BEYOND CENTRAL

Henry Franklin

Interviewed by Steven L. Isoardi

Completed under the auspices

of the

Center for Oral History Research

University of California

Los Angeles

CONTENTS

Henry Franklin,
"The Skipper"
bassist
Birthdate: October 1, 1940; Los Angeles, CA

Education:
Los Angeles High School / Manual Arts High School Graduate/
Los Angeles City Collage / private bass studies with Al McKibbon and George Morrow

Professional engagements with:

Curtis Amy (1960-62)
Roy Ayers (1960-62)
Nellie Lutcher (1963)
Willie Bobo (1967-68)
Archie Shepp (1968)
Hugh Masakela (1968-70)
Jazz Crusaders (1970)
The Three Sounds (1970-71) Hampton Hawes (1971)
Dexter Gordon (1971)
Gerry Mulligan (1971)
O.C.Smith (1972)
Shelly Mann (1972)
Sonny Rollins (1972)
Nichelle Nicoles (1972)
Donald Byrd (1973)
Esther Phillips (1973-74)
Harold Land (1973-74)
Calvin Keyes (1973)
Rudolph Johnson (1973),
Bobby Hutcherson (1974)
Clint Houston (1974)
West Covina Symphony Orchestra (1974)
Norman- Conners (1974)
Sonny Stitt (1974)
Doug Carn (1972-74)
Mary Osborne and T-Bone Walker (1973)
Jimmy Witherspoon (1973)
John Carter/Bobby Bradford (1973)
Sonny Criss (1973-74)
Bobby Darin (1974)
Jack Wilson (1973)
Bobby Humphries (1973)
Kai Winding (1974)
Gerald Wilson (1973-74)
Supremes(1974)
Freddie Hubbard (1975)
Al Jarreau (1976)
Johnny Hartman (1978)
Leon-Thomas (1979)
Pharoh Sanders (1984)
Mal Waldron (1985)
Steve Lacey (1985)
John Handy (1986)
Count Basie (1986)
Fred Raulston (1985-86)
Eddie "Clean Head" Vinson (1986)
Henry Franklin Trio (1986-89)
Texas Tenors/ Fathead Newman and James Clay(1989)
Teddy Edwards (1990-91)
Herb Jefferies (1991)
Dakota Staton (1991)
Barbara Morrison (1991)
Al Williams (1991)
Roy Ayers (1991)
Ink Spots (1991)
Dennis Gonzales (1991)
Michelle Nicholes (1991)
Randy Weston (1991-95)
Luluk Purwanto & the Helsdingen trio (1995-1998)

Recordings with:

Hugh Masakela, Africa, '68/ Cheisa Records (1968)

Live at the Whiskey a GoGo, Hugh Masakela/ Cheisa Records (1969)

Promise of a future, Hugh Masakela, Features; Grazin in the Grass / Cheisa- Records (1970)

Self-Determination Music, John Carter, Bobby Bradford (1970) Soul Symphony, The Three Sounds/ Blue Note Records (1971)

Secrets, John Carter, Bobby Bradford/ Realation Records (1972)

Blues for Walls, Hampton Hawes/ Prestige Records (1973)

Looking Glass, Michael Howell/ Milestone Records (1973)

New Directions, Gene Russell/ Black Jazz Records (1972)

Infant Eyes, Doug Carn/ Black Jazz Records (1972)

Song for my lady, Gene Russell/ Black Jazz Records (1973)

Live at the Momatre, Hampton Hawes (1971)

Live at Montreux, Hampton Hawes (1971)

Love Love, Julian Priester (1973)

Quartet, Pete Robinson, Phil Woods (1974)

In the Silence, Michael Howell (1973)

Live at Montreux, Bobbi Humphries (1973)

Gamblers Choice, Johnny Hammond/ Salvation Records (1974)

Looking Glass, Michael Howell (1975)

2nd Wave, Roland Haynes/ Black Jazz-Records (1973)

Proceed with Caution, Calvin Keyes/ Black Jazz Records (1974)

Blues for Walls, Hampton Hawes/ Fantasy Records (1974)

Criss-Cross, Calvin Keyes/ Ovation Records (1975)

Liquid- Love, Freddie Hubbard/ Columbia Records (1975)

Mr Gleem, Freddie Hubbard/ C.B.S. Sony (1975),

Cookin with Blue Note at the Montreux, Bobbi Humphries (1976)

One Step at a Time, Ray Crawford/ Dobre Records (1976)

Straight Ahead, Freddie Redd (1977)

Say Hey, John Wood/ Los Angeles-Records (1980)

You Betcha B.P., Benny Powell/ Los Angeles Records (1980)

I feel so good Today, Carey Williams/ Careline Records (1980)

One step Out, Kaif/ Nimbus Records (1981)

Little Toot, Dennis Gonzales/ Dagniim (1986)

Fred's Rescue, Fred Raulston/ Sea Breeze (1987)

Steffan, Dennis Gonzales/ Silk Heart (1988)

Pat Britt Live in L.A., Pat Britt (1989)

Dabengi Dabengi, Dennis Gonzales/ Silk Heart (1989)

Native Son, Jerry Rusch/ Jeru Records (1991)

Desert Wind, Dennis Gonzales/ Silk Heart (1992)

Salsa City, Shades of Jade/ Absolute Pitch (1993)

In Session, Michael Sessions/ Pacific ITM (1994)

Gold Records:

Promise of a Future, Hugh Masakela, 1970
Secret Life of Talking Plants, **Stevie Wonder**, 1978

Recordings as a Leader:

The Skipper/ Black Jazz (1972)
Skipper at Home/ Black Jazz (1973)
Blue Lights/ Ovation (1978)
Tribal Dance/ Catalyst (1978)
We came to play (1986)
Shalabongo (1990)
Basic Instincts/ Resurgent Music (1996)
The Hunter/ Resurgent Music (1998)
Bass Encounters/ Resurgent Music RM 124 (2000)

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

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

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Franklin's home, Perris, California.

Dates of sessions: July 30, 2001; July 31, 2001; August 1, 2001.

Total number of recorded hours: 4.5

Persons present during interview: Franklin and Isoardi.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

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

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

EDITING:

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

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

Simmons prepared the table of contents and interview history. Alex Cline, senior writer, assembled the biographical summary. Kimberly Foulds, editorial assistant, compiled the guide to proper names.

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 30, 2001

ISOARDI: Henry, let's begin your story with the beginnings of you—where and when you were born, and your family.

FRANKLIN: I was born October 1, 1940, in Los Angeles, California, at 187 East Forty-eighth Street, which is like a little bit east of Main [Street]—Forty-eighth and Main. My parents were Sammy Franklin and Vera Franklin. My mom was a nurse. She was at the Queen of Angels [Hospital] and then she went to the county [hospital] later on. My dad was a musician.

ISOARDI: Trumpeter?

FRANKLIN: Trumpeter. He was born in Oklahoma.

ISOARDI: When was he born? Do you know?

FRANKLIN: Oh, 1919, I think. I can get you some specifics on that. He was born in Oklahoma. He spent his teenage years and the first part of his musical career in Denver, Colorado, and he was a member of the number one big band there, Morrison's.

ISOARDI: Oh, kind of a legendary band leader, wasn't he?

FRANKLIN: Yes, he was.

ISOARDI: A teacher?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and I can't remember his first name.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I'm blanking on it, too.

FRANKLIN: Okay. But that was where he paid his dues, and then he moved to Los

Angeles, I guess. I'm not sure when. In the thirties, I guess.

ISOARDI: Sometime in the thirties.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, sometime—

ISOARDI: Can you trace your family back beyond your parents?

FRANKLIN: I can only go to my grandfather, Eli Franklin.

ISOARDI: On your father's side?

FRANKLIN: On my father's side. Oklahoma. I've got a better chance on my mother's side. My mom was born in Fowler, California, but her parents were from North Carolina. I guess that's where they got off the boat, and they spent a lot of time in North Carolina and they all migrated to California. Some went to San Francisco, some went to Fowler.

ISOARDI: Where's Fowler?

FRANKLIN: It's right next to Fresno. And then from there some came to Los Angeles and some, like I say, went to San Francisco.

ISOARDI: What was your mom's name?

FRANKLIN: Vera.

ISOARDI: What was her maiden name?

FRANKLIN: Vera Wysinger.

ISOARDI: Wysinger.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, she was like the backbone of the family, I guess.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Well, she had the day job, you know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right. [mutual laughter] She was a nurse.

FRANKLIN: She was a nurse and my dad was a musician, and he had a group called the California Rhythm Rascals.

ISOARDI: Did your grandfather play at all?

FRANKLIN: I didn't know him. I met him one time and— I don't think he played at all. My dad never mentioned that he was a musician at all. So we've got two generations and I think that's kind of enough.

ISOARDI: Was your father a schooled musician, as they say?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: Did he learn to play in the schools?

FRANKLIN: As far as I know. He didn't really expand on that too much when I was coming up. I'm sure he had to, because with his big band he did a lot of the arranging and— You know, the writing and stuff for the big band.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. Must have. He must have.

FRANKLIN: So he got it one way or another.

ISOARDI: Was it George Morrison?

FRANKLIN: George Morrison.

ISOARDI: Was it George?

FRANKLIN: I think so, yeah.

ISOARDI: I don't know why that name just sort of jumped at me.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, George Morrison. I'm sure that's it. I've got a picture in the back. I'll show it to you and you can check it out. Where was I, now? Oh, yeah, he had the band called the California Rhythm Rascals, which was like the number one dance band in Los Angeles at that time in the forties, fifties, and part of the sixties. They used to play quite a bit at the Elks hall on Central [Avenue].

ISOARDI: Oh, that was a— Yeah, it was a venue a lot of bands played.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was the spot. That was one of the many places on Central Avenue, and I remember as a kid he used to take me all the time to hear the band, you know?

ISOARDI: All right! He came out here probably in the thirties, you said, sometime.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So he was a teenager probably when he came out here?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: In his teens.

FRANKLIN: Late teens.

ISOARDI: Did he come on his own?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he came by himself. He just wanted to make his mark in California, I guess.

ISOARDI: And he thought L.A. [Los Angeles] was the place?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I guess it turned out to be pretty lucrative for him.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I guess, if he maintained a band for that long.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Well, that kept me around music all my life. They would always have rehearsals. I mean they would rehearse once a week and being a musician he would have all the guys over, all the cats over all the time. So I got to not only listen to the music, but just hang out with the musicians as a kid, you know?

ISOARDI: I guess probably earliest memories are of—

FRANKLIN: Are of all the guys. Gene Phillips was a great guitar player that was in his band. Jack Holt, alto player. Everett Walsh was a drummer and Ted Brinson was the bass player—and I was the mascot, I guess. [Isoardi laughs] Yeah, so I was there.

ISOARDI: Do you remember— Again, you're born in 1940. In your preteen years, I guess, Central Avenue is still pretty happening. Do you have any memory of it?

FRANKLIN: Not really. I was too young to go anywhere, you know. I do remember my dad taking me to the Lincoln Theater and I got to see Sugarchild Robinson.

ISOARDI: At the Lincoln?

FRANKLIN: At the Lincoln Theater, and that really knocked me out. Like he was—whew!—a piano playing fool. And I think he was about the age— My age, you know? About my age.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: I don't know whatever happened to him, but he was quite an inspiration, you know, for a little kid like me.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Was music sort of— I mean was that something you wanted to do early on? Was it just sort of—

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: It seemed so natural that this was what you would do?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it was natural. Sure was natural. My dad— *He* didn't think it was very natural for me. He tried me on every instrument in the world, and I rejected them. I didn't like them, you know? When I was a little kid I think my first instrument was the tap. He had me tap dancing and I was—

ISOARDI: See what your timing was like and things like that?

FRANKLIN: I guess. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So I was a member of— I went to Willie Covan. I think they were on Western [Avenue].

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: It was a big dance school where the black kids would go to— You know, because tap was very big in those days. So that's where we would go.

ISOARDI: So you studied for a while with Willie Covan?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Oh yeah.

ISOARDI: What was he like? I've heard a little bit about him.

FRANKLIN: As far as I remember he was strict. Pretty strict. I'm four or five years old there, so it's kind of hard for me to remember too much about him.

ISOARDI: I heard stories of— I mean a lot of the Hollywood stars coming to see him.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, I'm sure. I think I did that for about a year and then we— He

tried me on the trumpet. Because that was his instrument, was the trumpet.

ISOARDI: That was inevitable, I guess, at some point.

FRANKLIN: That was inevitable, and I couldn't stand it. I hated it.

ISOARDI: Why?

FRANKLIN: I just didn't like the instrument, you know? It just didn't get me. It didn't grab me. So we fought through that for about a year, I guess, and then he tried me on the saxophone. He got me— In the meantime he's buying all these instruments, you know. [mutual laughter] He bought a trumpet, now he bought a saxophone. And I stuck with that for a while. Saxophone and clarinet, and he took me to— I studied at Gray Conservatory, which was on Jefferson [Boulevard] around San Pedro [Street] in those days.

ISOARDI: What was that like?

FRANKLIN: That was great there. My teacher was Caughey Roberts.

ISOARDI: Oh, no kidding.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He played clarinet with [Count] Basie? Clarinet/saxophone with Basie?

FRANKLIN: Yes, that's Caughey Roberts, yeah.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: So he— I guess after he left the Basie band he was teaching at Gray's.

ISOARDI: So that wasn't just classical academy of music then.

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, we were classically trained.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah. There was no bebop. No bebop. It was straight ahead. [Isoardi laughs] It was straight ahead. And the saxophone took me all the way through high school really. I was involved in L.A. [Los Angeles] Police [Department] Junior Band, which was really great for me—

ISOARDI: Which sax were you playing?

FRANKLIN: In the band I was playing baritone sax and in junior high school I played the baritone sax. As a matter of fact, at Foshay Junior High School I was first chair baritone sax.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Because there was only one baritone sax player. [Isoardi laughs] And I was first chair. Second chair, third chair, all the chairs. In the police band I really got to meet all the kids my age. I'm talking about sixteen then.

ISOARDI: You're not at Foshay when you're sixteen, then. That's junior high, right?

FRANKLIN: No, no. So we're— Yeah, we're talking about thirteen or fourteen.

ISOARDI: You're in the police band that early on?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, thirteen or fourteen, because I was still in junior high school. When I got to high school it was all over with. You know, girls were there then. [Isoardi laughs] I was too cool for marching bands, you know what I mean? So that had to be all through junior high school. It was. Yeah, wow.

ISOARDI: Where did you go to grammar school?

FRANKLIN: I went to Vermont Avenue School. It was on Vermont and Twenty-seventh Street. And then from there I went to Foshay Junior High School.

ISOARDI: And then where did you go to high school?

FRANKLIN: I did two and half years of L.A. [Los Angeles] High School and then I did my last semester at Manual.

ISOARDI: Manual Arts [High School]?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Well, when you're growing up, you're living not far from Central, I guess. You're near what? You said Forty-eighth and Main?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, when I was about seven we moved to the west side of town. Raymond and Adams [Boulevard]—2627 Raymond Avenue. That's what enabled me to go to Foshay and—

ISOARDI: Oh, right. What used to be called the West Side then.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it used to be called the West Side then. Right. So yeah.

ISOARDI: Well, do you remember much of the earlier neighborhood at all? What it was like?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well it was— They were big, big, big houses. We lived in a house with a basement, an attic, and like six bedrooms.

ISOARDI: Was that the one on Forty-eighth or the one over on—

FRANKLIN: No this is the on Raymond.

ISOARDI: On Raymond. What about the earlier one?

FRANKLIN: The earlier was like two bedrooms. It was a smaller place.

ISOARDI: Was it— Did you have any siblings?

FRANKLIN: No. The only child.

ISOARDI: So it was just the three of you.

FRANKLIN: Just the three of us, yeah. The neighborhood— I remember more of the one on Raymond because that was where I grew up more in my older years. A lot of big homes in that couple blocks from Adams to, say, Twenty-ninth Street and they're all well kept.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We were probably maybe one of the three or four black families in that area at that time. It's changed quite a bit now, but I remember that quite well.

ISOARDI: Were there any problems that you remember?

FRANKLIN: No problems at all.

ISOARDI: When you moved in?

FRANKLIN: No. No problems at all. Everything was cool. Everything was fine.

ISOARDI: This was probably the early fifties then? I guess about—

FRANKLIN: Yeah. That would be 1945—'45 'till '58.

ISOARDI: Oh. That you were over there.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. You left Forty-eighth when you were very young.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I would say I left— I thought I was seven, but I had to be five,

because I didn't even go to school over there.

ISOARDI: Was that sort of a sign that your dad was doing well?

FRANKLIN: It was a sign that my mom was doing well.

ISOARDI: Your mom. [mutual laughter] Because that was sort of a more affluent area than the East Side was.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, sure. It was moving on up. Moving on up to the West Side. Yeah, they were together, they were both doing well, and my dad at that time, he always seemed to have a day job too.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah he was— In the later years, I guess when I was ten or twelve, something like that, he got work for the city. He was in [City of Los Angeles Department of] Recreation and Parks. So then— Yeah, they were both doing very well. With his music too. So, yeah, they were doing fine. I remember we had a 1950 Buick Roadmaster. In 1950. [Isoardi laughs] So I guess they were cool. He would keep it shiny all the time and, you know— [laughs] So that was a sign of doing well, I guess.

ISOARDI: Yeah, surely.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: What was your elementary school like?

FRANKLIN: Well, Vermont Elementary School was at that time— Racially it was, I'd say, 20 percent black and 70 percent white and maybe 10 percent Japanese at the

time. There were no incidents or anything like that. The neighborhoods were fine and everybody was fine in that part of town. Now I did have a friend of mine, Billy Bailey—turned out to be a doctor as a matter of fact—around that same time. Around '56 his parents moved to Dunsmuir.

ISOARDI: Northern California?

FRANKLIN: No, no, Dunsmuir [Avenue] off of Adams. Dunsmuir, which is the other side of Hauser [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And I was supposed to stay over there with him one time—you know how kids sleep over—on the weekend. I was going to be probably sleeping in the living room. It was a good thing I didn't, because his house was bombed that night.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: So there was racism, now. So that was kind of scary.

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but they stuck it out and hung out right there on Dunsmuir and, you know, things changed.

ISOARDI: When is it that you first become aware of racism? Was there any particular incident or is it just something you just kind of grew up understanding and knowing about?

FRANKLIN: I would really say probably not until I started traveling on the road, you know? I wouldn't even call it racism. I don't know if people were just nasty. You

know what I mean?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Coming up in L.A. at that time, I really can't say I had any problems or noticed any problems until being an adult and then you catch a lot of crazy people. I can't say— Honestly I really can't say I did until farther down the road when I started traveling.

ISOARDI: That was fortunate.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. My parents tried to keep me away from that because my dad had seen quite a bit of it, you know, being from Oklahoma, and so they did a good job. They kept me away from it quite a bit, because growing up I had a lot of white friends, I had a lot of Japanese friends, and a lot of black friends.

ISOARDI: So when you're in, I guess, what, seventh grade or so you go to Foshay?

FRANKLIN: Went to Foshay. I was in the band there where Miss Bicknell and Miss Fowler—

ISOARDI: They were the two music teachers?

FRANKLIN: They were the two music teachers and they were serious.

ISOARDI: Really? Good program.

FRANKLIN: A good program. A great program. A lot of musicians of today from L.A. went to Foshay under her program.

ISOARDI: Really? Such as?

FRANKLIN: Well, ahead of me was— Oh, boy, let me think, now. I'll have to think

about that. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: I'll have to think about that. I know there were a lot of guys, but I'm trying to think of anybody that would be famous and I can't think of anybody now.

ISOARDI: The only person that I think might have gone to Foshay was Eric Dolphy, but I'm not sure.

FRANKLIN: Eric Dolphy did go to Foshay.

ISOARDI: Did go to Foshay.

FRANKLIN: Thank you. But Eric Dolphy was ahead of me. I never even got to see him.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, he would have been quite a bit older.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I'm thinking about five years. Five years older. That was a lot in those days. That was a whole school—

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but a lot of guys did go to Foshay; they were just all ahead of me.

ISOARDI: And you're playing bari [baritone saxophone] through Foshay?

FRANKLIN: I played baritone sax, and then I played a little bass clarinet too. I got in— I was in the [Los Angeles] All-City Orchestra on bass clarinet.

ISOARDI: When was that?

FRANKLIN: That was in '57. No, I'm sorry, wait a minute.

