a figure, because it doesn't make sense today. You know, if you say, "I was really well paid; I was making \$500 a week," \$500 a week to some of these guys is not well paid.

CLINE: Right, right.

TANNER: I gave a lecture in Australia, and the first question I got was some fellow in his late twenties who said, "Dr. Tanner, tell us about the women." So I said, "Well, I was married, and other than that I was playing music or on the golf course," which was a terrible disappointment to him.

CLINE: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: So now you're traveling again, in other words?

TANNER: Almost all the time.

CLINE: Full circle.

TANNER: Yeah, except for one thing: we try to have at least two long visits to Maui, because that's so relaxing. Now, I have taken work over there and done work, but I'd rather not. Last time I was over there I was really fighting a physical thing. Arthritis was very bad then. It's fine now, as you can see. But as a consequence, I didn't feel much like working. But I do a lot of reading over there.

CLINE: Do you think there's a chance the interest in the swing bands with people other than the age bracket who were there at that time could increase?

TANNER: It seems to be. There are more and more younger people who come to these things, which is a little surprising. Except for one thing: most of the swing bands--not all of them but most of them--made good sounds. So if you just go from the sounds, the sound made by some of these big bands is really a thrill which you can't get with a smaller combination. And still big bands very often had excellent soloists. So you do get a combination that interests some of these younger people.

CLINE: Well, it seems that since so many of the younger jazz musicians now are so big on having people really know and

understand the tradition, logically, if you keep following the tradition back, you can't avoid going through the big bands.

TANNER: Well, unless you think tradition started with bop.

CLINE: Right. [laughter] Well, even Wynton Marsalis now is investigating more of the Dixieland period of playing.

TANNER: Yeah, he doesn't play that way.

CLINE: No. [laughter] He's trying, though.

TANNER: He was raised in a family that certainly heard that all the time.

CLINE: Right, right. But I think just anybody who fully wants to explore the history of their own instrument, whatever instrument it is, will have to encounter that period, which was a huge period in music altogether.

TANNER: Right.

CLINE: So trombonists may be going back and checking out your playing.

TANNER: I don't think so. [laughter]

CLINE: Does it amaze you that essentially a four-and-a-half-year period of a long and productive life is still so interesting now all this time later? That you can get paid to go around all over the world and talk about it?

TANNER: You're talking about the life of the Glenn Miller band?

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: Yeah, it is amazing. And when I tell people, "Glenn only had a band for four and a half years," they're in shock, because the impact that band still has makes you think the band was going on for fifteen or twenty years. But there are a couple of things you have to realize. Glenn, he was the most popular band. And you can tell that with the records and the accounts of how many people he drew here and there, he was the most popular band. Okay, he left a lot of good records. He died during the war as a patriot. If he hadn't, well, then, you don't know. Would he be that big today? But all those things come into consideration. It's a funny thing, Alex, but so many people talk to me, and they think the only thing I ever did was play with that band. Only four and a half years. I would have starved the other seventy years of my life, you know.

CLINE: [laughter] Right. And yet those four and a half years set the tone for so many things that happened to you afterwards that flowed rather smoothly because of the connections and the experiences.

TANNER: Well, they opened the door for a lot of things that happened to me, there's no question about it. But then, almost everything I've done has opened other doors. Teaching at UCLA opened doors. Being on staff at ABC opened doors. You develop a whole roster of open doors as you go along, provided you

keep working hard.

CLINE: Right. Since you were talking about how Glenn Miller had the most popular band at the time, how competitive were these bands and bandleaders at that period?

TANNER: Oh, highly competitive.

CLINE: I would imagine.

TANNER: Absolutely, yeah, they were highly competitive. We would go play someplace, and one of the things Glenn wanted was to break somebody else's record. And yet the leaders themselves were pretty good friends. They played golf a lot together and so forth. But I'll give you an example of the competitive nature. Glenn at one point borrowed \$25,000 from Tommy Dorsey. Glenn needed it to help him keep going. Glenn became successful, and here we were working the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York, and Tommy came in and Glenn walked over and gave him a check for \$25,000. They had to hold Tommy; he was going to kill Glenn. He didn't want \$25,000; he wanted a piece of the band.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Yeah. So that was a terrible scene. Of course, Tommy had this temper. He would have ended up second in that situation, because Glenn was quite athletic, you know. But they had to hold Tommy. Tommy never spoke to Glenn again.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: When Glenn was missing, Tommy was the first guy to call Glenn's wife [Helen Miller] and say, "The past is behind us. What can I do to help?" But he was so mad that he backed a band under the name of Bob Chester to imitate every note the Miller band played.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: And Tommy got him a good record contract and everything with the thought that the people would tire of that sound and therefore would take some of the polish off of Glenn's band.