ISOARDI: When you were at Foshay?

FRANKLIN: In 1955—'55 at Foshay, yeah.

ISOARDI: Your last year in Foshay?

FRANKLIN: My last year at Foshay, yeah. So that was great.

ISOARDI: Really. Why bass clarinet? How did you get into that?

FRANKLIN: Well, I was playing clarinet before through Mr. Roberts, Caughey Roberts, and I liked the bass clarinet. I liked the sound of it.

ISOARDI: You really gravitated toward the bottom, didn't you?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, and I didn't really get into the bass, you know. It was really funny. I was at L.A. High School I think my junior year, my second year there, and I was in the band playing sax there. We were having a jam session one day and there were plenty of saxophone players like there always are, but there was this bass over here and nobody was playing it. So I jumped on the bass and started playing it, and didn't know what I was doing, but I sure fell in love with the instrument.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah and I did it—

ISOARDI: And you never thought of it before.

FRANKLIN: Never.

ISOARDI: Amazing.

FRANKLIN: Never. It was there, and it was just love at first sight.

ISOARDI: Interesting.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so from there my dad got me lessons on the bass from a classical

teacher, and I can't remember his name because I only took about three lessons from him.

ISOARDI: Why only three?

FRANKLIN: He wasn't teaching me the way I wanted to be taught. I guess I was hardheaded and he was so strict, and I was hearing the bass another way, so we tried another teacher. That didn't work out either, so I just started playing on my own and I sought out my own teachers. One of them was Al McKibbon, and he did more than all those other guys combined for me.

ISOARDI: How did you find Al McKibbon?

FRANKLIN: That was on my day job. I had a day job later on.

ISOARDI: How much later on?

FRANKLIN: Two years out of high school and I was working for the [Los Angeles] Department of Animal Regulations chasing dogs.

ISOARDI: What used to be dogcatcher.

FRANKLIN: What used to be dogcatcher, but they changed it to animal control officer.

ISOARDI: Animal control officer. [Mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: So I was in the [San Fernando] Valley at the time working, and I think I chased this big old boxer home one day and I took him— I didn't like to catch dogs. I liked to chase them home, so I chased him home and I was getting ready to write this guy up. And this big guy comes to the door and I see all these basses inside. I just

happened to see them. I said, "You're a bass player. You're a musician." He said [very deep booming voice], "Yeah, I'm Al McKibbon," and then that did it. [mutual laughter] His dog got a free pass and I got lessons. [laughs] For the next two years while I was riding around I'd be over at his house every day.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Two intense years with Al McKibbon.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And I studied a lot with George Morrow, too.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Had he settled back in L.A. then?

FRANKLIN: He was living in L.A. then, yeah, and it was those two guys. You know, they didn't teach me a lot of rhythm music. I mean we didn't sit around there and read books and stuff like that. They just taught me how to play the instrument and the way to play the instrument. The jazz way. Of course I studied a lot on my own and but as far as formal lessons, that's all I had. Yeah.

ISOARDI: Outside of school, that was it.

FRANKLIN: Really.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I studied music— I studied music itself. I did the studies at [Los Angeles] City College and then L.A. High School. But as far as formal lessons, I

guess I've had about fifteen and that's about it. But these guys, like I said, Al and George, I mean that's all I needed, because—

ISOARDI: Can you talk a little bit more about their approach to teaching?

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, Al would sit you down, he'd talk to you about the music. He would talk to you about the purpose of the bass. That's what a lot of guys today don't understand, the purpose of the bass. You know, the word bass is the bass. It's supposed to be on the bottom, and a lot of guys skip that because they want to play fast or whatever, but the purpose of the bass is to support the other guys. He really expounded on that, and he taught me a lot about fingering. On the other hand, George taught me a lot about swinging.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: And he taught me about the metronome. Play with the metronomes and you can play fast, you know, and keep your time level and stuff. So these things, I still do it that way. Practice with the metronome, keep your times right.

ISOARDI: Well, yeah, you're carrying the band, aren't you?

FRANKLIN: Exactly. See, that's very important, and that's what the bass player's role is. I mean, it's fine to solo too. We all love to play solos and all that stuff, but the bass is the bottom.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Did either of them talk to you, though, about soloing and bass as a melodic instrument or anything like that?

FRANKLIN: George did quite a bit and— They both did. Yes. Sure, sure. But it

was all in conjunction with keeping your place. I got a lot of that from listening to the guys. See, luckily, when I was growing up in L.A., there were so many great bass players here, I spent all of my time watching, you know? Red Mitchell was here, a great soloist. Scott LaFaro was here.

ISOARDI: That's right. He was here for a while.

FRANKLIN: Yes, Scott LaFaro was here.

ISOARDI: Do you remember when he was around? Was it the fifties?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the early fifties, because he recorded with Harold [Land], as a matter of fact. They did something, yeah. Leroy Vinnegar was around. Guys like Bill Plummer were around. Oh, let's see. Man, so many guys. Ralph Pena was around. I think also there was always somebody to go hear.

ISOARDI: Yeah, true.

FRANKLIN: Check their styles out. Plus, you know, the local guys, other young bass players coming up, too.

ISOARDI: It sounds like there was—L.A. in the fifties—a lot going on musically.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man. When I started playing—I guess was the late fifties, '59/'60—there were so many clubs in L.A. and we all had five night gigs. I mean rhythm sections—piano, bass, drum—five nights everywhere. You know, you'd set your drums down, set your bass there, and you could leave them if you wanted, because you know you're going to be back the next night, which is something almost unheard of now.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But there were so many clubs all up and down Adams, all on the East Side, and Washington [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Jeez. Actually, I'd like to come back to those and talk about some of them specifically—

FRANKLIN: Sure.

ISOARDI: I wanted to ask you, when you're younger do you make any acquaintances that are going to stay with you musically? Any friends—

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: In elementary school or at Foshay?

FRANKLIN: Sure. Well, I'll start with my high school years, my last year in high school, when I learned how to play the bass a little bit—

ISOARDI: But when you finished high school were you a bass player? Is that what you were doing?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well—

ISOARDI: The horns are pretty much gone by then?

FRANKLIN: Oh, well, they were gone. They were gone.

ISOARDI: They're gone by then. So it's bass that you're focusing on—

FRANKLIN: They were gone. I was so happy they were gone. And, you know, my dad was happy, too, to find out something that I liked. He was happy that—

ISOARDI: To see you excited, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was really relieved, because he spent a lot of money, man.

ISOARDI: Phew.

FRANKLIN: Poor guy. Because he was thinking that I would maybe not be— Nothing happening, you know?

ISOARDI: He really wanted a musician.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he wanted a musician. He really wanted a musician. Yeah, my last year in high school and my first year out of high school I met guys like— Well, we had a band, the Roy Ayers Latin Jazz Quintet. You know Roy Ayers? A vibe player?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Okay, Roy was going to Jeff [Jefferson High School] when I was going to Manual.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: How did you guys hook up?

FRANKLIN: Well, through the music drum. So it was myself, Roy, and Bill Henderson, pianist.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Carl Burnett on the drums. Carl Burnett was there also.

ISOARDI: Ooh, that's a fine band.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Elmo Jones was a piano player. Actually Carl, at the beginning,

Carl had his own band. Carl was playing vibes also.

ISOARDI: Oh, didn't know that.

FRANKLIN: And we played Latin jazz, and we followed Cal Tjader all over the place whenever he came to L.A. and he let us play on intermissions, you know, on his gigs. But those are lasting friendships, you know, musical friendships.

ISOARDI: Was Carl Burnett at Jeff?

FRANKLIN: Carl went to Jeff, yes. And Elmo Jones— I don't know if he's still playing or not, but Bill Henderson sure is.

ISOARDI: Of course.

FRANKLIN: And Carl is. I played with Carl yesterday. And Roy is playing.

ISOARDI: Well, those guys have played with you on your—

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, on the records. So those are everlasting friendships, sure.

ISOARDI: Very nice.

FRANKLIN: High school— At L.A. High School, I was about the only— Maybe there was one other guy who was really into jazz.

ISOARDI: You're kidding? That's it?

FRANKLIN: There wasn't a lot of jazz players there. It just wasn't the music. It was music you'd have to search out, you know?

ISOARDI: Was there any music program to speak of?

FRANKLIN: Well, there was a band. Yeah, there was a band, the school band, but as far as playing the kind of jazz that I was listening to at that time, you know— There

was one guy called Art Griffin. He was a drummer at L.A. High School. His real name was Thomas Lee, but he was so much into the music, he loved Art Blakey and Johnny Griffin, so he changed his name to Art Griffin. And this guy was way ahead of his time. He was a great drummer.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: A great drummer. Sounded just like Art Blakey. You know, he had all his records and he played like him. He tried to get a band together. Oh, boy, and he was so intense. Like he said— He would always tell us, he said, "Man, if I don't make it by the time I'm twenty-one, I'm going to kill myself."

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: That's how intense he was.

ISOARDI: That's putting a load on yourself.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and on his twenty-first birthday he blew his brains out.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He followed through.

FRANKLIN: He did it. Oh, he did it. But he was— I mean he was really a great drummer and he was going to be a really superb drummer. He just didn't give it enough time, I guess. You know, twenty-one, on the West Coast, well—

ISOARDI: Oh, man, that's sad.

FRANKLIN: We would always play at a place called the Snake Pit. There was a guy

named Tony Robinson, a drummer. He had a place on Palmdale [Boulevard] in his house, in the back. He had all these big pythons and boa constrictors in his garage.

ISOARDI: Live ones.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. In cages, though.

ISOARDI: Yeah, good thing. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: In cages. He had them all in cages and we would go over there and play. You know, he was a jazz player. So we would always— We would go over there a couple times a week to the Snake Pit and play. Yeah, those guys— We would see guys— Well, Bill Henderson was over there all the time, Carl Burnett, Herman Riley. He was older, but he was— You know, we were all coming up then. Steve Clover, a drummer, he was there all the time. A lot of players. Byron Pope. I remember him. He was there. We would always have jam sessions, you know? Chauncey Locke. We would always have jam sessions.

ISOARDI: Gee.

FRANKLIN: And that's the thing in those days. There was always some place to play at somebody's house, you know, jam sessions too. And we would all try to play a couple times a week.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, aside from getting together at somebody's house, were there any clubs or locations where people would go and jam like in the old days?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, sure, sure. There was the Troubadour—

ISOARDI: With open jam sessions?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, this was the old Troubadour. It was on La Cienega [Boulevard]. They would have open jam sessions there.

ISOARDI: When?

FRANKLIN: Oh, it was—

ISOARDI: Was it one night a week or something like that?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, they would have it one night a week. I'm thinking it might have even been on Mondays or Sundays, yeah. And there were guys there all the time. Oh, Horace Tapscott was there quite a bit. Bill Pickens, bass player.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

FRANKLIN: Oh, another drummer or bass player I forgot to tell you about who was here was Clarence Jones. He was another guy I got to listen to. He was a great bassist. He sounded just like Paul Chambers.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: I mean he had his bow together, arco, he was—

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: He got out of here in the early sixties, though. So after school was out then I started playing with Roy. We did that for a couple of years around town.

ISOARDI: And you had regular gigs?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, we worked. Every weekend we had something going.

ISOARDI: Very good.

FRANKLIN: That was before deejays.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: You know, every time somebody would have a party or an affair they'd have a band, and I guess we were the hottest band then, the Latin Jazz Quintet. Either that or we played cheap or something, because we were always working.

ISOARDI: When does the interest in Latin music come?

FRANKLIN: Well, that came because— That wasn't really one of my big interests, but it was a gig, you know? And Latin and jazz, we combined them. That was Roy's first interest and it was his band.

ISOARDI: And he was finding the gigs, so you were playing a lot of Latin jazz.

FRANKLIN: So we might as well play Latin jazz. And it was fun. It was fun. It was confining for the bass, but I did it because we got to play jazz too. And like I said, Cal Tjader was his biggest influence. So we would follow them all around.

ISOARDI: What was your— I mean what were you listening to? What was your passion then?

FRANKLIN: Oh, at the time I was listening to John Coltrane or listening to Miles [Davis] or listening to Art Blakey. I was in it.

ISOARDI: How about bass players? Who did you like?

FRANKLIN: Paul Chambers.

ISOARDI: He was the man.

FRANKLIN: He was the man. He was the man for many years and he still is for me, you know. Of course, I've got a couple of others now. But at that time it was just Paul.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Some of my favorites now are— I like Ron Carter. I still love Paul. Niels[-Henning Ørsted] Pederson, Reggie Workman. I like Stanley Clarke playing upright bass, and Cecil McBee. You know, guys like that.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: My favorites.

ISOARDI: What was— I'm sorry.

FRANKLIN: Go ahead.

ISOARDI: Maybe you could talk a little bit and then I'll take you back to some of the clubs.

FRANKLIN: Okay.

ISOARDI: About L.A. in the 1950s— Any thoughts about how L.A. struck you in the fifties? Or did it?

FRANKLIN: It was great.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: A lot of music.

ISOARDI: A lot of music, places to go, you guys are busy—

FRANKLIN: Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. And a lot of groups coming from New York. There was a place called the It Club.

ISOARDI: Which was at—?

FRANKLIN: At Washington and Rimpau [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Was that the place that was run by John McClain?

FRANKLIN: John T. That's right.

ISOARDI: John T. McClain.

FRANKLIN: That's right.

ISOARDI: What was that like?

FRANKLIN: Man, that was the greatest place I ever saw.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah! I got to see Coltrane there, I got to see—

ISOARDI: Oh, in terms of the people who came through.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I got to see [Thelonious] Monk there.

ISOARDI: Wow.

FRANKLIN: That was my first gig with Curtis Amy. I worked there, too.

ISOARDI: At the It Club?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yeah, we worked there I think every Sunday afternoon or Sunday morning. There was so much music that we worked from twelve to six over here on Sunday mornings then six to twelve somewhere else. You know, on Friday nights, Saturday nights, all these after hour clubs. Yeah, a lot of music. I was in Curtis Amy's band. He was the one that encouraged me to get rid of my day job.

ISOARDI: [laughs] And that was late fifties?

FRANKLIN: It was late fifties.

ISOARDI: After you're out of high school then.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I'm out of high school, so late fifties, early sixties. Maybe '60, '61, around in there, you know. And I did, I quit my day job. It wasn't because of him, really, but I did quit it soon after that and then he got a day job.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Well, you don't regret it, do you?

FRANKLIN: No, no, no, no, no.

ISOARDI: So the advice was sound.

FRANKLIN: The advice was sound. I understand where he was coming from, because he knew I wanted to play, so it was fine.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: The reason I did quit my day job was I was in San Francisco with Roy, with the Latin Jazz Quintet. We did a little traveling, too. We went up to San Francisco and we were working at the Jazz Workshop and—

ISOARDI: That was an important venue in San Francisco.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, and we were playing a set and Willie Bobo was in town, so he walked into the club and he liked my playing, I guess. He said, "Man, I'm going to send you a ticket to New York. I'm going to send you a ticket, man, I want you to join my band."

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's when Willie was living in New York, before he moved out here.

ISOARDI: Oh, high praise.

FRANKLIN: So I said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, okay. Thanks a lot."

ISOARDI: You didn't believe him.

FRANKLIN: No. So two weeks later he called me on the phone and said, "You ready, man?" And I said, "Yeah!" So I went to work the next day and threw my badge and stuff on the table and told them I was quitting.

ISOARDI: No more chasing dogs.

FRANKLIN: No more chasing dogs. They asked me if I wanted to take a leave of absence. I said, "No I'm quitting." So he sent me a ticket and then we moved to New York.

ISOARDI: And that was in 19—?

FRANKLIN: That was in 1964, '65.

ISOARDI: Jeez. Let me ask you— Earlier, actually, before you leave California—

FRANKLIN: That's right, because I had had three kids since then, too, so I was busy.

ISOARDI: Man.

FRANKLIN: Three of my own children, right.

ISOARDI: During that space of time? Between high school and the time you go to New York?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Yeah, very. When you were with Curtis Amy— It may have been a previous band, but did you know Dupree Bolton?

FRANKLIN: I was in that band.

ISOARDI: With Dupree Bolton?

FRANKLIN: Sure. [inaudible]

ISOARDI: Any thoughts about him?

FRANKLIN: Oh, he was one of the greatest trumpet players I ever heard. I was very green myself and Dupree was pretty strung out in those days.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: But his music was so phenomenal. Yeah, I remember Curtis— As a matter of fact Curtis [Amy] used to have to play golf with his parole agent to keep him cool.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Curtis would come on the bandstand and say, "I had to play golf with his parole officer to keep him cool." [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Well, I guess it was worth it for somebody to play like that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he did it. That was a great band. Phil Moore Jr. was in the band, Doug Sides, drummer. We were about the same age, me and Phil and Doug. I guess Curtis wanted the youngsters.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Ray Crawford was the guitar player. And Dupree. We worked the Intermission Club, we were there like on weekends for a long time.

ISOARDI: Where was the Intermission Club?

FRANKLIN: Intermission was on Adams and Country Club Drive, which is a block

east of Crenshaw [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: And then a block away on the other side, a block west of Crenshaw, was Dynamite Jackson's, another club. So there was jazz all around.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Then across the street from that was what they called the Adams West Theatre. There was a theater there.

ISOARDI: Across the street from—?

FRANKLIN: Right across the street from Dynamite Jackson's there was—

ISOARDI: Just on the west side of Crenshaw? West of Crenshaw?

FRANKLIN: West of Crenshaw on the north side of the street. That's the Adams West Theatre and they would have after hours music on weekends.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Friday from two to six, and Saturday from two to six in the morning.

ISOARDI: Really after hours.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Who would play there? Just people who had regular gigs and—

FRANKLIN: No, they would have— They would feature somebody. Like one week Les McCann would be there.

ISOARDI: All right.

FRANKLIN: One week Curtis would be there. You know, it was always somebody

different every week.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: They would get, you know, big names. And Lou Rawls would be there one week, because Lou was coming up too. As a matter of fact, we worked a the It Club together with Curtis.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: And we were all making twenty-five bucks a night. Yeah. Including Lou. All of us.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Were most of these clubs, you know, kind of smallish places? Maybe a hundred people and small tables? Was it that kind of setup?

FRANKLIN: A hundred people maximum, I would say. Like the It Club, maybe seventy-five people, something like that. Maybe. But they were all full of people all the time, man.

ISOARDI: Really? Was it mostly— Was it mostly blacks? Were there mixed audiences?

FRANKLIN: No, no. Mixed. They were mixed. Yeah, sure.

ISOARDI: Really? All of them?

FRANKLIN: Sure. Yeah, there were— At that time that was a mixed area, especially around Washington and La Brea [Avenue]. It was quite mixed, yeah.

ISOARDI: Interesting.

FRANKLIN: Predominantly white, as a matter of fact.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, in those days, yeah.

ISOARDI: What was John T. McClain like?

FRANKLIN: Oh, gangsterish.

ISOARDI: Do you know anything about his history? Whatever— Gangster?

FRANKLIN: Gangsterish, yeah. Gangster. [Isoardi laughs] He was a sweet guy, but he was a gangster. He always wore his big hat. You know, gangster hat and all his sharp suits and stuff. He was a gangster.

ISOARDI: Was he a freelancer or did he— Was he connected to somebody bigger?

FRANKLIN: Well, I hate to say. I don't know. I'll just say I don't know on that one.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: He's still alive, isn't he?

ISOARDI: I don't know.

FRANKLIN: I'm sure he's still alive.

ISOARDI: You're kidding! He is?

FRANKLIN: I think so, yeah.

ISOARDI: Gee, I wonder if we could interview him?

FRANKLIN: Oh, I'm sure you could. I think he's still alive. You know, he was married to Dorothy Donegan.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was his wife.

ISOARDI: Oh, I didn't know that. Do you think he's in L.A.?

FRANKLIN: I'm pretty— I bet you he is.

ISOARDI: Amazing.

FRANKLIN: I think he's still alive, yeah.

ISOARDI: I heard a story from— I can't remember who now, but somebody talked about how they got a fur coat or something out of the back room. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: Sounds about right.

ISOARDI: One night he had some for sale. [laughs] Cracked me up.

FRANKLIN: Sounds about right. I remember one time John T. was really panicking. He had Monk that week and the place was— It was on a weekend night. I was there and the place was packed—you know, Monk was there.

ISOARDI: Sure.