The thing that happened is whenever people heard Bob Chester they thought of Glenn Miller, you know, which really backfired.

So then, when Tommy realized that, he broke up the Bob Chester band.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: That's how competitive they were.

CLINE: Did you get to know any of these other big band leaders of the time very well at all?

TANNER: A little bit. And then, when it became public that Glenn was going to break up, well, then some nice offers came in from other bandleaders, things like that, for me as an individual.

CLINE: Did you know Tommy Dorsey maybe better than some of these others because he was a trombone player?

TANNER: Well, you know, I played with him a little bit, and

I knew his playing. I was in awe of his playing. I wasn't in awe of his disposition. [laughter]

CLINE: Right, right. Benny Goodman, I guess, was a somewhat controversial personality, as well, known to be difficult to work with. Did you ever know him?

TANNER: Yeah, I played with him some. Can I tell you a funny story about Benny?

CLINE: Sure.

TANNER: In fact, a couple of them.

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: You can delete them if you like.

CLINE: No, no. We wanted this stuff on the record. [laughter]

TANNER: He was playing, and he had Red Norvo, a vibraphone player, there on the stage. He had finished a number, and he walked over to Red and said, "Red, what's the name of this tune?" and he hummed this tune to him.

And Red said, "That's 'On the Sunny Side of the Street,' Benny."

Benny said, "Right." He walked back and announced to the people, "Folks, now we're going to play 'On the Sunny Side of the Street.'" He walked back to Red and asked, "How does it go?" [laughter] Now, that's typical of Benny, such a foggo.

Another thing about Benny, his brother was in the band,

trumpet player, Irving [Goodman], and a good trumpet player.

Irving kept telling him, "You should hear this guy Harry James; he would be great for your band. You should hear him and hire him." So Benny went and heard him. And in order to make room for him, he had to fire Irving, his brother.

CLINE: Oh, no.

TANNER: Yeah. How's that for dog eat dog? [laughter]

CLINE: Unbelievable.

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CLINE: Benny Goodman, of course, was also one of the first big swing bands to integrate with black and white musicians, and you must remember when that started to happen.

TANNER: Absolutely. Now, when he first hired Teddy Wilson on piano, and then he hired Lionel Hampton on vibes, there was this problem with the public--not with the musicians but with the public. And like I used to tell the students, "Your dad and mother are dear people, but they had this terrible hang-up." [laughter] Goodman was a determined fellow, and he just finally said, "These people are in my band. If you want to hear my band, come in; if not, don't come in." Just like that.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: And of course they came in.

CLINE: Yeah, he was popular enough to pull that off.

TANNER: That's right, yeah. Now, some other fellows suffered a great deal, like Roy Eldridge with Gene Krupa's band. They took trips down South that were very hard for Roy. I don't mean that the South is any different than the North, you know, but Roy talked about the southern trips more. They were very hard for him. Billie Holiday had problems. So did lots of

other people.

CLINE: It was very impractical really, wasn't it? Because things were so segregated. Just going on the road would be an impractical sort of thing, wouldn't it?

TANNER: It was more than impractical, Alex, in that-- For example, with Krupa's band with Roy Eldridge in there, they'd walk into a restaurant, sit down and eat, and the manager would come over and say, "We're not going to serve this fellow." And the fellows in the band would say, "If you don't serve him, you're not serving us." He'd say, "Okay." So the guys would all have to leave. So it was more than the problems of a hotel room. Because most of the time a lot of those fellows stayed in other hotel situations, in people's homes and things like that. But it was just something that the country had to live through and survive and overcome. It was a terrible situation. The musicians never went along with it. It was the general public.

CLINE: Do you think the drive on people like Benny Goodman's part to insist on that helped change people's attitudes?

TANNER: Absolutely, yeah. I absolutely do think so. And good for him.

CLINE: Yeah. And didn't Fletcher Henderson do a lot of his arranging at one point?