FRANKLIN: So Monk's out in the back, in the parking lot, drinking wine with this wino—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's in the back, in the parking lot, drinking wine with this wino, you know, doing his little dance and staring up at the stars and stuff. And the place is packed and John T. is panicking. I guess he figures he's going to have to give these people their money back or something. "Monk! Monk! Come on! Play, man, please! Play, man!" And Monk just ignored him. He's still hanging out with the winos drinking wine. So the band starts to play without Monk, and they played for about an hour.

ISOARDI: Uh-oh.

FRANKLIN: And Monk's still out there hanging out, man. [mutual laughter] So John T. is almost on his knees by now, you know. So Monk decided that he wanted to play, so about an hour later he just goes in and plays, man. And it was beautiful.

ISOARDI: Wow.

FRANKLIN: But that's another John T. story.

ISOARDI: Too much.

FRANKLIN: Boy.

ISOARDI: Somebody told me that— Oh, I remember. Horace [Tapscott] told me this, and we even put it in Horace's autobiography, something about John T. having to lock up Phineas Newborn [Jr.] or something to keep a hold of him, keep control of him.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: So he had this place in the back.

FRANKLIN: He had a place in the back. That's right. You could always see Phineas back there.

ISOARDI: That's true?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Oh, it's very true. [mutual laughter] Yeah, because if you didn't Phineas would be gone, man. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: You know, I could just see a movie called *The It Club*.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man.

ISOARDI: All this stuff.

FRANKLIN: A lot of action. A lot of action then. Something always going on at the It Club.

ISOARDI: How long was it around? Do you know when it began and how long it lasted?

FRANKLIN: It closed— Well, let's see. It was going on in '70.

ISOARDI: Still going on in 1970?

FRANKLIN: Because I did a— I was there. I started working there with Gene Harris and the Three Sounds, yeah.

ISOARDI: Whoa.

FRANKLIN: That one just got released, *Live at the It Club* [*Vol. 2*], 1970, '71, I think.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Under Gene Harris's name?

FRANKLIN: Gene Harris and the Three Sounds. Yeah, it just got released.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: So it lasted a while. And down the street from there was the Purple Orchid.

ISOARDI: Where was that? Just on Washington?

FRANKLIN: On Washington, same side of the street, east, about a block east. That didn't last that long. Not at long as the It Club, but that's where I first saw Ornette Coleman.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Ornette, Don Cherry, Billy Higgins, and Red Mitchell. Before they went to New York.

ISOARDI: Oh, it wasn't the Hillcrest [Club]? That was before they went into the Hillcrest?

FRANKLIN: No, the Hillcrest was about a block away. Well, maybe it was the Hillcrest I saw them at. I thought I saw them at the Purple Orchid though.

ISOARDI: Gee, there were a lot of clubs in a few blocks.

FRANKLIN: They were both— The Purple Orchid and the Hillcrest were about about a block from each other, and then the It Club. They were all three clubs right in a block.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: So I might have seen them at the Hillcrest. I'm pretty sure it was the Purple Orchid, though.

ISOARDI: Purple Orchid.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Maybe you could talk about each of those clubs.

FRANKLIN: The Hillcrest— I can't say anything about the Hillcrest. I never worked there. I don't remember even going to the Hillcrest, but I know it was there. The Purple Orchid, that was my club, and the It Club was a club I could go to. Because I wasn't twenty-one.

ISOARDI: Oh, this is the late fifties you were playing at the It Club, right?

FRANKLIN: This is—

ISOARDI: Early sixties?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, early sixties—'60, '61 with Curtis Amy, yeah.

ISOARDI: Yeah, so you're twenty years old or nineteen years old.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it was before I was twenty-one. Yeah, because Curtis was right around that time, right after Roy Ayers. Oh, yeah, Curtis was— Yeah, yeah. And Roy Ayers, I was working with Roy and the Latin Jazz Quintet. It's been a while. But Curtis was right in there around that time before, way before Willie Bobo, so—

ISOARDI: Maybe you were working both bands at the same time?

FRANKLIN: I think that must have been what was happening. Yeah. It had to be.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: A lot of things to try to remember, man.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Sometimes you don't realize how much you've done.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, wow. Across from the It Club there was another after hours place called the— What was the name of that place? I'll have to think about that.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: It was right across from the It Club.

ISOARDI: What was it like?

FRANKLIN: It was another theater.

ISOARDI: You mean like a movie theater?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Oh, somebody told me about this.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. What was the name of that?

ISOARDI: Regency or Regent?

FRANKLIN: No. [The Metro Theatre]

ISOARDI: Was that a place where they had sessions? After hours sessions?

FRANKLIN: Well, they had featured groups also there, too.

ISOARDI: Featured groups.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but you know the musicians would all sit in. All the good guys would come and sit in.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And down the street on Adams there was the Rubiyat Room. Adams

and Western, and it was in a hotel there. That's where Kenny Dennis and Al McKibbon were working quite a bit. I think Nancy Wilson worked there, too.

ISOARDI: Remember the name of that hotel? It wasn't the Watkins, was it?

FRANKLIN: Watkins Hotel.

ISOARDI: Watkins?

FRANKLIN: Yes, it was. You've got a pretty good memory, too.

ISOARDI: Some things stick. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the Watkins Hotel. The Rubiyat Room. That's right. Yeah, Kenny Dennis, and down the street, on down Adams, there was the Normandie Club, at Adams and Normandie [Avenue].

ISOARDI: What was that?

FRANKLIN: That was a jazz club. William Powell, the vibe player, worked there. I don't know if he's playing any now.

ISOARDI: Who ran most of these places? Were these just sort of individual entrepreneurs? Individual businessman for the most part?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Who was behind like the Normandie Club? Do you know who owned it?

FRANKLIN: No, I don't remember that.

ISOARDI: Purple Orchid or—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the Purple Orchid was a guy named Hank Stewart, he owned that. And John T. at the It Club. And of course on the other side was the Parisian Room.

ISOARDI: Who ran that?

FRANKLIN: You know, I don't know who the owner of that place was.

ISOARDI: That was around a long time.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Red Holloway was the guy there, though. He did all the business for the musicians and stuff, but as far as the owners, I don't think I even saw the owners, because they probably never came around.

ISOARDI: What were the conditions like for a musician? I mean you had a lot of opportunities to work. Was the pay acceptable?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, for those— In those days, you know, twenty-five dollars was probably like a hundred is now.

ISOARDI: For an evening?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Sure. I was looking at some of my dad's old records, you know, out in the garage and he was— They were making fifteen dollars a night.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You know, so it was comparable for those times, sure. Twenty-five bucks.

ISOARDI: And what would a typical night be? How many hours would you play?

FRANKLIN: Nine [o'clock] to one [o'clock].

ISOARDI: That was usual?

FRANKLIN: Or nine to two.

ISOARDI: Nine to two?

FRANKLIN: Nine to two. And people would stay out until two in those days. You know, now everything is closed at twelve, twelve-thirty.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But people would stay out until the last note and if it was on a weekend, you'd go from here two to six.

ISOARDI: After hours.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. On Santa Barbara [Avenue]—well, [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] Boulevard [now]—of course, there was Memory Lane.

ISOARDI: What was that like?

FRANKLIN: That was a great place.

ISOARDI: Good place to play.

FRANKLIN: Good place to play and that was one of the spots. KBCA—which is now KLON—at the time KBCA would broadcast from there every Monday.

ISOARDI: All right.

FRANKLIN: And, you know, guys like Teddy Edwards, [Harry] "Sweets" Edison, Hampton Hawes, Leroy Vinnegar, Sam Fletcher, that was where they would work quite a bit. I know I would see Miles in there quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He was— Every time a trumpet player— I want to just say— Not Roy Elders, but the other trumpet player. Sweets.

ISOARDI: Oh, Sweets Edison.

FRANKLIN: Sweets Edison. Every time Sweets would work there—

ISOARDI: Miles would come?

FRANKLIN: Miles would be there checking him out, yeah. And I guess they were great buddies.

ISOARDI: Wow.

FRANKLIN: There was a— What was the name of that club? On Santa Barbara there was— Not Santa Barbara, on Crenshaw there was the Pied Piper.

ISOARDI: Oh, I haven't heard of that one.

FRANKLIN: It was around Forty-second [Street] and Crenshaw.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: And that was owned by— What was that guy's name? Can't remember his name, either, but O.C. Smith was there quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

FRANKLIN: And then in later years I was there with Gene Harris and the Three Sounds for about six months in that one place.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: That was a long gig even for that day, I would think.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. They would get a group and keep it.

ISOARDI: Very nice.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Who ran Memory Lane then? Do you remember?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, what was his name?

ISOARDI: Was it this guy Larry?

FRANKLIN: Larry. Larry.

ISOARDI: I'm trying to think of his last name. Hearns, was it?

FRANKLIN: Larry Hearne. And he was such a sweet guy.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's retired and he sold that place and moved to Hawaii.

ISOARDI: When did he sell that club? Do you know? Did he sell it to Marla Gibbs?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So it went from him to Marla?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So it must have been some time in the eighties.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: But he kept that place running up until the early eighties?

FRANKLIN: A long time.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: It has never been the same. You know, Marla tried to do it. I guess— I don't know what happened, but it's closed now.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it is.

FRANKLIN: But that was really a great spot. No telling who you would see in there.

That was like the who's who.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: And then in the black areas there were many, you know, I'm telling you about these clubs. There were a lot of clubs.

ISOARDI: A lot of great places.

FRANKLIN: And that's not even counting the East Side. You know, the East Side of town there was the Zebra Lounge, Club La Deus. Club La Deus was on Vermont [Avenue] and around Eighty-second [Street]. I think the Zebra Lounge was on San Pedro around Eightieth [Street], in the eight thousand block. That's where I first saw Art Blakey, at the Zebra Lounge.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: So guys would come from East to come to these places.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And these were just almost like neighborhood clubs? Kind of small places?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Well, they were small, but they were famous in that time, you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: They were on the circuit.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Now was there a— Do you remember a place— I'm not sure. Larry Hearne may have— Is it Hearne or Hearns?

FRANKLIN: I'm mixing him up with the fighter now. Larry Hearne, I think.

ISOARDI: Did he have a place across from the old ball field, off Central? It was a real place for jam sessions.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and I can't remember the name of it because I never went there, but I knew it was there.

ISOARDI: You've heard of it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: I was too young at that time to legally go. Yeah, he did.

ISOARDI: Any other places on the East Side?

FRANKLIN: That's all I can think of on the East Side. There were plenty of places up in Hollywood too, now, but on the East Side and—West Side in those days—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: That's about—

ISOARDI: Those were the main ones.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, those were the main ones. That's about all I can think of.

ISOARDI: Was Marty's going when you were—?

FRANKLIN: Marty's on the Hill.

ISOARDI: In that time?

FRANKLIN: Oh, not Marty's on the Hill, but the one on Broadway. Yeah, that's another one.

ISOARDI: That was happening then?

FRANKLIN: That's right.

ISOARDI: Okay, that was before he moved though, right?

FRANKLIN: That was before he moved. I didn't go there often, because there was an organ in there, so there was no bass player. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: [laughs] Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But it was the spot to go, like for all the horn players and all the drummers and all the piano players. Art Hillery was the house organist.

ISOARDI: My old teacher used to play at Marty's quite a bit.

FRANKLIN: Really.

ISOARDI: Bill [William] Green.

FRANKLIN: Bill Green. Right, right. He was your teacher?

ISOARDI: Yeah, for a few years.

FRANKLIN: Oh, okay, yeah.

ISOARDI: I studied with Bill for about four or five years.

FRANKLIN: Okay, yeah, he was— That was his gig. And then they moved to Marty's on the Hill.

ISOARDI: When did they move? Do you remember that?

FRANKLIN: What year was that? That had to be in the seventies.

ISOARDI: Seventies it moved up?

FRANKLIN: It didn't last long.

ISOARDI: Well, there was one other club I wanted to ask you about. California Club?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yes! That's one I forgot about. California Club.

ISOARDI: That was on old Santa Barbara, right?

FRANKLIN: That was on Santa Barbara, right. That was about a mile from Memory Lane.

ISOARDI: A mile east of Memory Lane?

FRANKLIN: A mile east, yeah. Right off of Western, yeah. That was a good place. I think they had mostly more of the local musicians there.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: They didn't have any out of town groups coming in there. It was a good local club. It was a jazz club.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Not quite as much jazz as the rest of them. They would have a lot of singers in there and they'd put some Latin in there or something, you know.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: But it was another place in the neighborhood to go, yeah. Sure.

ISOARDI: You mentioned Hollywood a little bit. I mean by the time that you're working as a professional it's, what, the late fifties or early sixties I guess, right? Are there— Are more black musicians working further out? I mean in Hollywood and places like this before? Do you guys have opportunities for gigs in Hollywood?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Or on what would today be the West Side?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Were people playing?

FRANKLIN: I would say so. Yeah, there were more gigs. Everybody was working so, yeah, there were more gigs. I mean the white musicians were down our way, too. Everybody was everywhere. Now, there was no [San Fernando] Valley in those days. [Isoardi laughs] The Valley was really a valley, so all we had was Hollywood in this part of town, but it was no big deal to see anybody anywhere.

ISOARDI: What were some of the better places in Hollywood to hear the music?

FRANKLIN: The Renaissance.

ISOARDI: Which was where?

FRANKLIN: It was on Sunset [Boulevard] west of Crescent Heights [Boulevard]. A couple blocks on the South Side. What was the name of the other one? Right at Crescent Heights and Sunset was Sherry's. Sherry's, right there on— There was always like a good trio in there.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: And Hampton Hawes was there quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, with his trio.

ISOARDI: Well, you spent a little bit of time with Hampton Hawes.

FRANKLIN: I spent some time with Hampton, yeah.

ISOARDI: Must have been a great experience.

FRANKLIN: Oh, it was one of my best experiences in life.

ISOARDI: I believe it.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man, he was such a beautiful person and such a great player. Yeah, that was one of my best musical experiences, with Hamp. Hamp will let you play. Whatever you want to play, he was right there, you know, and— His outlook was so beautiful.

ISOARDI: In what way?

FRANKLIN: Well, he wanted— In his later days, I would say from '71 on, his outlook seemed to change quite a bit. He was getting more loose himself, you know, and he was getting out of the suits, wearing the suits through all his gigs, and he was just a more loose person. His attitude on life was loose. Like his most famous expression was, "Let's do this gig, buy a hot dog, and fuck it in the dick." [mutual laughter] That was it. That was his expression. Do the gig and get a hot dog, fuck it.

I remember one time we were in London on tour and we were at a party. People invited us to a party. It was me, Hamp, my second wife Penny [Holt], Michael Carvin, and Jackie [Hawes]—Hamp's wife— and Josie [Black], Hamp's future wife, which was a friend of my wife Penny's. We were all at this party. Talk about tense. That was a pretty tense tour. I'll tell you more about that. That was a tense tour, but we were at this party and it was in London and people were stiff. You know, London people are kind of stiff anyway.

ISOARDI: British.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so Hamp says, "Man, this is a stiff party. I mean what's the matter with these people? They've got to loosen up. What's the matter with them? Loosen up." He says, "I'll loosen them up." So Hamp gets right in the middle of the room, takes all of his clothes off.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: That's right.

ISOARDI: Man, he must have given them cardiacs.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man, he did, man, especially his wife Jackie. Like she was just like—eewww. So we were all cracking up. We were laughing, you know? So the party started to loosen up. You know, people started— The British, they started laughing and [mutual laughter] from then on it was a good party. He put his clothes back on and everybody was loose. That's just the type of guy he was. He was so beautiful in that way.

ISOARDI: It seems like there are a handful of stories like this. I remember both Larance Marable and Dave Bryant told me stories about playing with Charlie Parker once, and he told everybody in the band to take their clothes off. Here in L.A. David said he was never so happy to be playing bass in his life. [mutual laughter] He had something to hide behind—

FRANKLIN: Gave him something to hide behind. That's great. Well, go ahead, David. That's great. "Take your clothes off." Well, I wouldn't have believed this

unless I was there, man. I saw it.

ISOARDI: Did anybody else take their clothes off?

FRANKLIN: No, he didn't want anybody else to take their clothes off.

ISOARDI: No. Just him.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he just wanted to loosen the party up. He wanted to loosen the party up and he did. It was cool after that.

ISOARDI: Too much.

FRANKLIN: But the look on his wife's face, man. You should have seen that, man. Whew. Boy. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez. What's— Well, actually, I should ask you, you mentioned that before you go to New York you're already married and you've got three kids?

FRANKLIN: Got three kids. Two boys and a girl.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Or a girl and two boys. One each year.

ISOARDI: When did you get married for the first time?

FRANKLIN: I got married for the first time in 1959.

ISOARDI: So you're a year out of high school or so.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. So—

ISOARDI: What was your wife's name?

FRANKLIN: Blanche [Patterson]. She's still a great friend and still the mother of my children. We're great friends.

ISOARDI: What are your kid's names?

FRANKLIN: My oldest Laurita [Franklin], she's given me two grandsons [Christopher Franklin and Drew Franklin].

ISOARDI: Congratulations.

FRANKLIN: My oldest son Carlton [Franklin], he has given me two grandsons [Sammy Franklin and Tim Franklin]. And my youngest son Henry, "the Skipper" [Franklin], he's given me two grandsons [Henry Franklin III and Micah Franklin].

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: So I've got six grandsons. My oldest grandson is nineteen.

ISOARDI: Nineteen?

FRANKLIN: From my daughter, yeah. She's got a nineteen year old and an eleven and Carlton has got them six and three. And my youngest son has got them nine and seven.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Well, congratulations.

FRANKLIN: Thank you.

ISOARDI: That's wonderful.

FRANKLIN: Thank you. I'm happy with them.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's nice. You must have had some wild Christmases in the past when you get them all together.

FRANKLIN: Well, it's hard to get them all together now. My daughter lives in Lancaster, my oldest son lives in Hurst, Texas.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: His job moved him there, so he has been there five or six years now. And my other son just recently moved to Oxnard.

ISOARDI: Yeah, kind of spread out.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so we're spread out, but we get together.

ISOARDI: Any musicians?

FRANKLIN: No musicians.

ISOARDI: Not a one.

FRANKLIN: Not a one. That's why I said earlier two generations is enough, I think. [Isoardi laughs] They all want to make some money, so one's an engineer, another one's a—

ISOARDI: That's been the curse of the last fifteen years, twenty years in this country. It's all anybody wants to do.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yeah. Of course, I can't blame them, because they weren't musically inclined and I didn't force it on them.

ISOARDI: You can't, really, can you?

FRANKLIN: No. No. No, you can try and maybe if it's there it will come out. You don't even have to force it on them. Plus I wasn't there all the time anyway. I had gotten divorced and they weren't around me every day, so that made a big difference.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: But they're cool, doing their things.

ISOARDI: It sounds like, just from what you've said, that there was a lot of— L.A. was pretty varied in this period in the late fifties, early sixties in terms of the sounds that you heard in L.A., the kind of music that was being played, it sounds like. I mean how diverse was it? Was Latin jazz big? Were people—?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Latin jazz was very big. You know, Cal Tjader was like the Poncho Sanchez of today, that was Cal Tjader in those days. He had a very big influence on the music and on the people, you know? Other than that it was just a lot of straight ahead and bebop.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and there were a lot of singers, you know, doing their thing. Sam Fletcher, Spanky Wilson, of course Ernie Andrews. People like that, you know? So singers do their thing and you play with singers.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: There was— Yeah, just straight ahead. And bebopping.

ISOARDI: You mentioned Ornette. Did you ever come across him?

FRANKLIN: Just that one time I heard him. I got to hear him before they moved to New York.

ISOARDI: What did you think?

FRANKLIN: Uh. [Isoardi laughs] Huh. First time I heard it I couldn't figure out

what the hell they were doing.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: You know, it didn't grab me. It took a little while.

ISOARDI: It was different.

FRANKLIN: It was different, yeah. It was different, but it killed me because Red Mitchell was playing, so—

ISOARDI: Oh, right, right, right.

FRANKLIN: So I got to hear Red Mitchell, so it was fine with me. You know, Red Mitchell could be playing at that time with Hootie and the Blowfish. It's cool with me as long as I got to hear him, you know.

ISOARDI: Was there much outside stuff being done then other than Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry?

FRANKLIN: No, no, no. Not then, no. That was probably the most outest— That was definitely the most outest stuff that—

ISOARDI: That was going on then?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because that was— I remember that was before Albert Ayler, and that was before "Trane" [John Coltrane] went out. Trane was in.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So it was kind of— It was a new territory. Ornette was the first guy who was doing that kind of stuff. Maybe Cecil Taylor was doing it in New York.

ISOARDI: Well, back in New York, but who had heard of him probably by then?

FRANKLIN: Right.

ISOARDI: At that time.

FRANKLIN: Right. I think even Horace [Tapscott] was playing more in in those days. Yeah, he was playing a lot of trombone too in those days.

ISOARDI: Oh, right, right. Yeah, it's a few years before he gives that up, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: What about some of the players that were coming out of L.A. then? I mean we mentioned Curtis [Amy]'s band and Dupree Bolton. There's another guy I've heard a little bit about, but don't know much about, and that was a saxophonist named Earl Anderza. Did you ever come across him?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was great.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He was great. Great player. I just found out that he's died.

ISOARDI: Oh no.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Earl Anderza had a problem. He was always in jail.

ISOARDI: Well, he did a lot of drugs, didn't he?

FRANKLIN: He did a lot of drugs, but he could play his ass off.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: There was another guy named Sinclair Greenwell.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: Guido.

ISOARDI: Guido Sinclair.

FRANKLIN: You know about him?

ISOARDI: Well, just because of—

FRANKLIN: The other guys telling you.

ISOARDI: The [Pan-Afrikan People's] Arkestra and Horace.

FRANKLIN: Oh, okay. But I mean these guys sounded— He and Earl, they both sounded like Charlie Parker.

ISOARDI: Wow.

FRANKLIN: I mean they were, to me, just as great as Charlie.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: They did everything that Charlie did. They were strung out just like he was, you know. [mutual laughter] And that's the day— Frank Morgan was around then, too. A lot of great alto players.

ISOARDI: Man.

FRANKLIN: Guido, Earl Anderza. And Frank was around.

ISOARDI: Was Sonny Criss around then?

FRANKLIN: Sonny Criss was around. Yes, he was.

ISOARDI: You know, this town was really loaded.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man. And when you go to the saxophone players— You know— Harold Land.

ISOARDI: Teddy [Edwards] I guess was around.

FRANKLIN: Teddy was playing. Yeah, Teddy was around. What's— Walter Benton.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

FRANKLIN: Walter Benton was around, Curtis Amy, you know? A lot of good piano players too.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: A lot of great drummers, a lot of great bass players. Yeah, a lot of guys.

ISOARDI: Man.

FRANKLIN: A lot of them held on, some of them went by the wayside, and a couple of them moved to New York.

ISOARDI: Maybe you could talk a little bit about the drug problem as you saw it. I mean a lot of guys, certainly— Even by the late fifties, early sixties, junk is still a real problem.

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, because Charlie Parker was a really major influence.

ISOARDI: With a lot of guys that really was it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. That was a major influence.

ISOARDI: And the stuff was that easy to score here then?

FRANKLIN: I imagine so. I wasn't into that, so I really don't know.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: It must have been, because everybody had it.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Frank Butler, a great drummer.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez, yeah, he had a bad habit, didn't he?

FRANKLIN: He had a pretty bad habit. Yeah.

ISOARDI: How did you stay away from it?

FRANKLIN: Well, that was— Those guys were the older guys and they were all really influenced by Charlie Parker. We weren't really influenced by Charlie Parker.

ISOARDI: Oh, so these were the guys who were teens in the late forties, early fifties.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, see, we were the younger generation coming up and we were trying to beat that rap and just trying to play the music.

ISOARDI: There's a real generational change then?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Your generation in terms of attitudes towards the drugs?

FRANKLIN: Sure, sure. That was a no-no then for us.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, I guess you could see what was happening to so many of them.

FRANKLIN: Exactly. You know, we were smoking weed. I guess everybody did that.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And drinking wine, but that other stuff was just— I can't think any of the guys that I grew up with that were or are strung out.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: There was definitely a generation gap.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Because you hear some stories about Frank Butler, man, that—

ISOARDI: Really? Like what?

FRANKLIN: Well, like he borrows your drums, you know? The next thing you know you've got to go to the pawn shop to get them back, and stuff like that.

ISOARDI: Man.

FRANKLIN: Then you see guys like Guido, whom we used to play with— He'd always come by and play with us somewhere—just to keep playing, you know—and you'd see guys like him nodding on the bandstand, fall asleep and all that kind of stuff. So it kind of turned you off. So we got lucky there, I guess. If I had been born ten years earlier it would have been a different thing. I don't know.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Who else? I'm trying to think of some other guys' names that have come up in the past. Hadley Caliman. Was he around then?

FRANKLIN: Hadley was around, yes. A really great tenor player. Hadley's in Seattle now, teaching at the university. Yeah, another great player.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Then you know Bill Green and— Oh, man. You know, New York underestimated Los Angeles, but there were a lot of guys here.

ISOARDI: No kidding. What sort of first got me going in all this was when I was studying with Bill and he would tell me stories about Central Avenue and about some of the people. I thought "Whoa, really?", because this hadn't been written up anywhere. So I started going back through my records, and reading liner notes and

things, and trying to find out where people were from, and putting together a list of who had come out of L.A. and Central Avenue. And the list just kept getting longer and longer, and I thought, "This is ridiculous." [mutual laughter] "Why hasn't this—? You know, why haven't books been written about this? Why isn't this part of the jazz history?"

FRANKLIN: Right. And as far as bass players, I just thought about Red Callender. You know, he was around.

ISOARDI: Ah! For a long time. This is a guy who came in the thirties, late thirties. Yeah, a great player.

FRANKLIN: Red played off and on in my dad's band too.

ISOARDI: Really? Oh, Horace also told me, I think, at one point—

FRANKLIN: Horace was in my—

ISOARDI: He played in your dad's band.

FRANKLIN: Yes, he did. Trombone. Yes, he sure did, that's right. A lot of guys have been through it. My dad got us in the union— We played in his band. Myself, Bill Henderson, and Roy Ayers. We played two gigs with him, I think.

ISOARDI: Yeah?

FRANKLIN: And he made join the union. He helped us join the union, you know. We played a couple gigs—

ISOARDI: Was that when you were still in high school?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. No, just out of high school. We had just gotten out of high

school and we played at the Elks one night, two nights. And we were happy, man, we were playing with the big band.

ISOARDI: [laughs] What kind of advice did your dad have for you about being a professional musician? I mean did he want you to try the studios? Find a good band that's working all the time? Did he want you to play bebop? What was his attitude towards bop?

FRANKLIN: He wanted me to be prepared.

ISOARDI: To handle sort of any situation?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. He wanted me to be prepared on my instrument and that's just about the most advice he gave me. I think that was the best, you know, be prepared. And the way he raised me I think that he didn't have to worry about me personally being cool mentally, because he raised me to be strong that way. Take care of business. But I mean as far as music, he just wanted me to be prepared. That's why he spent all that money trying to get me into something, you know? [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Find something that worked.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was really happy when I started traveling, because that's one thing that he never got to do. Like go to Europe, go to Japan, and that really knocked him out—

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Because I did it. You know, I was going to Japan.

ISOARDI: How long did your dad live?

FRANKLIN: He died in 1978.

ISOARDI: So he saw you enjoy quite a bit of success.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he did. He did. All the guys used to come out here and he really loved [Hugh] Masekela. I've been with a lot of great trumpet players, you know, Hugh Masekela, Woody Shaw, and Freddie Hubbard, and that really knocked him out, because the quality of these guys' playing. And I got to play on some records with these guys, so he was really happy about that. Yeah, whenever we played in L.A. he and my mom, they'd usually be there.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Very nice. Very supportive.

FRANKLIN: He used to love to come and hear Freddie Hubbard. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: [laughs]. Get in line. Who didn't?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he loved Freddie Hubbard, man.

ISOARDI: Is he playing again? I heard he had some serious lip problems and some surgery or something?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, right, he's playing. I just worked at the Jazz Bakery with Ronnie Matthews, an old friend of his, and Sonny Fortune. Ronnie just said that he called Freddie's house and Briggie [Bridget Hubbard], his wife, said he was in Greece doing a gig. So he's playing. I don't think his lip— It's not a hundred percent, but I guess

he's getting by. I guess he's making the gigs. But, no, he's not healed yet. That's a hard one to heal, your lip. You know, I guess there's no—nothing there to heal.

ISOARDI: Yeah, tough one.

FRANKLIN: But that was my other great musical experience, with Freddie.

ISOARDI: Gee. Well, we'll get up to those.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So anything else that we should know about L.A. in the late fifties, early sixties? Anything else that kind of stands out in your experience?

FRANKLIN: Just that there was a lot of music and I was gone a lot of weekends.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You know?

ISOARDI: So when Willie Bobo calls, it's '63, '64?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, '63.

ISOARDI: And you pack up—

FRANKLIN: Pack up and go to New York.

ISOARDI: —and take the family?

FRANKLIN: No, I leave the family here.

ISOARDI: Leave the family here and you take off for New York.

FRANKLIN: Go to New York. I stayed with that band for a year.

ISOARDI: In New York mostly?

FRANKLIN: Well, we were in New York for most of the time. We were based out of

New York, but we did a lot of traveling. I got to go to the East Coast and his band at the time was— Blue Mitchell, which was great for me. Blue Mitchell—

ISOARDI: Great player.

FRANKLIN: Sonny Henry was the guitar player, Victor Pantoja was a conga drummer, and Kenny Rogers was the saxophone player. We worked at Count Basie's in New York, we worked New Jersey, [Washington] D.C. We worked all back East. Blue Mitchell left the band and Marcus Belgrave came in.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so I got to play with him and that was really— Whew. Boy. He's a great player. I played with him this summer and he's still smoking.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We went up to Washington D.C., played the Bohemian Caverns, and that was a place on Eleventh [Street] and U Street. That was a great jazz club. It used to have icicles coming down from the ceiling. Not real icicles. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Yeah, of course.

FRANKLIN: With icicles, and they called it the Bohemian Caverns. Roberta Flack used to work there. She was like the intermission band before she got famous.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: While Willie was off I got to do a lot of work in New York. I worked with Archie Shepp.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Talk about getting into the new music, yeah.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, of course. Gee, you go back there in '63.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Things are really about to open up.

FRANKLIN: In '63 and '64, yeah, and that was scary for me, but it sure was fun.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: We worked at the Fillmore East.

ISOARDI: [laughs] With Archie Shepp?

FRANKLIN: Archie Shepp, and in that band was Roswell Rudd, Beaver Harris, Lamont Johnson, and myself.

ISOARDI: Jeez, these are some of the outest cats at the time.

FRANKLIN: Yes. You'd better believe it. And Archie— [laughs] So I remember the first time, as a matter of fact, it was really funny. The stage was closed and we were behind the stage, and the stage is getting ready to open, the gig is getting ready to start. I've got my stuff set up, so I asked Beaver, "What are we supposed to play? I don't see any music. What are we supposed to play?" So the curtains open up and he says [shouts], "Just play! Just play!" That's what we did. We just played.

ISOARDI: Well, how did you hook up with these guys?

FRANKLIN: Somebody called me, or somebody called him. I guess Archie called and said, "Be here at the Fillmore East at such and such a time."

ISOARDI: And that was your first playing with him?

FRANKLIN: That was my first playing with him, yeah.

ISOARDI: Had you heard much of his music though at that time?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I had heard his music.

ISOARDI: And you were ready to get into it?

FRANKLIN: Well, I thought I was. [mutual laughter] I thought I was. There's nothing like the live experience— You know, the records weren't like the live experience, buddy. Live drums and— Archie came from this side of the opening of the curtain and Roswell comes from this side.

ISOARDI: From opposite sides and they just come together?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, they meet in the middle, man.

ISOARDI: All the while blowing.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Blowing and wailing and I said, "Wow." In the meantime Beaver Harris is back there just bashing, man, and Lamont? I don't know what he's doing over there. It was very interesting.

ISOARDI: Did you get into it?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, I had fun. I had fun.

ISOARDI: Cool.

FRANKLIN: I would like to do that again. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Wow.

FRANKLIN: I would like to do that again. Yeah, that was plenty fun.

ISOARDI: How long were you back there?

FRANKLIN: I was there about a year. A year and two months.

ISOARDI: Did you play more with some of the out guys?

FRANKLIN: I played— No I just— Mainly Archie. We played three or four times, we got three or four hits in. I was living at Roy's place, Roy Ayers.

ISOARDI: Oh, he was back there.

FRANKLIN: He had since then moved. Herbie Mann called him to join his band. So I stayed at Roy's place on the West Side, the Lower West Side and that made it really helpful, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We got to play all together. We played all the time when we were off at Roy's house, with an alto player named Steve Potts, who now lives in Europe. So, yeah, it was— We got to see New York, man.

ISOARDI: At a time when it was really changing musically.

FRANKLIN: Oh, man. Yes. We got to go to Slug's. We went to Slug's all the time.

ISOARDI: Did you ever see Sun Ra there?

FRANKLIN: No, we saw Sun Ra— Where did I see Sun Ra? I never saw him at Slug's, but I did see Lee Morgan at Slug's. That's where he—

ISOARDI: A few years later.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I got to see all the guys, man. You name them, they were there. I got to hear the music, you know?

ISOARDI: I mean you were there for about a year, I think you said, right? In New

York?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Then you come back to L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Then we come back to L.A. I was getting homesick for my kids and I was getting tired of Willie's music, the Latin stuff, because I wanted to play, you know.

ISOARDI: Now there had to be something going from on stage with Archie Shepp, Beaver Harris, Roswell, and then walking into Willie's band. That's got to be—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was my savior, playing with those guys, because that was where I was really coming from, you know? I hope I'm still coming from there. Just playing the music. Latin is fine, but that's just not me.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We came to Memory Lane with Willie's band.

ISOARDI: When you came back here?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, we were at Memory Lane for two weeks.

ISOARDI: By the time you come back here has New York— Has that experience changed you at all musically?

FRANKLIN: Sure.

ISOARDI: How does it change you?

FRANKLIN: Oh, man, it gave me the sight of seeing these guys, all my heroes, and in person, right out there. They all used to like to hang out with Willie. You get to see these guys and they would all come around, and because— A lot of times, when

they come out here, they're kind of showing off, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You know, coming to this big city and showing off. But you get to see the guys, man, it was beautiful. But then you get to hear more music. I mean as much music as there was in L.A.— You know, Elvin Jones was in New York, and Louis Hayes and guys like that. They were in New York. You could see these guys on a regular basis.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: All these great bass players, man. Oh, man. So we went to Memory Lane and that's when I decided I was going to give Willie my two weeks notice.

ISOARDI: Did you have anything else lined up?

FRANKLIN: No. And he decided he's going to give me two weeks notice then, too. So it worked out just right. He said, "Man, I'm going to use another bass player," and I said, "Good, because I quit." So that was fine with both of us.

ISOARDI: Were you going outside a little too much behind him?

FRANKLIN: Probably. [mutual laughter] Probably. Willie was— He was very strict with his music. I mean he wanted what he wanted and we had a personality clash. We had a personality clash.

ISOARDI: I suppose, as things go, spending a year with someone is something. [laughs]

FRANKLIN: Well, I spent years with other guys and it was the most beautiful thing,

you know, but we had personality clashes. So it just so happened that in Memory Lane one night was Hugh Masekela.

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ISOARDI: When we finished last time you were about to start talking about Hugh Masekela.

FRANKLIN: Right, okay.

ISOARDI: But let me ask you, actually, before you get into that— Since you've just come back to L.A. [Los Angeles] now, right? I guess it's '64? End of '64 maybe?

FRANKLIN: It's about— No, about '65 then.

ISOARDI: Early '65? First half?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: How does L.A. strike you? Any change in a year, year and half?

FRANKLIN: No.

ISOARDI: Nothing really?

FRANKLIN: Clubs at that time were still jumping. Big change didn't come until probably '75.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: That's when the clubs started dwindling.

ISOARDI: Starts drying up.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: It's interesting because a lot of people talk about how the Beatles land and rock invades in the sixties and it dries up for jazz, but that doesn't seem to have been

the case in L.A.

FRANKLIN: No, it was still happening, because jazz people didn't care anything about the Beatles anyway. You know, they were just going out to hear entertainment, and in those days there were no bars on the windows.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Adams [Boulevard] was a street [where] you could see action all night long, and Western [Avenue] and all these streets were busy, busy avenues, and there weren't a whole lot of crazy people out there robbing people. I mean I'm sure it was going on, but no drive-bys and none of that stuff, you know?

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: So in those days there was music and people went to hear it and they supported it. There were no video machines in those days either. It was pre-video, so you either go to a movie or go hear some music.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You don't have the video brought to you. You know, let's check out a video and stay home. Everybody was out in the streets. And you could afford it then, too. That's what really stopped a lot of music coming from the East or anywhere else, is the airfares got so expensive. It's hard for guys to bring bands, you know? That's why I guess we've only got one jazz club, Catalina's [Catalina Bar and Grill] and maybe the Jazz Bakery. And they're holding on, but as far— You know how much it costs to bring a band from New York? Just in airfare?

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: We used to even be able to take a bass on the airplane.

ISOARDI: You'd have to get another seat, wouldn't you?

FRANKLIN: We'd get another seat. Half fare for the seat.

ISOARDI: Oh, they'd give you only half fare for it.

FRANKLIN: Half fare for the seat, and you'd go on board first and your bass next to you, and you get the extra meal and everything. That's Mr. Bass. Everything had to have a name, you know?

ISOARDI: [laughs] Right. Mr. Bass wants another glass of wine.

FRANKLIN: Exactly. Yep. So now it's hard to even get a bass on the plane, even with a hard case, you know? They charge you so much overweight and all that kind of crap.

ISOARDI: Yeah. So in '65 you come back.

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: And you meet up with Hugh Masekela.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's in the audience. It was really funny.

ISOARDI: When you're still playing with Willie Bobo.

FRANKLIN: I'm still playing with Willie— I'm on my two weeks notice.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: So he's in the audience and he says, "Hey, man, are you with Willie for long?" I said, "No." He said, "Give me a call. I want to talk to you about my band."

So I did and that was three and a half years, four years, and one gold record. A lot of beautiful times.

ISOARDI: Wow. Four years straight.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Probably a lot of traveling.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, we went all through the United States. All through the United States. Everywhere. You know, we had the number-one record for two or three months.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: "Grazin' in the Grass" was up there for a long time.

ISOARDI: Yeah, huge hit.

FRANKLIN: At that time there used to be a lot of BSUs, Black Students Unions. And all the major colleges, we did all those. We did all of the circuit night clubs, we did that. And we started doing the concerts, the Newport Jazz Festivals, when they were really jazz festivals.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So in the summer months we would— Well, after the record came out we would just work on weekends and do the Newport festivals and usually on the plane there would be [Thelonious] Monk and his band, Herbie Mann, Nina Simone and her band, [Julian] "Cannonball" [Adderley] and his band. So we would have plenty of fun.

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: Just going out on weekends and going from one city to the next. It was a lot of fun. And in those three years I got to meet everybody, because everybody was— It was four years, excuse me. We were there.

ISOARDI: Jeez. Was it very interesting musically?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it was. "Grazin' in the Grass" was just like four changes, but other than that he had a lot of interesting music, a lot of interesting rhythms—African rhythms—and there was a lot of playing involved.

ISOARDI: So there was getting a sense of what was happening in South Africa musically?

FRANKLIN: We got a lot of that and the musicians were great. I mean when I first joined the band Cecil Barnard was the pianist. From South Africa, good player. He later worked with Jackie McLean, so that shows you what his quality was. Cecil Barnard. Chuck Carter was the drummer, from St. Louis. Al Abreu was the saxophone player. He was from Caracas.

ISOARDI: Venezuela?

FRANKLIN: No, not Caracas. In Puerto Rico. What's the— Coco— Well, scratch that. Anyway, he was from Puerto Rico via New York. He's Puerto Rican and he was a great saxophone player. And Masakela, who was a great player. And that band was together for about a year and a half, two years, and then Bill Henderson replaced—

ISOARDI: Ha! On your recommendation?

FRANKLIN: [laughs] Yeah, I got him on the gig. Bill replaced Cecil, and so there were great musicians, and when we did live performances the music was interesting and exciting.

ISOARDI: Yeah, very good.