TANNER: Yes, but you didn't see Fletcher.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

TANNER: The public didn't see him. Until there for a while he hired him as a piano player. Fletcher wasn't that good of a piano player. But you could buy a black player's arrangements, and the public wouldn't know anything about it.

CLINE: Right. Was that pretty common?

TANNER: Oh, yeah. Sure. Especially on the up-tempo things. You know, "In the Mood."

CLINE: Yeah, right. We talked about that. Very few people probably know that.

Okay, going forward again in time now to your post-UCLA life, you do these lectures and you tell stories like we've just been telling. Does that help to sort of de-mystify some of these larger-than-life figures for some of these people who were there at that time?

TANNER: I suppose so but it's not really done for that. It's done mainly as an interest, and it's a fun thing for them and so forth. Like you start to talk about Charlie Barnett, and you talk about how he was one of the few bandleaders who was very wealthy before he ever had a band and things like that.

I've also been involved in some court cases, if that's of interest to you.

CLINE: Right, that's what I was about to ask you. You do expert witness work?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Explain that a bit.

TANNER: Well, I'll tell you one thing, Alex, if you get asked to do that, you should do it. Boy, the price is right.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Good Lord, they think nothing of \$1,500 a day and all expenses for you and your wife. They say, "Where do you like to stay in San Francisco?" I say, "The Hilton." "Okay." And they don't bat an eye, because let's face it, the lawyers make a lot of money. [laughter]

CLINE: Right.

TANNER: But usually with me they're plagiarism cases. Now, here's where UCLA has opened a door. They figure a guy, he's done this and this and this, so he should know. So the court doesn't argue with you. They figure you know what you're talking about. So it's just taken for granted that this is a true fact. Especially when you swear this is the truth, well, then they believe you. What they hire really are your credentials. Because I don't tell them anything any other musician wouldn't tell them. They hire you for your credentials. They say you can't argue with a

guy who's got those credentials.

So they're mostly plagiarism cases, although not long

ago I was called up to San Francisco by a trumpet player. He was taking a trip to New York on Amtrak, and Amtrak had a wreck, an accident in Ohio, and the guy got hurt. Now, he wasn't hurt badly, but he was hurt. Now Amtrak figures, of course, "We have to pay this fellow money, absolutely. There's no question about it." They didn't argue about that. The question was how much. The fellow said it hurt his playing so badly. They had tapes of his playing before the accident, and they had videotapes of him playing after the accident. Now, the guy did a very foolish thing, and it was an ego thing I'm sure: he played a lot better after the accident than he did before the accident.

CLINE: Uh-oh.

TANNER: And I've got to sit there in court and say, "Well, he played better afterwards." It cost the guy a lot of money.

CLINE: Oh, man. [laughter]

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: And in these plagiarism cases, these are the kinds of cases we read about where someone writes a pop song and makes a lot of money on it, and somebody else comes along and says, "That was my song; you stole my song, and here's how it originally went," that kind of thing?

TANNER: Absolutely. I think one of the strangest plagiarism cases I've ever been involved in is-- Do you remember the name

John Fogerty?

CLINE: Yeah, Creedence Clearwater Revival.

TANNER: That's right. Well, they had a tune, and it was a big hit, and they recorded it for Fantasy Records. Then their contract with Fantasy was up shortly after that, and they moved over to Warner Bros. [Records]. Okay, now, that's all nice and legal. But then they recorded the same tune for Warner Bros., they changed the title and the lyrics, and that was a big hit. So then Fantasy calls me in and said, "We should be getting those royalties, because that's our tune." You know, they own the tune. So they call me in, and it was the exact same tune. Now, the problem was, Fogerty communicated so nicely with the jury. They brought his guitar in, he sat there and sang and played for them, and the jury would not go against him.

CLINE: Oh.

TANNER: Absolutely.

CLINE: Wow.

TANNER: So the Warner Bros. lawyers won the case, yeah. And it was a shame, because it was a miscarriage of justice.

[laughter]

CLINE: So you do a fair amount of that?

TANNER: No, I do some. There's not an awful lot, but I'm usually one of the guys that some of the law firms will call. You

don't like to do too many because then the lawyers begin to think you're a professional expert witness, and that's not good.

CLINE: So with your lectures and with this expert witness work, you do a lot of traveling, in fact, all over the world.

I was wondering, since we didn't actually mention this earlier in this interview, when you were playing, did you do much traveling outside of the U.S.?