FRANKLIN: So it was, yeah, a lot of fun. You know, Masekela was like on top, so you would see Miles— I met Miles—I met Miles this time—hanging out with us. Right at the top of the gig or the bottom of the gig. Wherever it was. He was coming to hang out with us and I think we changed a lot of— I won't say fashion, but we changed the entire musician's appearance.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because before we were on the scene everybody was dressed in suits and stuff, and we were loose. I mean, you know, maybe leather pants or jeans or something and just— Slick, but loose.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: So that there opened it up for all these guys. You started seeing Cannonball wearing dashikis, and his brother Nat [Adderley] wearing dashikis and stuff, and they all loosened up. And I think we were the guys who started that. You can attribute that to us, I'm sure of that. Because we used to watch them and talk about it. Yeah, but Monk's band would never loosen up. [Isoardi laughs] They were suit and tie all the way.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Did you come back to L.A. then when you finished with Masekela?

FRANKLIN: Well, we were based in Los Angeles.

ISOARDI: Oh, you were?

FRANKLIN: We were based in Los Angeles. He lived in Hollywood. He had a place in the canyon, in Laurel Canyon, and by that time I was separated from my wife and I had a place in the canyon too—next to Chuck Carter, as a matter of fact. Eight Thousand Honey Drive. And as a matter of fact, there were a bunch of places, about ten units, and Chuck Carter moved a couple doors down, and he was in the place where Robert Mitchum had gotten busted.

ISOARDI: Way back in the—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so that's the place he was living in.

ISOARDI: Famous photo of [Mitchum] going down to county jail.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, that's where he got busted, right there. Eight Thousand Hunting Drive. So, yeah, we were based in L.A. and then we were based in New York too, because we spent a lot of time in New York and he had a place in New York too.

ISOARDI: Are you doing many things when you're in L.A.? Do you do many other things?

FRANKLIN: Not when I was with that band. Well, yeah. Yeah. We were off for a while.

ISOARDI: You would sit in? Or would you get together—?

FRANKLIN: I would work. Something would always be there. You know,

something when I'm off. I'd just make some phone calls and do a lot of local gigs. Just local gigs around town.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: But that was my main gig, because we were on like retainer too. So we had to be there all the time. And it was cool. We worked hard, so when we were off we would like to be off and hang out.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I got to see the kids and spend a lot of time with the kids.

ISOARDI: Good. What about— Are you with Masekela until about '69 or so?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, '69.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: And that opened up a lot of doors on the pop side too.

ISOARDI: Oh, I can imagine.

FRANKLIN: I got to meet Otis Redding. We did the Monterey Pop Festival and—

ISOARDI: Oh, man. That was so great.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. One night I got to see Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, and Janis Joplin the same night. I got to watch them perform. I didn't know who they were until later, you know. I mean they were more singers to me.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But now I look back at it and I guess it was something to be proud of, that I saw them. I didn't know who they were then.

ISOARDI: Well, not many people did before Monterey.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, okay.

ISOARDI: That was really the concert that really launched [them]. I think up until then a lot of them— Well, maybe not Jimi Hendrix. But Janis Joplin and a lot of those bands had come out of San Francisco, and nobody knew what was going on up there.

FRANKLIN: Well, I don't feel so bad then.

ISOARDI: I think it was [being] on that stage that pulled all these people together too. It was amazing.

FRANKLIN: Okay.

ISOARDI: Yeah, no, that was—

FRANKLIN: I don't feel so bad.

ISOARDI: That was a landmark.

FRANKLIN: Okay. Well, we're on that movie, *Monterey Pop*.

ISOARDI: Have you seen the movie?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I have. I'm going to go back and look at it now. Hugh Masekela and I, we all had green— At that time we had green shirts on.

ISOARDI: Did you play behind Otis Redding at that one too?

FRANKLIN: No, no, we didn't play behind him. We couldn't have kept up with him. We watched him go through his thing where he burned his guitar up.

ISOARDI: Oh, Hendrix, you mean.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Man, this guy is nuts. Who is this guy?

ISOARDI: No, Hendrix is something else. But Otis Redding you didn't.

FRANKLIN: Oh, Otis Redding, no. We didn't play behind any of them. They all had their own bands.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: I didn't know these guys. I didn't know any of them.

ISOARDI: No one did.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but later on I started to appreciate them, where they're coming from.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But when I first joined the band we were, you know, doing six night gigs here and there and everywhere. Then that record came out and we went from taxi cabs to limousines and coach to first class on the airplanes.

ISOARDI: How did that record come about?

FRANKLIN: Oh, it's funny, man. We were doing a record date and it was the last tune on the record—

ISOARDI: The last tune on the date?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Huey [Hugh Masekela] said, "Well, we've got to fill this up. Here's this little tune, this little ditty, that is a South African thing I grew up with, that goes like this—"

ISOARDI: So he hums it, right?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's what he did. Next thing we know they're making singles

out of it and, man, we watched it move on the charts. You're number forty-five with a bullet, you're number twenty-two with a bullet. You're number one. And it stayed number one for a long time. That was really beautiful, because we could go to New York, you know— Every time we'd get on the plane and go to New York for a couple of days, you go through Harlem or wherever, and you hear "Grazin' in the Grass" come out of people's record players, man. It's just like the whole city was dancing to that music.

ISOARDI: Fabulous. You know, there are so many stories you hear about people about to finish a session and they toss one off almost without thinking about it and that turns out to be the—

FRANKLIN: That's the one. That happened this time.

ISOARDI: I remember Johnny Otis told me about "Harlem Nocturne." He had a huge hit with that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, that was a big one.

ISOARDI: And he said they went into a session, he had three songs ready. He had no recording experience, he thought they needed three songs and they had to do them in four hours, instead of four songs in three hours.

FRANKLIN: Okay, yeah.

ISOARDI: So he picked this— They just grabbed something, this thing "Harlem Nocturne", that was pretty lame, right? The other recording that had come out was terrible, didn't do anything. The next thing he's got a national sensation on his hands.

FRANKLIN: National hit, yeah.

ISOARDI: It's funny sometimes how that will work. [laughs]

FRANKLIN: That's right, man. That's what happened. I was there, I saw it. And we never had a second hit, so then after we got through—limos for about three, four, five, six months—we went back to the taxi cabs and from first class back to coach again.

ISOARDI: That must have been hard.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, it was all fun while it lasted.

ISOARDI: Yeah, you had a good ride.

FRANKLIN: And we made a lot of money.

ISOARDI: Had a good ride.

FRANKLIN: He was pretty fair with the money, I guess. It was cool.

ISOARDI: I hope Masekela controlled the rights to that.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, he and Stewart Levine. They were partners and they took everything.

ISOARDI: Smart.

FRANKLIN: I'm sure he's well to do, well off right now. I know he is. I talked to him three or four months ago and he's living in South Africa and he's got like— What did he say? Forty acres or a hundred and forty acres. One of the two.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: And he controls the water—a big water dam or something—in South Africa, so he's doing fine.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He's still playing, too.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's good. Gee, he's got to be up there in years.

FRANKLIN: Well, he was just a couple of years older than me. If I'm sixty, he's sixty-two.

ISOARDI: Oh, gee, I thought he was in his later seventies or something.

FRANKLIN: Oh, no, he's sixty-two, sixty-three.

ISOARDI: So he was pretty young when that record hit.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I was thirty, twenty-nine, twenty-eight, something like that. In '68? Yeah. So he was about thirty-two.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: And after that was over he decided he wanted to switch up and do something— You know, he started using some African cats. He wanted to switch up, so after that was over I kind of freelanced around town for a while.

ISOARDI: Well, let me ask you— Now you're getting into I guess the early seventies, right?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: I mean certainly one of the big things that happens in L.A. and for the country is the Watts upheaval of '65. Does that affect you at all? How do you see that?

FRANKLIN: It was the what?

ISOARDI: Watts in '65.

FRANKLIN: Oh, you mean the riot.

ISOARDI: The upheavals, yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it affected me quite a bit. I didn't get the TV I wanted. [mutual laughter] That's terrible. I'm sorry. That's terrible. Scratch that right off the record. [mutual laughter] That's terrible, but I tried. No, Watts affected every person, every black man especially, and white people too, because I mean that just severed relations, I think, you know? Quite a bit. It didn't mess with the music that much. It maybe made the music more pure or something or maybe more fierce or something. Maybe that's when the rappers started coming. Or maybe they hadn't come with that yet.

ISOARDI: Not yet.

FRANKLIN: We burned down our own clubs, you know. And white people stopped supporting the music in black areas. Black people really didn't have a lot to— Well, we didn't have any clubs, so we had to start depending more on going to white clubs.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: It fucked up quite a bit. I mean the arts in general, because you have something like that— And people died, too. You know, people were killing people and I think that— I don't think it really recovered from that, the whole art scene from Los Angeles, because see the whole— That's when the West Side turned out to be southwest, southeast L.A.. Whatever we call it now.

ISOARDI: Yeah. South Central?

FRANKLIN: South Central, see?

ISOARDI: It seems like ever since then everything south of the Santa Monica Freeway is Watts or South Central.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, see, so that was the attitude in white people's minds, so they stopped dealing— They stopped spending their money in there, and they were great supporters of the music, you know? You go to any club in the area and it's going to be half white people and half black people. But that took out that half. You see what I'm saying?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So then what does a club owner do? Charge more money or what? You can't charge black people that don't have that much money to begin with.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: So you've got to cut down on those nights or close or something. So it affected everybody in the arts, yeah.

ISOARDI: Where were you living then?

FRANKLIN: I was living at 6522 Fourth Avenue, and when it happened we stayed in the house, because we were in curfew too, and that's about six blocks east of Crenshaw [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And Florence [Avenue], so they called that— That's a way, way long way from Watts, but it was still under curfew and it was still considered the bad part. But ever since then, like we've just been saying, it's all been South Central. You can

go to Wilshire [Boulevard] and La Cienega [Boulevard]. That's probably South Central now. I know my second wife lives on Redondo Boulevard and San Vincente [Boulevard], and that's South Central, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's strange.

FRANKLIN: So, yeah, it definitely affected everybody.

ISOARDI: One of the things that happens almost immediately— Well, certainly things have been brewing before politically, the civil rights movement and all that stuff is going on, but I think especially after that— I mean the Panthers [Black Panther Party for Self-Defense] emerged the next year, the Nation of Islam has a much higher profile, although Malcolm [X] was dead by then, but I mean the whole community is more politicized in general. There's so much going on by the late sixties, early seventies.

FRANKLIN: Right.

ISOARDI: [Maulana Ron] Karenga's US [Organization] movement. I mean, all of this is happening, is going on. How do you fit into all of this? How do you sort all this stuff out?

FRANKLIN: Well—

ISOARDI: What do you think about it? Did you at the time?

FRANKLIN: I was of course a follower of Malcolm X, so I was into Black Nationalism, you know, support your own and buy from your own to keep your community going. I can see a little bit of good that they were all doing. Like the

Panthers, I can see that they were doing good. They were feeding the poor, feeding the homeless, and I felt that it would take more than what Martin Luther King [Jr.] was talking about. It would take some violence to overcome, you know? I felt that and I think that the Panthers certainly did what they had to do, and it was certainly beneficial. Some things that they— Well, I think overall what they did was beneficial, but I mean they couldn't win. They couldn't win. You know, you got the police there and I mean they just do like they did. They just stormed people's houses and took them out and shot them and killed them. Whatever, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah. You're not going to win against the power of a modern state.

FRANKLIN: Can't win. Right. My hero was Malcolm X after he had left the Nation of Islam, after he had come back from his—

ISOARDI: He made the hajj to Mecca.

FRANKLIN: To Mecca. When he was treating all people for themselves, you know? Looking at all people as for themselves and he saw black Muslims, he saw white Muslims, saw all colors of Muslims and he came back with that different attitude.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: He was going to take the United States to the United Nations. So I think that would have really— If he had got that far, that might have maybe taken care of a lot of the things that are going on now. But they didn't let him get that far. I'm not going to say it was the government, I'm not going to say it was the Muslims or whoever it was. He's gone and we'll never know who it was.

ISOARDI: Probably not in our lifetime.

FRANKLIN: Not in our lifetime. We might know who was— We know who was paid to do it, but he was too strong a man and he was really— You know, we need him back now.

ISOARDI: Yeah, big time.

FRANKLIN: Of course, they did that to a lot of people. Seems like everybody who tries to get the right things happening, they get dusted.

ISOARDI: Buys a bullet.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. But that's life in America, so we have to just deal with it and keep on going and do the best we can.

ISOARDI: Really. One of the things that does start happening, I know artistically in the late sixties there are a lot of alternative arts movements, 103rd Street in Watts has all these— The Watts Happening Coffee House, the Mafundi Institute, all of this. The Watts Writers Workshop is happening, all these things are going on, and I guess to an extent this has to be affecting the music, doesn't it? I mean is there more nationalism in the music? Is this reflected in the avant garde?

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah. It did affect the avant garde. I mean there was a collaboration between say the avant garde and maybe poetry or telling a story, and the music did become more fierce. When I say fierce I'm talking about musically, you know, more— How would I say it? More violent. The music became more violent. I mean guys— That's when guys like Albert Ayler and Archie [Shepp] really started

doing good, and guys like that. They were forgetting about the structure—I guess you would say the European structure—of the music and just playing avant garde, which is I guess music from the heart. Forget about the European method and just play it.

ISOARDI: Do you think they were really capturing something about what was happening though?

FRANKLIN: Sure, sure, but it still wasn't for everybody to listen to, though. I mean you had to go out on a limb listening and dig it and that came from mostly Europeans [more] than it did Americans. You can take Archie Shepp— I keep using him because he was like I guess the forerunner in avant garde music and he's king over there. They love him. You know, if you go all throughout Germany, they have— There's an avant garde circuit.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So they appreciate it more over there, just like now they're appreciating our music, the straight ahead music more over there than I think they are here. That's because— Well, we know the reason for that is because people appreciate art over there. Well, they appreciate the artist, first of all. Here, you know, we've got such a bad stigma. We've got to be junkies, to begin with.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And if we're not junkies, we're no account, we're bums or whatever. Over there they appreciate the music for the music and over here you've got to search for the music. AM stations? There's no jazz there. Now we've got KJAZZ [radio

station KKJZ] on FM.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But other than that— How long has that been? It's years and years until it finally came in. So definitely the riots did do something for the music, sure. As well as did something for everything, you know?

ISOARDI: Were you involved in any of the stuff that was happening within the community? The local stuff, the poetry and the jazz and any of that kind of stuff that was going on? At 103rd or other places?

FRANKLIN: No, I was on the road. I was traveling, playing music. You know, I was doing it my way. I'm sure my heart was there, but I was— [mutual laughter] But I had to play some music. I was gone. No, I was gone. I knew a lot of people involved in it and they were friends, but life goes on. I have to keep on going.

ISOARDI: Really. So by the early seventies, when you leave Masakela, you start freelancing around L.A., you were saying? Is that what you were doing most of the—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I freelanced for a while. That's when I decided to— I got lucky enough to hook up with— I had been playing with my friend Gene Russell for years and he started a label called Black Jazz Records, with the help of Dick Shory in Chicago. It was a subsidiary of Ovation Records.

ISOARDI: It became a subsidiary?

FRANKLIN: It was from the—

ISOARDI: It was.

FRANKLIN: Ovation was the mother label.

ISOARDI: But it was based in L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Based in L.A. And Gene told me to do a record. So I said "Fine," and he kept procrastinating and procrastinating, so one day I called him up and I said, "Gene, I'm ready," and he said, "Oh, are you? I'll book the studio." And he did. He booked the studio and we did our first album, called *The Skipper*.

ISOARDI: Got to ask you at this point—

FRANKLIN: How did the name Skipper come?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Okay— [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: But you had also adopted another name at the time.

FRANKLIN: Uh-oh. Nyimbo.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it's on the album.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah. Nyimbo Sauti. I'll tell you about the Skipper first. The Skipper is my son's nickname. Skipper. His godfather, Bill Henderson, wrote a tune for him called "The Skipper," which is on our first album. So we decided that was going to be like the hit of the record. We had illusions that we'd pick out a hit, you know, like— You know how they do.

ISOARDI: Sure.

FRANKLIN: So the album was called *Henry Franklin / The Skipper*, for the tune, the last tune.

ISOARDI: And ever since then?

FRANKLIN: And ever since then everybody has been associating the tune— Henry Franklin and "The Skipper." So that's how it happened. And my son always reminds me of that too, because I stole his name. So we recorded our first album with Gene Russell. It was myself, Bill Henderson on piano, Oscar Brashear on trumpet, Charles Owens on saxophone, and Michael Carvin on drums. And we did it. We made a lot of noise, and we worked around town with that band for a while, and—

ISOARDI: You covered a lot of ground on that album, too. I mean, "Outbreak" is a very out-there tune.

FRANKLIN: Yes, it is.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yes, it is. And then "The Skipper" is a nice—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Funky-type toe-tapping tune.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We thought it was a good record. I still think it's a good record. It made some noise. I was always kind of like the stable bass player with Black Jazz Records. I did Doug Carn's album *Infant Eyes*, I did the Calvin Keys album *Caution*, I did a Roland Haynes album. I forgot the name of that. I did Gene Russell's albums. He did two or three. Somebody else's I did. I can't remember anybody else, but anyway I did a bunch of stuff with them—

ISOARDI: A lot.

FRANKLIN: Which is great. And we did another album. The second album was called *The Skipper at Home*, in quad—quadraphonic sound.

ISOARDI: Weren't they all done in quadraphonic?

FRANKLIN: Not the first one.

ISOARDI: Oh, your first one wasn't.

FRANKLIN: No, that's why it sounded better. [Isoardi laughs] In quadraphonic I still never heard the trumpet. [mutual laughter] Sounds like he's in a well or someplace. The second album was a good one, too. It featured Al Hall on trombone, he did a lot of writing for it. Ndugu [Chancler] was the drummer. Bill Henderson, Oscar Brashear, Charles Owens, and Kenny "Climax" [Climas] was the guitar player. And that's the one with the picture with everybody on the front. I had about a thousand of my friends come to my house and we took a picture of everybody. It was classic.

ISOARDI: How long was that label around? I mean I know to a degree it still is, because they've been reissuing CDs.

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, it's a different owner now, but it lasted from '70 to— Gene died about '74.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so that then did it, around '74.

ISOARDI: So it was about three or four years then.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but it made a lot of noise when it was going.

ISOARDI: Yeah, well, those albums are collector's items.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's what I hear now. Gene Russell went in for something minor to the hospital and never came out again.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so that was the end of Black Jazz Records, but now it's gone through a couple of hands and now they're releasing the CDs. And I'm still waiting for my check.

ISOARDI: For your first check? [laughs]

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, I'm still waiting for a first check, as a matter of fact.

ISOARDI: Is that an old story.

FRANKLIN: Boy. Well, you know, it was all part of paying your dues. You know, after it was all over with we got paid in other ways.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I suppose.

FRANKLIN: We got a product that's out and it's there forever.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I found in the book business it's like that. You know, there are a handful of people who make money.

FRANKLIN: Seems like it, huh?

ISOARDI: And that's about it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I have a friend who is one of the greatest artists around and she's not making any money. She's one of the greatest artists.

ISOARDI: I tell friends of mine, "You know, one more successful book and I'll be bankrupt." [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: I hear you, I hear you.

ISOARDI: It's crazy.

FRANKLIN: I hear you. But you live and learn, too.

ISOARDI: Well, you do it ultimately because it's a passion. It's a labor of love.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because you've got to express yourself. You've got to get it out there. Ovation released another record called *Blue Lights*. It was the best of the two CDs.

ISOARDI: Oh, really? When did they do that?

FRANKLIN: Around '74.

ISOARDI: From your two LPs.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I'm still waiting for the paycheck on that one too. But I'm not giving up. It may come. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Got to get a lawyer after them. Sic a lawyer on them.

FRANKLIN: See, they know that it costs more money to get a lawyer than—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But I mean it's— If you look at it another way, I would have probably spent the money by now. And it's gotten us a lot of work. I mean it's got everybody recognition.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But you just hate to see somebody else get your money, though.

ISOARDI: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

FRANKLIN: But that's the way it goes.

ISOARDI: So when you come back in the early seventies— Well, come back when you're focusing, when you're away from Masekela, have you put your own band together then or is it just—

FRANKLIN: It was put together.

ISOARDI: Were you just the leader for the recording or was it a working band?

FRANKLIN: No, we got a working band. We worked around L.A. Yeah, we worked.

ISOARDI: So this is your first time as leader.