TANNER: I did after I stopped playing with any specific band, just traveled as an individual. Yeah, I did quite a lot of solos, especially in Europe.

CLINE: And how did you react to the audience overseas?

TANNER: Just fine. You play, and they like it or they don't like it. That's the way it is.

CLINE: [laughter] Right.

TANNER: But I never had any problem. I was treated very well.

CLINE: Because we had talked about the amazing level of interest in jazz music overseas. Did you notice that when you were there?

TANNER: Yeah. But, Alex, usually when I travel and play as a soloist I'm playing classical things, so there's not much arguing.

CLINE: I see.

TANNER: But the funny thing is, people would come to me and

say, "Do you know the Paul Tanner who's involved in jazz?"

[laughter] I'd say, "I've heard of him."

CLINE: So some of these classical projects that we talked about yesterday, you were actually hired to fly to some other country to do these works?

TANNER: That's right.

CLINE: Oh, I see. It wasn't all here in L.A.?

TANNER: No.

CLINE: So they really did want your talents very much, then.

TANNER: Well, somebody talked them into it.

CLINE: [laughter] Okay. So we've talked a little about Japan, and you mentioned that there's still interest in swing music there, and that, in fact, some Japanese businessman bought your horn and has it on display. Have you been over there yet?

TANNER: Yes, I've been over there several times. Gosh, I did one tour-- Now, as I've told you, they're crazy about Glenn Miller over there.

CLINE: Which is sort of ironic, I mean, even though he personally wasn't fighting against Japan in World War II.

TANNER: He was the enemy. [laughter]

CLINE: Yeah. [laughter]

TANNER: Well, I did one tour over there. These people called me from there. They said, "There's a band from the Netherlands

that's going to take a tour of Japan playing Glenn Miller music."

Can you picture that mixed-up thing?

CLINE: Yeah.

TANNER: And they said, "We want you to come along."

I said, "I don't speak Japanese, and I don't play anymore."

They said, "That's all right. They just want to see if you're alive." Right.

So I would walk out on the stage, and I'd say "*Konban wa*," collect my flowers, and walk off each evening, touring Japan, and that was it. And the salary was lovely. My wife and I were over there at the end of February, the beginning of March, because they opened a new Tokyo branch of the Glenn Miller Birthplace Society.

CLINE: Oh, my.

TANNER: [laughter] So they had this huge, monstrous to-do over there. The bigwigs of Japan all came to this huge opening of it. A lot of it was in the Toyota building and some of it in some other big halls. It was a huge affair. And of course, they picked up every nickel. It was really nice. It's nice to travel in an expensive country when someone else picks up the tab.

CLINE: Sure. Again, considering how relatively short-lived that band was and how obviously extremely long-lived their

popularity is, how does that make you feel to relive something that was actually such a short percentage of your musical career?

TANNER: Well, I have no strange thoughts about my contributions to that music. Glenn oversaw everything you did. But it's nice to be getting in on what you would call the gravy of it, you know. It's very nice. There aren't a lot of us left. That's evidently important to some of these people. So that's just fine. And I do these things more because people want to talk to me more than anything else. They want to talk to me because I was in the band, that's all--not because of how I played the trombone but because I was in the band. They figure I played the trombone well or I wouldn't have been there. So that's okay. It's enjoyable, it truly is. And I'll talk to anybody who wants to talk to me about it. It's not my whole life, you know, but it's very important to a lot of people. So I'll talk to them, talk to them all night if they want to.

I was just now taking a walk, my morning exercise, and a guy stopped his car in the middle of the street, traffic lining up behind him, wanting to talk to me about Claude Thornhill's band. He said, "Can I come and talk to you?" I said, "Of course you can."

CLINE: That's a name that hasn't come up yet.

TANNER: Well, he was one of the bands that Glenn had a financial

interest in. And it was a good, good band. So I said, "Sure, I'll talk to you about the Claude Thornhill band."

CLINE: He recognized you on the street?

TANNER: Yeah.

CLINE: Amazing.

TANNER: Well, there was a big newspaper spread on me not too long ago. ["La Costan Swings to Big Band Beat," *North Country Active Lifestyles*, November 1991].

CLINE: Oh, right.

TANNER: Yeah, down here.

CLINE: Right, I have a copy of that.

How many of you are there left to talk about the Glenn Miller band?