FRANKLIN: That was my first time as leader, yeah. That's right. Yeah, we worked around. I mean not enough to pay child support or anything, but we worked around. We all had other gigs too, you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Oscar was just beginning to get in the studios and Charles was working a lot and Bill was working a lot, so everybody was working.

ISOARDI: Still are too, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Michael Carvin is in New York now. He's got about a million students, so he's okay. But '71 was— Oh, '71 I got to work with Sonny Rollins.

ISOARDI: How so?

FRANKLIN: Well, he called me up one night and said, "This is Sonny Rollins." At

about three o'clock in the morning he called me up and he said, "This is Sonny Rollins," and I said, "Yeah. What's happening, man?" [Isoardi laughs] You know, I believed him that it was Sonny Rollins. He had just been on his hiatus for ten years or whatever it was. He said, "Well, I've got this gig—" You know how he talked. "I've got this gig at the L.A. [Los Angeles] County Museum [of Art] and I have Monterey Jazz Festival and I want you to come and play. George Cables recommended you." I said, "Okay." For some reason I wrote it down. You know, it's three o'clock in the morning and I'm asleep. He woke me up.

So I called George Cables the next day and I said, "Hey, man, you guys been playing jokes on me?" George said, "Oh, no, man. That was Sonny, man. He called and he wants you to do it." I said, "Oh. No shit?" So then we did the L.A. County Museum and, man, I never experienced anything like that before in my life, man.

ISOARDI: What do you mean? Oh, you mean playing with Sonny.

FRANKLIN: Playing with Sonny, man. As soon as he walked on the stage he had a standing ovation from like a thousand people. This was outside in front on the steps of the county museum. There were like a thousand people there. KCET was there taping it and it was just like honoring the emperor. It was a great band. It was George Cables, David Lee on drums, and myself. We did that and then the next day we went to Monterey Jazz Festival.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: And the same thing, man. People stood up—because they hadn't seen

this guy in five or six years, whatever it was. And he was playing so good, man, he looked so healthy. So we did that and those were my two gigs with Sonny Rollins and he went back to New York. He got Bob Cranshaw and those things he's been doing with him.

So right after that I freelanced around and then Carl Burnett called me to work with Gene Harris and the Three Sounds.

ISOARDI: And this is when?

FRANKLIN: In '71. Right after Monterey, as a matter of fact. Andy Simpkins had left the band. Well, he left the year before and then Stan Gilbert played with Gene for a couple of months. And then I don't know what happened, but Gene needed a bass player. So he asked Carl and Carl told him he knew me, and so he called me and that was another couple of good years. Yeah, three years. And that was some classic times. I really learned how to play the bass funkily— I knew what it really meant to groove, you know? And we traveled around the United States in his Cadillac with a trailer on the back, with the bass in the trailer and the suitcases in the trailer. Gene didn't like to fly in those days.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He would never fly. So we go from L.A. to Pittsburgh, from Pittsburgh to Texas, and Texas back to North Dakota. It was quite a trip.

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ISOARDI: Henry, did you want to add some material from last time?

FRANKLIN: Well, I just thought about [how] in 1970 I had a brief stint with the Jazz Crusaders, which I was really happy about.

ISOARDI: Why?

FRANKLIN: Well, they were a hot group and they were an organized group and they were playing good jazz, so— They were all nice guys, you know? So it was really fun.

ISOARDI: So this was Joe Sample and Wilton [Felder]?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's when they were the Jazz Crusaders. Stix Hooper, Wilton Felder, Wayne [Henderson], and Joe [Sample]. Yeah.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So they had a thing on using different bass players all the time. They liked to use a lot of different bass players.

ISOARDI: Why?

FRANKLIN: They were as a group themselves, you know.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: I don't know what the reason for that was. I guess they didn't have any bass players in Houston where they came from, you know? [mutual laughter] So that was fun. We went to San Francisco and did a few gigs and later on I really got hooked up with Wayne because of [Hugh] Masekela. He was with Masekela. I guess it was

afterwards.

ISOARDI: After you had left?

FRANKLIN: After I left, yeah. He had been doing some things with Masekela. I guess that's how he knew about me.

ISOARDI: Weren't some of those guys, though, from L.A.? Joe Sample, didn't he—

FRANKLIN: No, they were all from Houston.

ISOARDI: They were all from Houston?

FRANKLIN: Fifth Ward in Houston, yeah.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I did that for a while and that was fun. And I did some stuff also with Nellie Lutcher and that was early, that was around 1962.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was very interesting for me too, because she knew what she wanted and she was a good piano player.

ISOARDI: Well, gee, by that time she had been a veteran for thirty years or something.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and she's still playing now to this day.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We did some stuff at Disneyland and that was interesting.

ISOARDI: So she sang and played piano?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: And you were kind of in a small group backing her?

FRANKLIN: Just the two of us.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, just the two of us. I think a couple things we used drums, but mainly it was just the two of us. She had me do a lot of arco, a lot of bow work, and I remember one tune we did was the "New Gravy Waltz," which would feature the bass, which was kind of fun. So that's another experience, because she's another legend.

ISOARDI: Yeah, yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Did she know your dad?

FRANKLIN: Yes. Yes, she did. I thought about too when I was in Europe with Hamp [Hampton Hawes] for that first time. You know, we did the Montreux Jazz Festival and made a record out of that.

ISOARDI: When was that?

FRANKLIN: That was 1972. That was the *Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival*. That was the record that came out on Vault Records. We spent three months in Europe. We traveled all around. It was Hamp, myself, and Michael Carvin, but while we were there the trio played with Gerry Mulligan on one particular tour over there. So that was interesting also.

ISOARDI: You mentioned Vault Records. Do you know anything about them?

FRANKLIN: Oh, that was Jack Lewerke. It was his company.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was the owner. Jack Lewerke.

ISOARDI: That wasn't connected to Motown, was it?

FRANKLIN: No, no.

ISOARDI: It was a small independent label?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, this was a small independent jazz label.

ISOARDI: Based in L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: I think, you know, the reason that sort of rang a bell with me was I think Elaine Brown did an album on Vault with Horace [Tapscott] providing the [Pan-Afrikan People's] Arkestra backing her, and it was a controversial album called *Seize the Time*, I think, with a big black panther on the front of it.

FRANKLIN: Oh, really? Uh-huh. I didn't know that one.

ISOARDI: I think that was the one. She did two albums with Horace, and one I know was on Vault and I think it might have been that first one.

FRANKLIN: Oh, okay. Yeah, Jack Lewerke was the one who got us to Montreux, because the record companies take care of that.

ISOARDI: Ah. Well, that's good exposure, going to Montreux.

FRANKLIN: Oh, it was great. It was great, yeah. That was my first time in Europe and, like I said, we spent three months there. And three months with Hamp is beautiful.

ISOARDI: Three months you kicked around Europe?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. We went all through Italy, where we did about eight concerts in eights cities in Italy.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: At that time the Harold Land Quintet was over there doing the same concerts, so we got to hang out with all our friends over there. And then we did a stint with Gerry Mulligan. Then we went back with the trio to Paris and we worked in Paris for about a month at the— What was the name of that club we worked at? It will come back to me. It's been so long ago. [Shaque Paige]

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Oh, what was the name of that club? Anyway we worked there and then from there we went to London, with the incident that I told you about.

ISOARDI: [laughs] How did you first hook up with Hampton Hawes?

FRANKLIN: Through Leroy Vinnegar. Leroy didn't want to make the trip, so he called me to do it, to go to Europe with him, with Hamp. So he knew it was going to be a three month trip— [laughs]

ISOARDI: And that was too much for him.

FRANKLIN: A lot of trains involved and low money, so he turned his buddy onto it, which was me. [laughs] The whole trip was beautiful. From London we went to Copenhagen and we did another album there called *Live at the Montmartre*, a club in—

ISOARDI: You played in that club?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: It's a famous club.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. It was the trio and we were supposed to play with Ben Webster.

ISOARDI: Ah.

FRANKLIN: He was there. He and Dexter Gordon were both there because, you know—

ISOARDI: He was living there then, wasn't he? Dexter Gordon?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, both of them were living there and, you know, Hamp was a great friend of Dexter's. They both went to Jeff [Jefferson High School]. Ben Webster was so drunk he couldn't play.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: So Dexter was right there and he said, "I'll do it," and he did it and I got to record with Dex, so it was really happening.

ISOARDI: Fabulous.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. [laughs]

ISOARDI: This was a good three months then.

FRANKLIN: It was a great three months.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: We came back with no money. We left with no money, we came back with no money, but we did two albums. Actually we did three. There was another

one we did, *A Little Copenhagen* [*Night*] *Music*. We made two records out of that session.

ISOARDI: With Dexter?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. So it was very interesting.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly. You talked a little bit yesterday about Hampton Hawes. I mean you talked about how he really let you play.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Anything else you can say about his musicianship? I mean as a pianist, how would you talk about it?

FRANKLIN: Oh, to me he was one of the greatest piano players out.

ISOARDI: What made him so good?

FRANKLIN: Well, just his feel.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: His feel of the music and, yeah, he didn't have any real formal piano education. But he didn't need any. He had the chops, he had the feeling. You know, he won the *Down Beat* [magazine] award for a couple years, so it wasn't just my thinking. He was a very recognized guy. Very beautiful.

ISOARDI: Were you pleased with those albums musically? The recording?

FRANKLIN: Well, *Live at the Montreux*, I wasn't pleased with the bass sound. The music? Yeah, I was happy with the music, but the bass sound was straight off from the mike. You know what I mean? There was no amplifier involved or anything. It

was just straight pickup.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And I wasn't pleased with my sound. So to answer that question, yeah, musically it was great—

ISOARDI: Yeah, but the engineering left—

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Okay, anything else you want to add to, Henry, before we—

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, in 1972 I did some work with Nichelle Nichols. You know, the *Star Trek* lady?

ISOARDI: Yeah, [Lieutenant] Uhura.

FRANKLIN: Uhura. She's a singer also.

ISOARDI: I didn't know that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so we did a lot of air force bases and army bases with her.

ISOARDI: Oh, really? [laughs]

FRANKLIN: Yeah. It wasn't that bad. That was Donald Dean and Terry Evans. [tape recorder off] Nichelle Nichols, yeah. I remember one great story about that. We were up north somewhere and doing an air force base, and Terry Evans and I decided we were going to have some wine. We bought some wine earlier, a big bottle, a half a gallon of Gallo wine, *vin rosé*, for after the show, because it's a small town and the stores close probably about seven o'clock in the evening. So we got this big bottle of wine and the gig was over, so we were in the hotel room and Terry dropped

the bottle.

ISOARDI: Oh. That's a lot of wine.

FRANKLIN: Whole half a gallon of wine all over the place and we were— Every time I see Terry now I slap him [mutual laughter], because he spoiled our evening of pleasure. He blames it on me to this day.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He said I dropped it, but I know he dropped it. Yeah, just something to do on the road. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

FRANKLIN: I guess I went back in 1973. I went back to Europe, with Donald Byrd to Montreux. His bass player David Williams couldn't make it. He was having passport problems, so I played with Donald around and he asked me to go to Europe with him. So I did and that was fun. We went over there for a day and came back.

I made a record with Bobbi Humphrey, the flute player. Donald was on Blue Note and so was she, so she decided— You know, she did a live album there. They record you while you're there, so they released it and it came out good. It was Kevin Toney on the piano, Keith Kilgo on the drums, and the guitar player's name was Barney Perry.

I guess after that I came back, I freelanced around and— Oh, yeah, I started working with Esther Phillips.

ISOARDI: Little Esther Phillips.

FRANKLIN: Little Esther, yeah. She was in town, living in L.A., and she was starting to work around.

ISOARDI: Was she singing more jazz then?

FRANKLIN: Kind of jazzy bluesy, yeah. Yeah, and that was quite an experience, because you never knew what Esther was going to do next.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: [laughs] You never knew if she was going to show up or what's going to happen with her.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: But she was such a beautiful person, you know? Whenever you saw her you just had to give her a big hug. We did a lot of work at Memory Lane.

ISOARDI: With her?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was like her home base, was Memory Lane. We did a lot of work around there and at the time I was freelancing, like I say, and I was working with Harold Land too. Was it '74?

ISOARDI: What were you doing with Harold?

FRANKLIN: We were working all around L.A. Where we worked, you know.

ISOARDI: With his band? Quintet? Something like that?

FRANKLIN: It was a quintet. Yeah, it was myself and Ndugu [Chancler] on drums, Oscar Brashear, Harold, and Bill Henderson. Yeah, I got married again, on the Fourth of July, to Penny—Penny Holt.

ISOARDI: Mid-seventies?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, 1974. I remember we had a gig that night with Harold, so as soon as I left the wedding— We were all there. As soon as we left the wedding we went over to play the gig in Santa Monica. [mutual laughter] Yeah, but it was cool. Penny didn't mind, because she was a jazz lady. Oh, boy, so I was still freelancing around, I guess, still working with my own band and trying to do some work around town, and I was freelancing with people like Rudolph Johnson and Calvin Keys. I was working with Bobby Hutcherson. Bobby would call us. Bobby was living up north then, so he—

ISOARDI: San Francisco area?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. He would call myself and Kirk Lightsey, and we would do a lot of stuff with him. We went to Calgary one time and that was very cold to say the least. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Really. How long had you known Bobby? Now he had come out of L.A., hadn't he?

FRANKLIN: Pasadena. I had known Bobby ever since we were youngsters together. Well, high school.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, right out of high school. Did I mention anything about O.C. Smith?

ISOARDI: You just kind of mentioned him in passing—where he had been playing,

and that was about it.

FRANKLIN: Okay, because I had joined his band. Kirk Lightsey got me— He was the musical director so I guess it was right after, right during that time, I joined his band and we did a lot of traveling again.

ISOARDI: Jeez. You were keeping pretty busy.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, those times, those days were a lot of action.

ISOARDI: Really? When do you hook up with Gene Harris? Is that earlier or about this time?

FRANKLIN: Well, Gene was before then.

ISOARDI: It was earlier?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Gene was earlier.

ISOARDI: And you're not with him for very long then?

FRANKLIN: Oh, I didn't mention Gene, did I?

ISOARDI: Well, last time you were just— When we finished you were just starting to talk about Gene Harris.

FRANKLIN: Oh, okay, okay. Well, I should have started with Gene today, I guess.

ISOARDI: Well, maybe before we get into that let me just— Can I throw a couple of things at you from yesterday?

FRANKLIN: Sure. Please do.

ISOARDI: Okay, going back a bit you made a reference to [Los Angeles] City College. Did you go to City College? You didn't really say much about it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I went to City College for a year and then—

ISOARDI: LACC.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I went for one year and—

ISOARDI: To study music?

FRANKLIN: I studied music and I studied sociology. I was doing both, but I figured [laughs] City College wasn't for me. Well, plus I got the music in my bones, you know?

ISOARDI: You wanted to play.

FRANKLIN: I had to go. Yeah. So I didn't finish. One of these days I will go back and get my A.A. [Associate in Arts] degree.

ISOARDI: Musically was it at all helpful?

FRANKLIN: Well— Oh, yeah, yeah. The music I studied, yeah.

ISOARDI: At LACC?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was very helpful. Plus I got to meet guys there, a lot of musicians. Les McCann was there and he was a professional student there. He was there for three or four or five years, you know? [mutual laughter] Well, he was funny. Whenever you saw Les you saw a big crowd. He was keeping them laughing. [laughs] Yeah, I studied composition and a lot of theory. So sure it was helpful, yeah.

ISOARDI: Okay, what about the electric bass? Did you ever fool with that?

FRANKLIN: Yes, I did. When I was in O.C.'s band, which was about a year and a half, that's all I played, exclusively, was electric bass.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: And in '75, when I joined Freddie Hubbard's band, he had me playing electric bass also. Since then somebody stole my electric bass and I never replaced it.

ISOARDI: [laughs] So I guess that says what you think about playing electric bass.

FRANKLIN: Exactly. It's a great instrument, and it's great for somebody else, you know? [mutual laughter] It just wasn't for me.

ISOARDI: Why not?

FRANKLIN: Well, the upright, that's what I love.

ISOARDI: You like the wood?

FRANKLIN: I love the wood. Give me some wood, you know? [The electric bass is] convenient, but the sound's definitely not the same and the feel's not the same, and I never did learn how to do all the slapping and all that stuff. I didn't want to do that anyway, so I just stayed away, let somebody else do the slapping.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Oh, we talked yesterday a bit about Dupree Bolton, the trumpeter, and you commented about what a great trumpeter he was. Could you talk a little bit about what made him so great? As a trumpeter what was it about him?

FRANKLIN: Well, I guess it was his fire.

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he had the fire and he was so arrogant that he knew that he could play, so he gave you that impression without even playing. You know what I mean?

ISOARDI: And you believed it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was one of those guys. Yeah, we didn't hang much, because he was into the other things and he had his own destiny that he was chasing, but as far as the music, he was— Every time we got on the bandstand he was serious.

And speaking of the electric bass, there— When I was with Gene Harris and the Three Sounds I got a call to work with Diana Ross. She was forming this new band. She was just leaving the Supremes and she was—

ISOARDI: Going solo?

FRANKLIN: She was going solo. So Freddie Hill gave me the call, as a matter of fact, and I went to rehearsal and took my friend the bass and said okay, made the rehearsal and I said, "Oh, wow." I had mixed emotions then, but I made another rehearsal.

ISOARDI: Why mixed emotions?

FRANKLIN: Well, because I was playing electric bass and I was not playing the type of music that I really wanted to play, you know? I was working with the Three Sounds at night—

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: You know, playing some—music. So after the second rehearsal I told them I couldn't do this anymore. And I remember Ben Barrett told me— He was a big contractor in those days.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: He said, "Well, you're turning down $40,000 a year and you'll never get

into the studio scene."

ISOARDI: That's what he told you?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I said, "Well, sorry. I've got to go." Yeah, he told me flat out. He said, "If you blow this one, that's it. As far as I'm concerned, you know."

ISOARDI: Did you care?

FRANKLIN: Not in the least. Not in the least. He had wanted me to leave Gene right away without giving him notice, you know, because— And we were getting ready to do a record date, the *Live at the It Club*. So I thought that I couldn't do that, just leave him cold to go with this guy, just to make a lot of money. So I told him I couldn't do it, and I sent in Bobby Haynes to do the gig and he stayed with her for three or four years, and that's the last I saw of Ben Barrett.

ISOARDI: Were you looking at the studios? Were you thinking about going that direction?

FRANKLIN: I had done a little bit and I didn't like it, so I didn't miss anything.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And even to this day, you know, I go into the studios to make some jazz music, but just to be going in to do anything, I cringe. I don't like to do it.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So— That's the name of that tune.

ISOARDI: Really. Do you think he was leveling with you? That you would have been in the studio scene had you followed through with that?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, I really do. Yeah, he had the power.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he had the power.

ISOARDI: I've heard his name come up a lot.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he had the power, sure. But if you were with Diana Ross, you know, you're going to get connections.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Sure.

ISOARDI: Was there an issue— Was there still an issue then about black musicians getting into the studios?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: Getting access to some of those jobs?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he could make you and break you. Sure, yeah. There was only a few black musicians in the studios at that time.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So, yeah, he had the power.

ISOARDI: Okay. At one point you went to spend some time in New York, in the early sixties, early to mid sixties, and all was— Was there a big pull on musicians out here in the fifties and the sixties to go to New York?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: Were people really feeling that?

FRANKLIN: Yes. And they still feel that now.

ISOARDI: Still the case now?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the younger musicians, they feel that they've got to go to the Big Apple to make their mark, sure, and that's the way it was. That's probably the way it always will be.

ISOARDI: Think it's still true today?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah. You've got to go there to prove yourself, you know? You can be the best player around here, but you're just the best player around here. You know what I mean? You've got to go and jump in the water.

ISOARDI: Okay, let's see. Up to where we left off last time you were talking about Gene Harris, and you're with him for—

FRANKLIN: About two years.

ISOARDI: Two years then?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, about two years.

ISOARDI: About '73 to '75? Something like that?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Let's see. Actually I was with Gene— Had to be longer than that. Yeah, I guess it had to be around '73 to '75. Yeah, yeah, because right after that I went with Freddie Hubbard. I was with Freddie in '75. So, yeah, Gene was— That was quite an experience, going across country in the Cadillac and his white wife [Judy Harris] in the front seat, and we're in the back, and he's going right through Texas and Mississippi. [laughs]

ISOARDI: Ever have any problems?

FRANKLIN: Well, we always used to have a joke about that. We'd stop at these little redneck kinds of towns, you know, to get gas or something and Gene would say, "Well, let's go get something to eat," at the diner over there, truck stop diner. And he and his wife would go in and we said, "No, we'll stay out here." [mutual laughter] "We'll stay out here." "You got it buddy." And he loved to do that. Gene would— I guess he loved to piss people off or whatever. He'd go right to the wire, man. He used to— He loved to do that. But that was fun. We'd have some of the greatest arguments in that car, just debates about anything. Gene loved to talk and loved to debate, and so did Carl Burnett, so they would go at it, man. All friendly, you know, but they would just go at it all the way. We started off in California, you look up and the next thing you're in Colorado and they still haven't stopped talking—still talking about it, you know? It made time fly. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Was L.A. sort of his home base then?

FRANKLIN: Yes. But Gene never lived in the city. He lived out. He didn't like the city. He lived, I guess— Where was he? Maybe Anaheim or something like that? Somewhere out there. He never did like to live in the city. Gene was the type of guy who after the gig was over we'd have to wait around for him. Like there was only one car to get us back to the hotel, his car. If the gig was over at one, it would be at least till two-thirty. He's got to talk and hang around at the bar and drink some beer, and we'd always try to find rides with people, you know, somebody from the audience to

take us to the hotel [laughs], because if we've got to wait around for Gene, boy— Whew. [laughs] Boy. He loved to talk. He was a talker. Boy. Let's see, after Gene—

ISOARDI: You mentioned Freddie Hubbard.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. That was probably the best musical experience I had.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's really working with a genius. And some of the most funny experiences. I'm sure you've heard some Freddie Hubbard stories.

ISOARDI: No, actually, not many.

FRANKLIN: Oh, boy. [laughs] Freddie Hubbard is quite a person. He's— I mean he's one of the greatest players ever.

ISOARDI: Is he living out in L.A. then?

FRANKLIN: Yes. He's living in Hollywood. Freddie's memory is so great. We used to try to test him, to try to get him, you know? He can remember songs like from the sixties, the musical lines and he can remember what album it was on and what his part was. I mean from any group that he played with.

ISOARDI: Amazing.

FRANKLIN: If you ask him to play a tune that he recorded thirty or forty years ago, he can just play it. Doesn't even have to be his tune. I mean anybody's tune that he's played before. Yeah, his memory was quite something.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: I was fortunate enough to record two albums with him. One that was live in Japan was called *Mr. Gleem*; I don't think that was released here in the [United] States. And the other one was *Liquid Love*. He was trying to do his little crossover thing and make some money, so—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: The music was a little funny, but Freddie just made it so exciting, and with that band— George Cables, Carl Burnett, Carl Randall, and Buck Clarke was on conga drums, and myself. So it was a very tight group, because we worked for a good year or year and a half, I mean steady, all over.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, we went to Europe, Japan, and all through the States. It was a working band, and the band was very tight. We were in Philadelphia one time and Freddie stood us up. We got off the plane and we didn't see him until the second day of the gig. That was a classic. [laughs] Oh, boy.

ISOARDI: Did that happen much?

FRANKLIN: It happened every now and then. Something would come up. Yeah, that happened every now and then. And I remember one time we were in the South and, you know, every time we had to go somewhere we would all try to separate ourselves from Freddie, because we didn't know how he was going to be acting that day. So the band's over here and Freddie's over here. [mutual laughter] So all of a sudden— We're way up in the air, like thirty thousand feet up in the air, and we hear

some yelling in the back of the plane, and Freddie's surrounded by all these white guys. And he says, "Whitey, I'll kick your ass!" So this other guy gets up and says, "Nigger, I'll kick your ass!" And then they all stand up, they're all around Freddie, and I said, "Oh, shit, here we go." [mutual laughter] Thirty thousand feet up in the air. So the stewardesses, I think, and the stewards, they all came and calmed him down, and everybody had changed seats. And I said, "Oh, boy, Freddie got in an argument with somebody." [laughs]

ISOARDI: Jeez. Man.

FRANKLIN: Oh, it was funny.

ISOARDI: Well, I guess— I was once part of a Freddie Hubbard story, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Really?

ISOARDI: It was kind of like that. Yeah, it was just a couple of years ago. Clora Bryant was coming to talk to one of my classes. It was a history of jazz class and we were going to have a special evening session, give Clora some time and make it more relaxing.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And she calls up Freddie and tells him about it, and he says, "Oh, let me come." So we thought, "Great." This was a couple of years ago and I think his lip— He hadn't been playing much then.

FRANKLIN: Okay.

ISOARDI: With his lip, but— So everybody got really excited about this.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So the night comes along, the place is packed all of a sudden. Everybody in the school wants— And all the faculty who grew up listening to Freddie Hubbard records, you know, they just— Everybody's excited and two of the kids who lived near where he lives said, oh, they'll pick him up, they'll bring him. So we go, "Okay, we've got a ride for you and everything," and I call him the night before and I say, "We're all set," and I say, "You'll be picked up— " You know, etc. etc. And fifty minutes before it's supposed to begin I get a call from one of the kids and he says, "We're out in front of Freddie Hubbard's house, and his wife just told us he's in San Francisco." [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: That's, Freddie, boy. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: I couldn't believe it. Clora was just—

FRANKLIN: That's Freddie.

ISOARDI: Clora was homicidal.

FRANKLIN: I know she was. I know she was. That's Freddie, boy. That's classic. I know she was, man. That's classic Freddie.

ISOARDI: Too much.

FRANKLIN: He did that to me once, too. I had a gig at Elysian Park. I used to do the Festivals in Black. They used to have them every year and Oscar Brashear was out of town, he couldn't make the gig, so I was working with Freddie. So I said, "Freddie, why don't you come out and play with my band just for this gig?" "Oh, yeah, I'd be

glad to, man. Everything I can do to help." Well, gig time—

ISOARDI: No Freddie?

FRANKLIN: No Freddie. [mutual laughter] No Freddie, and you see him the next day, and he says, "Oh, man!" He's so sweet you've just got to forgive him.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: He's got a reason. "Oh, man, I couldn't fucking find it," or something, you know. So what can you say? It's over with. You've just got to love him. [laughs]

ISOARDI: So you were with him for about a year?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: And then? You move on?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah. I did another CD on my own, which was called— What was my CD called? Oh, okay, wow. Phew. *Tribal Dance*. That was for Catalyst Records.

ISOARDI: Is it a L.A. company?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Pat Britt was the producer.

ISOARDI: Pat Britt. Oh, okay.

FRANKLIN: And I thought that was a good one. That featured Sonship [Theus] on drums, Dwight Dickerson on piano, Charles Owens on reeds, and Jerry Rusch on trumpet.

ISOARDI: Now these are some of the younger guys coming up.

FRANKLIN: We were all the same age then. Well, except for Sonship. He was ten

years younger, but the rest of us were about the same age.

ISOARDI: Had you known Jerry and Charlie for a while?

FRANKLIN: Well, I had known Charles. Charles was on my first CD. Yeah, I'd known Charles since the early seventies. Dwight I'd known since the early seventies or earlier.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Jerry— I'd just met Jerry.

ISOARDI: At that time.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, he— Bobby Bradford was supposed to do the record date, but he had had his tooth pulled that day or a couple of days before and he couldn't. His lip was gone, his mouth was gone—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So Jerry— We called Jerry and he came and filled in and took care of it. Sounded great. Yeah, so ever since then Jerry and I have been great friends.

ISOARDI: Bobby Bradford. When do you meet Bobby?

FRANKLIN: With John Carter. We had done an album—

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right. *Self-Determination*—

FRANKLIN: *Self-Determination Music* and *Secrets*.

ISOARDI: That's right. We haven't talked about that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, right, right. I worked with John and— You know, we didn't work much. We rehearsed a lot.

ISOARDI: Well, it was different music.

FRANKLIN: It was different music, yeah. We did a record. Yeah, we rehearsed a lot [mutual laughter], and the gigs we did were— I mean, there were not many people there.

ISOARDI: Where were you playing?

FRANKLIN: We did the coffee houses, a couple of coffee houses—

ISOARDI: Things like that.

FRANKLIN: Stuff like that, yeah.

ISOARDI: Well, I guess you've got John and Bobby, and maybe Horace by the, what, late sixties or so doing this kind of music. Is anybody else doing that kind of music or is that—

FRANKLIN: Well, not really on the West Coast that I can think of. They were doing it and they were doing good, but— Well, the West Coast, there weren't a lot of groups— That was about it, you know, really doing that experimental type of music.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: I later did an album with Bobby called *Secrets*.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: It did pretty well, I guess. Later on I did do some of that avant garde music with Dennis Gonzalez in Texas.

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right, yeah. On Silkheart [Records].

FRANKLIN: On Silkheart, yeah. That was in the eighties. That was around— Let

me refer to my records. It was probably around '87, but to be sure— Yeah, '89. That was '89. We did a series of albums. I think we did one in '88 and then one in '89 and one in '90.

ISOARDI: All with Dennis?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. And that was a good band, too.

ISOARDI: Did you ever work with Charles Brackeen?

FRANKLIN: Charles Brackeen was in one—

ISOARDI: On one of those disks?

FRANKLIN: On one of those, yeah. And I knew Charles from when we were coming up in Los Angeles.

ISOARDI: What's his background? He was here in the fifties?

FRANKLIN: He was here in the fifties, sure. He and Joanne [Brackeen].

ISOARDI: And he was an Angeleno? He grew up in L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah, right. As far as I know, Joanne was from Los Angeles too, but they went to New York to make the mark. But we would play all the time: myself, Bill Henderson, Joanne, and Charles.

ISOARDI: Where did Charles go to school?

FRANKLIN: I don't know. I didn't know him at that time. He was finished with school then, but Bill would come over and play drums, and the three of us— And it was— Oh, yeah, it was really hip.

ISOARDI: Yeah. I mean he's still— The Silkheart stuff that he did is really

interesting stuff.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: He's kind of a— I guess kind of a recluse though. I mean you never—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's back here now.

ISOARDI: Oh, really? In L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but he's not doing any playing, I'm sure. He called me out of the clear blue about six months ago and said he was ready to play, but I haven't heard any more from him. But he's here somewhere. He's been doing some gardening work last time I heard. Cutting lawns and stuff, you know?

ISOARDI: Man, that guy should be blowing.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's a great player.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. Like his stuff a lot.

FRANKLIN: So we did about three albums on Silkheart and he was on one of them and that band— Actually we went to Norway with that band. Charles didn't go, but Dennis and John Purcell from New York went, and William Richardson on drums and myself.

ISOARDI: Yeah. What about— I mean you really moved through a lot of musical circles. You were doing Latin-tinged jazz, and you've got straight ahead and then playing with Bobby and John. I mean these are different worlds.

FRANKLIN: You've got that right. You really got that right, but it's all good music, so—

ISOARDI: So it works for you.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: What was it like playing in John and Bobby's band? Musically.

FRANKLIN: Musically that was challenging, because they had some nice lines and stuff, you know? It wasn't just free music. I mean it was all well documented and written out well and everything was accounted for. Like Ornette [Coleman]'s music. There was no open space there.

ISOARDI: Were you playing— Was Tom Williamson also playing bass? Were you using two bass format?

FRANKLIN: Just on that one record.

ISOARDI: That was it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and I didn't get any credit for that record.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So people are wondering "How could Tom be playing that much bass, man?" Two different notes at the same time and all that stuff.

ISOARDI: Really? [mutual laughter] Well, was that sort of a point where he was leaving and you were coming in?

FRANKLIN: I think so, and that was like a happy medium right there. We did it right, the two of us. Yeah, because he had been with them before.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And then I started doing some stuff with them and then Roberto

[Miguel Miranda] replaced me.

ISOARDI: We interviewed Tom just a little while ago.

FRANKLIN: Right, right.

ISOARDI: He's living just on the other side of the hill.

FRANKLIN: Victorville or someplace?

ISOARDI: Was it Palmdale, I think?

FRANKLIN: Palmdale.

ISOARDI: Palmdale? Lancaster? I'm not sure. I can't remember which town. I think Palmdale.

FRANKLIN: What's he doing? Is he playing?

ISOARDI: Well, he's starting playing more now. He hadn't played as much. He had been actually writing more. He wrote a novel and—

FRANKLIN: Really?

ISOARDI: He's very, very active, and he's getting into town quite a bit now.

FRANKLIN: Oh, good.

ISOARDI: And I see him at a lot of music events.

FRANKLIN: Oh, cool.

ISOARDI: And he said he's starting to play more now, getting the itch.

FRANKLIN: Cool, cool. I did see him once, I guess about three years ago. That was the first time in years. I had forgotten what he looked like. He had to tell me who he was. I said, "Wow, okay."

ISOARDI: Yeah, yeah. I remember the first time I met him. It was a little bit of a jolt, because I was used to those earlier photos on albums and things.

FRANKLIN: Right.

ISOARDI: He looks very different.

FRANKLIN: A little different, yes.

ISOARDI: What about— You mentioned Sonship?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: Now he's pretty young, I guess, when— Maybe in his twenties or early twenties when you hook up with him?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's ten years younger than me.

ISOARDI: How do you meet him? And why do you work with him?

FRANKLIN: Well, Sonship was on the scene, you know. He had been around and in musical circles—everybody kind of meets everybody—and I really loved his energy and his playing and his spirit.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. So I called him to do all the gigs we could do. I remember one time we were working at the John Anson Ford Theatre with the band, and Leonard Feather was there giving us a write up. So on all our concerts we opened up the festival with the drum first, and by the time Sonship got finished, twenty minutes later—

ISOARDI: [laughs] I believe that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Leonard Feather comes running down the steps— "Too loud! Too loud! Too loud!" [laughs] That was so funny, man. We figured if we got Leonard Feather out of there we did a great job. [mutual laughter] Oh, boy. "Too loud! Too loud!" Shaking his head and running down the steps, man. So— "Right on, Sonship!"

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: I saw Sonship the other day.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he's looking very well and he's trying to get back into the playing. But he's into the ministry also.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: He looked great. You know, he's on that dialysis, so that kind of slows him down. But he looked great.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Too bad he doesn't play more.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because he's definitely one of a kind.

ISOARDI: Phew. What a talent.

FRANKLIN: Did you know that he did a marathon concert one time?

ISOARDI: No.

FRANKLIN: It was a club called Onaje's [Cultural Tea] House on Pico [Boulevard] and Redondo [Boulevard]. This is about fifteen years ago now.

ISOARDI: Mid-eighties.

FRANKLIN: It was a twelve hour non-stop drum solo.

ISOARDI: What?

FRANKLIN: Drum concert. Twelve hours non-stop.

ISOARDI: No kidding.

FRANKLIN: And he had his vibes set up and his conga drums set up, so after he finished with the trap drums he'd play some vibes or go to the conga drums, and back and forth, non-stop for twelve hours.

ISOARDI: Now how could he do that with his condition?

FRANKLIN: He did it. He did it.

ISOARDI: My god.

FRANKLIN: This was before he was on the dialysis machine though.

ISOARDI: Oh, it was.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, about fifteen, seventeen years ago.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: So I'm sure he can go in the Guinness hall of fame on that one, right?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I don't know anybody else who's done that one.

ISOARDI: Man, that's incredible.

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FRANKLIN: I guess in '75 too I was doing a lot of things with the board of education.

ISOARDI: With the board of education?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. "Story of Jazz" and these types of jazz programs that would go to schools, the Title I [federal program] schools, and put on an hour concert for the kids, a program.

ISOARDI: Really? Very good.

FRANKLIN: I did them for a year with Howlett Smith, pianist, and he had his "Story of Jazz" he would to take to the kids, you know? The next semester I think I did it with Harold Land, and he had the same thing. There wasn't much talking in Harold's program.

ISOARDI: I know that.

FRANKLIN: It was all playing, boy. You've got these elementary school kids and he's playing a twenty minute solo. [mutual laughter] Harold takes no prisoners. I don't care where he is. [mutual laughter] Kids falling asleep, kids—

ISOARDI: Tenth chorus.

FRANKLIN: For some reason they never called Harold back to do those things.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Well, he wasn't that much of a front man.

FRANKLIN: No, he was a player.

ISOARDI: He wasn't one to emcee it.

FRANKLIN: No, Harold's a player.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he was just a player. It was so funny when I saw him a couple of months ago at the [Jazz] Bakery with Curtis Fuller—

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Because Fuller is just the opposite, I think.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He just talks and talks, and stories and—

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Perfect front man.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: It's like you've got Fuller and then Harold's his straight man, you know, standing there next to him. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: Ready to play. Yeah, that's funny and it reminds me too of one time—Oh, I forgot to tell you about Shelly Manne. I used to play in Shelly Manne's band.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: At [Shelly's] Manne-Hole.

ISOARDI: Part of the house band?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's really how I got to meet a lot of guys, because Shelly would play a set and then the featured band would play a set.

ISOARDI: When was that?

FRANKLIN: Oh, it had to be '76, '77. Right before they closed, yeah. There was

some kind of gig we had— This wasn't with Shelly's band, this was with Harold's band I think, and he decided this time to use two saxophones, himself and Rudolph Johnson. And, you know, Rudolph likes to— He's a little long winded also. And they would play, and Harold would get up there and play, do a solo for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then Rudolph would come up and do his for fifteen or twenty minutes. But all the time Rudolph's up here, you can hear Harold back there in the dressing room still playing. [mutual laughter] And then it would be Harold's turn to go back up front and then you'd hear Rudolph back there still playing. These guys never— They just kept their horn in their mouth, man. Loved to play, man, and still working on it.

ISOARDI: One of the things that always impressed me too about Harold, I always thought he had such a fine harmonic sense and he never really had any training. I mean, you know, he just picked that up by listening and listening to recordings and—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was a natural. He had a gift.

ISOARDI: He really did. He really did.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, boy. The older he gets, the stronger he gets.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's the way it seems.

FRANKLIN: Boy.

ISOARDI: You mentioned yesterday also that I guess it was around this time, '75, '76, the mid-seventies anyway, when things really get rough job-wise in L.A. There aren't as many clubs. And it isn't so much the sixties and when rock comes in.

FRANKLIN: No.

ISOARDI: It's really in the mid-seventies that things start turning bad.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: In terms of clubs not— Play opportunities? Is that—

FRANKLIN: Well, the clubs, I guess, economically they weren't doing it, so they just started closing. They just started fading away. It was that time, I guess. That time in life, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: The economy was going up or going down, one of the two, you know, and the first people that were hit were the musicians. Left from five night gigs to a night here and a night there—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And that's the way it is now. You never— Very few gigs that last over two nights anywhere.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I guess I'm one of the fortunate ones. I'm working, you know, five nights in Riverside.

ISOARDI: Yeah, not many people can claim that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. In Los Angeles I think the only other one is Phil Wright and Louie Spears at the Maple Drive. They're working four nights a week, but other than that it's everybody hitting and missing.

ISOARDI: Yeah, really. But it seems like you keep busy during this time.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Knock on wood, I've been busy. I was doing the school gigs in the daytime and then— Because I did another year with Sonny Criss, I did another one with a singer, Rochelle Landers. She's not performing anymore, but I did a year there with her.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You know, doing the school, that was during the daytime. That was pretty good money.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And in the meantime I was still trying to work my band and work around and I was freelancing. I worked a lot with Doug Carn, I did some stuff with Norman Connors, and I was in Clint Houston's West Covina Symphony Orchestra Bass Choir.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I was working around town with Jack Wilson, and then I went to the Playboy Club and I worked with Lainie Kazan for a couple of years. So that kept me busy, you know. She had a good band, she had Theo Saunders, [who] was the musical conductor.

ISOARDI: Oh, who you've worked with quite a bit.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. And the drummer's name was Doug Sinabaldi. I haven't seen him since, but it was a good trio we had for Lainie. She was the type of person that

she was never happy, you know? After each set, after each set for two years, she would call us all in the dressing room and we'd go down the list of tunes that we did—

ISOARDI: And what was wrong with each one?

FRANKLIN: Exactly.

ISOARDI: Oh, man.

FRANKLIN: "On the third tune—"

ISOARDI: Wasn't that a bit rough to put up with that for two years?

FRANKLIN: Yes, it was.

ISOARDI: Was the money that good?