TANNER: Only two of us now who were with the band, the civilian band, the whole time Glenn had a band.

CLINE: Is that you and Tex Beneke?

TANNER: Yeah, Tex Beneke and myself. There were other people who came and went, like Ray Anthony and people like that who were in there for a short while, hired again for one reason or another. Most of the fellows have passed away.

CLINE: Is this partly because you were sort of the young guy?

TANNER: That's right, yeah.

CLINE: This brings to mind another question I wanted to ask you that goes back to your student days. You were the young

guy in Glenn Miller's band, but you've described yourself as the oldest freshman at UCLA. We talked a little bit about how you got along with the faculty there, but how did you relate to the students since they were so much younger?

TANNER: Well, I suppose they thought I was a loner, except I was friendly. That's just my nature, I guess. I don't know.

But I never had any problems. I wasn't involved in their social world. I certainly didn't spend any time on fraternity row or anything. Although after I joined the faculty I was a regular guest for dinner every week on sorority row.

CLINE: Oh, really?

TANNER: Yeah. You know, they have one night a week where they have a faculty [member] in. So I had an awful lot of meals on sorority row, a few on fraternities--just a dinner, and then I'd leave.

CLINE: So you didn't feel too alienated by being around so many younger people?

TANNER: They were awfully nice to me.

CLINE: Well, that's good. I guess there are quite a few older students going back to school now. Did you find that then there were a lot of people like you who were taking advantage of the GI Bill who were somewhat in your age bracket?

TANNER: Not so many in my age bracket. Quite a few taking advantage of the GI Bill, but very seldom up in the thirties

or the mid-thirties like I was. But there were quite a few people in there on the GI Bill.

CLINE: Did most of them take advantage of it sooner than you did? Is that why that would have happened?

TANNER: Yes, that's right.

CLINE: Because you had those six years of playing.

TANNER: With Tex, that's right.

CLINE: I see. Okay. Is there anything else since your teaching career and your playing career ended that you'd like to have here on the record for us?

TANNER: Well, I can't think of anything. I've told you that I do writing. If a publisher asks me to do a book, if it's within reason I will certainly do it. Like I've been asked to do a book on rock and roll, which I turned down because I don't think that I know enough about it. I do college textbooks; that's what I do. Except for the one fun book [*Every Night Was New Year's Eve: On the Road with Glenn Miller*] that I've already told you about.

CLINE: Right, the Glenn Miller book.

TANNER: But other than that, I do college textbooks on music. Other than that and lecturing, talking to people, that's about it now.

CLINE: Do you still write music?

TANNER: I write if I can use it in my lectures, and that's

all. I don't do any other composing, per se.

CLINE: Is there anything else that you'd like to discuss here that we haven't talked about that comes to mind?

TANNER: Well, I have a couple of thoughts that I would just like to add in, that's all.

CLINE: Please.

TANNER: One is that my recognition in music--and I understand that there is a certain amount of it, okay--my recognition in music, in the jazz annals, is mainly as a player, as a trombone player. But even more so I'm recognized in the jazz annals as someone who helped a great deal to bring jazz into the college classroom, and that is a contribution supposedly. Okay. And then the other thing is I'd like to say I'm highly complimented that you've done this--

CLINE: Oh. [laughter]

TANNER: --this whole interview thing, because it's a monstrous ego trip for me, it truly is. And I hope someday somebody will be interested enough to dig into it. Another thing is, I've always been so lucky, and I'm sure I said this earlier on the tape. I've always been so lucky, and I mean that. You know, being a player, you've got to be lucky, too. You have to be where someone wants what it is you can do. If you're a deep-sea diver in Kansas, you're going to starve to death. So you have to be where someone wants what you can do. And

there have been situations--which get into a lot of detail; there's no sense to go into it--that prove how lucky a fellow I have been all along. I really have.

But one other thing is that I have also found out that the harder you work, the luckier you get.

CLINE: Right. And maybe it's a few of those three thousand students who were at your send-off party perhaps coming back to check out this interview, if they run across its existence somewhere in the annals of the ORION [UCLA's online information system] computer system.

TANNER: Maybe so. [laughter]

CLINE: Anything else you want to add?

TANNER: That's about all I can come up with.

CLINE: Because I don't seem to have any crucial questions that I seem to have left over here. Well, in that case if there's nothing left for now, thank you very much for doing this.

TANNER: A pleasure.

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