FRANKLIN: The money was pretty good. We put up with it. We made a joke out of it as best we could. [laughs] "Number two tune was a little bit fast at the end, and a little bit too slow on such and such." Something was always wrong. Every now and then she'd say, "Oh, well, number three was fine, but number four and number five— "

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: For two years. Finally I went on the road with— Who did I go on with? I went with Al Jarreau for a while, and I gave the gig to John B. Williams and he did it for a while. As a matter of fact that's where he met his wife.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: She was one of the singers with Lainie Kazan, Jessie.

ISOARDI: I think at some point don't you play with Woody Shaw also?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: Is that coming up?

FRANKLIN: That's coming up, yeah, because— Yeah, that was a great experience. But I worked with Al, I went on the road with Al Jarreau, and that was in '76. I was still freelancing then. That trip just lasted a couple weeks.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I worked at the Parisian Room quite a bit, I got to work with Johnny Hartman at the Parisian Room.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Man, what a vocalist that guy was.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was great. Beautiful person.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was really wonderful. He had all the ladies in the front row, you know.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I can imagine.

FRANKLIN: Always singing his ballads.

ISOARDI: By the late seventies what clubs are left? Are there places— Is the Parisian Room still going?

FRANKLIN: Parisian was still going in the late seventies, yeah. Shelly's Manne-Hole was probably gone then.

ISOARDI: I assume the It Club is long gone.

FRANKLIN: It Club was long gone.

ISOARDI: All those clubs on Washington [Boulevard].

FRANKLIN: They're all gone, yeah. The Intermission Club was gone, Dynamite Jackson's was gone, Zebra Lounge, [Club] La Deus, they were all gone.

ISOARDI: All gone.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, they were all gone.

ISOARDI: Memory Lane, I guess, is still hanging on?

FRANKLIN: Hanging, yeah, and the Pied Piper was still going on, but then that's— It kind of moved— Everything moved up west towards Hollywood and you had to try to work at the Hollywood clubs. But there weren't a lot of them, either. Sherry's was gone or close to it.

ISOARDI: Was Donte's going then?

FRANKLIN: Donte's was still there then. It wasn't long after that it was gone too, but I only worked Donte's I think three times. I never did like to work Donte's.

ISOARDI: Why?

FRANKLIN: Well, they didn't pay any money first of all, and you always had to wait to get it.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: Come back next Tuesday to get your sixty dollars or whatever it was. Something like that, you know? The times I worked, I worked with Hampton Hawes, and he made sure that we got paid pretty good. And I worked there with Phil Woods.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Phil, when he came back from Europe, he came to California first, and he was thinking about living out here, and in the meantime we formed a band. It was Phil Woods, Pete Robinson, myself, and Brian— A drummer. Brian [Moffatt]. Anyway, he's dead now. So we did an album and then our big debut was going to be at Donte's. I think about twenty people came.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: So Phil Woods, after that, he packed up and said, "I'm going to New York, where the music is, and the people are there."

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And that did it.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: For him, yeah.

ISOARDI: When was that? Late seventies?

FRANKLIN: Late seventies, yeah. That had to be— I forget exactly when that was. Well, actually that was the early seventies.

ISOARDI: Oh, it was?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was around '74.

ISOARDI: Oh, so that's when Phil had just come back from Europe?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Let me ask you something a little different. You mentioned that

when you were still pretty young your dad [Sammy Franklin] assisted or encouraged or demanded or whatever that you join the union.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Are you still a member?

FRANKLIN: I'm a member of [American Federation of Musicians Local] 581, Ventura.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah I'm not in [Local] 47 anymore.

ISOARDI: Oh, okay.

FRANKLIN: In later years I started working quite a bit out in Ventura so—

ISOARDI: In that club in Ventura—66?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, California 66. So I had gotten out of the union before then and the guy up there encouraged me to get back in the union. And I thought about it and the Ventura union had more benefits, so I joined up there.

ISOARDI: Yeah. In L.A. what function did Local 47 do for most musicians? Was it—

FRANKLIN: Oh, I can't think of anything that they did.

ISOARDI: Really? Kind of strictly just a business operation?

FRANKLIN: Just a business operation for studio musicians.

ISOARDI: And that was it?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I mean every now and then they'd throw us a bone and give us

trust fund gigs, you know? But as far as anything else all they'd do is take money out when you get paid. You do a record date or something, they get their share and that's the only thing I can— They have a great credit union, but other than that they're designed for studio and classical musicians. You get a health plan if you put so much in. You have to put so much in by playing music every day in the studios, you know.

ISOARDI: That's about the only way to qualify for that?

FRANKLIN: It's the only way to qualify for that. So they're completely ignoring the local jazz musician.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: At least in Ventura they do get you some work every now and then.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I get calls now even— They ask if I want to do a wedding or something and they need a jazz trio for something. I don't think that's ever happened to me at the union. But they got some pretty ladies when you walk up there, you know? You put your money in or get your money out, you know? But as far as us getting any benefits from them I can't see any. You get a thousand dollars when you die if your dues are paid up.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: If your dues aren't paid up you don't even get that thousand. At least in Ventura you get two thousand. Stuff like that, you know? But I was in the 47 for seventeen years and after that I just got out of it, because I couldn't see any benefit.

ISOARDI: Right. So we're up to, what, about the early 1980s or so?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, around 1980 and then—

ISOARDI: Where are you living around this time? Are you still up in the canyon?

FRANKLIN: No, I was at 1233 South Redondo Boulevard, which is right in the city.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: It's a little west of La Brea [Avenue] and San Vincente [Boulevard].

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's a great area for a musician, because a lot of guys lived around there, and we would do a lot of playing over at my house and other guys' houses.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: In the daytime. Just to be playing, you know?

ISOARDI: Well, I guess— Are there any places by this time where there are jam sessions going on?

FRANKLIN: Well, there was the Stage 1 at that time, with a guy named Earl— I can't remember his last name. Earl had a club on Pico [Boulevard] and Redondo Boulevard.

ISOARDI: Called Stage One.

FRANKLIN: Stage One. And they would have jam sessions on Sundays.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: And they would have different groups during the week, you know. Frank Morgan played there a lot. I was able to play with him there quite a bit. And as

a matter of fact I worked there with Dorothy Donegan once.

ISOARDI: So this was a regular club, and then on Sundays it would have jams?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, right. It was headed by Rose Gales.

ISOARDI: Rose Gales ran the jam sessions there?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I worked there with Pharaoh—Pharaoh Sanders. I've been working with him off and on over the years.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And who else was there? Oh, I worked there with Abbey Lincoln.

ISOARDI: Oh, jeez.

FRANKLIN: So they were trying to do it then, yeah.

ISOARDI: But was that about it for jam sessions?

FRANKLIN: That was about it for jam sessions, yeah.

ISOARDI: Gee, so it gets to a point where people are going over to each other's house to play?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: A few people getting together?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, that was a good thing, too. Oh, but down on Adams [Boulevard] at the other end there were a couple of others. There was an after hours, I think called the [Blue Jay] and they would go after hours from two to six. There were jam sessions there. There was another club around the corner of Adams and [Burnside Avenue], and I can't think of the name of it [Burnside Inn], but they would have jam

sessions there too. And then in the early nineties there was another place on Imperial [Highway] and Crenshaw [Boulevard], and they would have jam sessions there from twelve P.M. to twelve A.M. Twelve hours.

ISOARDI: Jeez. You don't remember the name of that?

FRANKLIN: No but it will come to me [Mister J's].

ISOARDI: Okay, good. During this time did you ever play with Horace and the Arkestra?

FRANKLIN: I played with Horace and the Arkestra a couple of times during that time, yeah. Usually have David Bryant and Al Hines and probably Roberto, so there wasn't too much room for any more bass players up there. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: And then sometimes too I guess he'd have Red Callender on stage. But at least he was playing tuba. [laughs]

FRANKLIN: He was playing tuba at the time, yeah. So there wasn't too much more room up there.

ISOARDI: I was talking a little while ago by phone with Wilber Morris.

FRANKLIN: Wilber Morris.

ISOARDI: Bass player.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah.

ISOARDI: And he was saying that, yeah, when he was in the Ark—I guess it was around the late sixties or so—there were always so many bass players. I think he said there was Al and David, and there was a guy named Walter Savage then.

FRANKLIN: Oh, Walter, that's right. That's right, yeah.

ISOARDI: And he said that a very young Roberto— At one time, he thinks, there were five of them on stage at once.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, plenty of bass players, man.

ISOARDI: He said Horace always liked the bottom. [mutual laughter]

FRANKLIN: He loved the bottom. He got plenty of bottom there with that band, boy. Yeah.

ISOARDI: Do you remember any of those gigs?

FRANKLIN: Oh, one we played at the— Where was that gig? [tape recorder off] Yeah, in answer to that question I can't remember where we played with the Arkestra. I remember we used to do a lot of clubs— Not a lot of clubs, but I used to work with him often in trio and quartet settings.

ISOARDI: This was in the eighties mostly?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah. I had received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Well, actually, I had received four of them over the years.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: And the last grant I had was for a performance at a place called Sheenway [School]. It's an alternative school for kids in south L.A. and—

ISOARDI: What was it called again? And I had the music program to put on a different music setting for the kids once a month or something like that. So I had Horace down one time—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And we did some duo stuff which was really good for the kids.

ISOARDI: Yeah really.

FRANKLIN: Very interesting. Yeah over the years I've received four grants from the National Endowment for the Arts for performances, so that kept us going too. You know you get to play some music and you get paid for it.

ISOARDI: Really.

FRANKLIN: And kind of create and work on your music, your band and stuff.

ISOARDI: Have most of these involved bringing music to the kids? Into the schools?

FRANKLIN: Some to the kids, some to the— I had one for shut-ins and old people in hospitals. I had one for just the general public to come, you know, in public places.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And another one in the hospitals. So it was great. They cut that program out, too. But we keep on pushing.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

FRANKLIN: Keep on pushing. And during that time I was still doing a lot of recording. I guess not a lot of recording, but a lot of albums at the time. I did *Gambler's Choice*, Johnny Hammond, 1974; *Proceed with Caution*, Calvin Keys in 1974; *Criss Cross*, Calvin Keys, 1975; *One Step at a Time*, Ray Crawford, 1976. I did one with Freddie Redd, *Straight Ahead Freddie Redd*, 1977, and *Say Hey* with John Wood, 1980. *You Bet Your BP*, Benny Powell, 1980. *I Feel So Good Today*, with

Carrie Williams, a piano player, 1980. *One Step Out*, by Kaeef [Ruzadun]. He's a subsidiary of Horace's UGMAA [Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension].

ISOARDI: Oh, Kaeef— Well, I guess he was going by the name Ruzadun then?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: I just talked to him.

FRANKLIN: Did you?

ISOARDI: He's in Philly [Philadelphia].

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he calls me about once a month and says, "We're getting ready to do something."

ISOARDI: [laughs] Yeah, he tells me he's going to send me something. That's been happening for a while.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's been about five years for me. It's getting closer, though, I bet you. And then I did a series with Dennis Gonzalez. The first one was *Little Toot*, for his son. That was in 1986. And when I was down there I did an album with Fred Ralston, a vibe player, called *Fred's Rescue*—with some great Texas musicians: Claude Johnson, Marchel Ivory, William Richardson. So that did pretty good. And then *Little Toot* and *Stefan*, by Dennis Gonzalez. Those were both on Silkheart.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And *Dbenge, Dbenge*. Dennis Gonzalez on Silkheart. And then I did the one with Pat Britt, *Pat Britt Live in L.A.*, featuring Ron Jefferson, Theo Saunders, and Wilbur Brown. Wilbur just left us—

ISOARDI: Last year.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He and Pat Britt used to run jam sessions at Cat and Fiddle, right?

FRANKLIN: Still do. Pat—

ISOARDI: He's keeping it going?

FRANKLIN: He's keeping it going, yeah. And then in 1990 I did a few albums. I did one with a group called the Shades of Jade. It was kind of a Latin album, and the title of it was *From Africa to New York*. That was in 1990. Then I did Jerry Rusch's album, called *Native L.A.*, and it had Bill Henderson on piano, Billy Higgins, myself, Richard Aplanalp on saxophone, and Jerry, and Thurman Green. That was a good record. And then in 1994 I did Michael Session's album called *In Session*.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And that had Sonship, Nate Morgan—

ISOARDI: I think Steve Smith was playing trumpet?

FRANKLIN: Steve Smith, right. And then I did another with Shades of Jade—in 1993, I guess. It was called *Salsa City*. Then I went back and did another one with Dennis Gonzalez, called *Desert Wind*, in 1992. It was on Silkheart. Then in the meantime I was still doing mine, too. By that time I had three more out.

ISOARDI: You've been producing throughout your career pretty regularly. The last thirty years you've been coming out with music regularly.

FRANKLIN: Well, if you wag your own tail—

ISOARDI: But not everybody can do it. A lot of people want to do it, but you manage to get it done.

FRANKLIN: I manage. I don't know how, but I manage.

ISOARDI: Well, how do you?

FRANKLIN: I have no idea. [mutual laughter] Keep the faith.

ISOARDI: Yeah, and you find people that want to record you.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, luckily I find them or I just do it myself.

ISOARDI: I mean do people approach you? Do you go after particular companies?

FRANKLIN: Both.

ISOARDI: Both.

FRANKLIN: Both, yeah. You know, you've got to stay on the move. If you wait for somebody to do it for you— Just like in any business, it'll be a while.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

FRANKLIN: We did an album called *Shalabongo*. It was on Jerry's record label, Jeru Records. *Shalabongo* featured Bobby Pierce on piano, Rich Zunigar on guitar, George Harper on saxophones, and Jerry Rusch, and William Richardson on drums. That was a good one. That was in '86, I guess, yeah. Then *Bassic Instincts* on Resurgent Music. I signed with Resurgent and we did something in 1990, *Bassic Instincts*. Then I came out with another one, *The Hunter*, in '94. And we did an album called *Two Worlds*, myself and Steve Clover, which we produced. We produced it ourselves and that was on A Records, which is a subsidiary of— What was the name of that label? Anyway,

a European label [Challenge Records in the UK]. Yeah, I can't remember the labels. Memory is the second thing to go, they say. Can't remember the first. [laughs]

ISOARDI: I've come up with a way of dealing with that. It's not that your memory is going, it's just that after a while you accumulate so much it's just harder to remember. You've just got that much more to remember.

FRANKLIN: You've just got to keep it all. Right. You can't keep it all in storage. There you go.

ISOARDI: Yeah, that's all. You've just got too much to remember.

FRANKLIN: There you go. So we did that *Two Worlds,* and then I did *Bass Encounters* in '99, and we did another one called *Three Worlds* that just got released this year.

ISOARDI: How involved are— I mean are you producing most of these or—

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the last five I think I produced.

ISOARDI: That's good.

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, it gives you a chance to—

ISOARDI: Well, you have more control over the project, don't you?

FRANKLIN: Control, yeah. Control the music and everything, yeah, sure.

ISOARDI: Do most of these companies then— I mean have you been more or less delivering them the product, and then they put it out and you pretty much—

FRANKLIN: That's the way it works, yeah.

ISOARDI: That's pretty good. I mean in the sense that you pretty much get— They're

going to put out what you want the way you want it to sound.

FRANKLIN: Exactly. I just couldn't put the cover I wanted.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Right.

FRANKLIN: But I'll get to that one, too.

ISOARDI: Very good, very good.

FRANKLIN: I'll get to that one too. So I've been fortunate enough to do a lot of recordings and stuff. I did a lot of stuff with a lot of other guys too.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Do you have favorites? Which ones stand out to you?

FRANKLIN: Well, I guess all of Hampton Hawes's stuff.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: All of Freddie Hubbard's stuff. Yeah, there's a bunch of them. I liked Gene Harris's stuff, that was great. I did one with Julian Priester. That was a really good one. I can't remember the name of it. What was the name of that? Oh, it was called *Love Love*. Julian Priester. That was in 1973, though. No wonder I don't remember.

ISOARDI: That was a while ago.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Bobbi Humphrey was a good one, *Live at Montreux*. And I liked Kaeef's record. That was a good one. And I just did a new one last year with a trumpet player, John Harrington, that was a good one, featuring Willie Jones [III] on the drums and Greg Kurston on piano. So that was a good trio. I did a good one with Dan St. Marselle in 1998. It was called *Departure*, and it featured Carl Burnett and

Kirk Lightsey, so there was a lot of energy on that one.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

FRANKLIN: So, yeah, I think I like them all for something. All except one I did, the last one.

ISOARDI: Why?

FRANKLIN: With this guy Fred Griffin. I don't think you'd know of him, but—

ISOARDI: No.

FRANKLIN: It didn't come out that well. [laughs] Didn't come out that well. So now I'm working on the next one. Working on my next CD.

ISOARDI: Are you now?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah. Takes me a while to get them together. I get them in my head what kind of direction, and then go from there.

ISOARDI: Yeah. What are you looking for on the next one?

FRANKLIN: Well, I think I want to do some more that featured the bass, you know?

ISOARDI: Did you ever think about doing a bass solo album?

FRANKLIN: Well, that's what I'm thinking about this time. Yeah, it's really great. Roberto did one of those—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: About twenty years ago.

ISOARDI: Yeah, for Tom Albach.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I've been thinking about it. But I don't want to do it like that, you

know. I like the bass up in front, but I don't want to just have a bass solo album, no. I want to try to at least sell, you know, a few copies. [mutual laughter] To people other than musicians, you know what I mean? Because you notice that when bass players take solos everybody starts talking. [Isoardi laughs] That reminds me. Did you hear about the— Can I tell a joke?

ISOARDI: Of course.

FRANKLIN: Okay. Did you hear about the couple who are having problems? They've been married for twenty years, so they were having problems communicating. So they went to a psychiatrist and the psychiatrist says, "Well, I understand your problem and I can solve it." So he goes to his closet and brings out his bass fiddle and starts playing.

ISOARDI: And they start talking. [mutual laughter] Oh-hoo.

FRANKLIN: What can I say, you know? So this record will have somebody else on it beside the bass, you know what I mean? [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Oh, God.

FRANKLIN: Oh, boy.

ISOARDI: Too much.

FRANKLIN: Where are we now? Where were we?

ISOARDI: Well, let me ask you about L.A. in the eighties. How are things changing in L.A.? I guess by this time— You said most of the clubs are gone.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Compared to the way it was.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: I mean where is the music coming from? Who are the musicians who are coming up then?

FRANKLIN: Who were the musicians that were coming up?

ISOARDI: Yeah, in the eighties.

FRANKLIN: Well—

ISOARDI: Mid-seventies and eighties.

FRANKLIN: Who were the musicians that were coming up?

ISOARDI: Any younger guys. I mean you mentioned Sonship as somebody who starts emerging in the seventies, I guess.

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah. In the eighties, if I'm forty he's thirty, so he's already come up.

ISOARDI: Right, by then.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I can't— Younger guys from L.A.? If they hadn't come up by then I can't think of any that were coming up.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: You know?

ISOARDI: It sounds like— I mean there are some real connections that are being broken. It's like the musicians—

FRANKLIN: Definitely.

ISOARDI: You know, there isn't this common territory that people inhabit anymore.

FRANKLIN: Definitely. You know, if I can find a young guy playing the upright bass now, I really feel good to see them, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I guess maybe Azar. He was probably the last guy to go out and do something, I guess.

ISOARDI: You're talking about Azar Lawrence, I guess, right?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I guess he's one of the younger guys that got out of here and started doing something. You know, he went to work with McCoy Tyner.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Did you play with Azar at all or did you know him when he was young?

FRANKLIN: I knew him, yeah. We didn't do any playing until later on. We did some playing after he came back with McCoy. Yeah, I saw him last week, as a matter of fact.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: He looks good and we talked about doing some more playing.

ISOARDI: Great.

FRANKLIN: So it'll happen.

ISOARDI: I hope so. He came back about a year, year and a half ago, I think, wasn't it?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think so.

ISOARDI: Came back to town.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so hopefully we'll do some playing.

ISOARDI: Beautiful.

FRANKLIN: Oh, I didn't mention that I was in the Count Basie band for—

ISOARDI: Oh, that's right, you didn't mention that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it was in 1986. I went out with the Basie band for about three weeks.

ISOARDI: Who was running it then?

FRANKLIN: Trumpet player. I can't— Sonny. Sonny somebody. I never remember that name.

ISOARDI: Good experience?

FRANKLIN: Well, playing with the band was a great experience. It was just at the time of my life that I didn't need to be there. The chief, Count Basie, was in his wheelchair—

ISOARDI: Oh, he was still alive then.

FRANKLIN: He was still alive, yeah. He had his wheelchair and they had to wheel him up to the bandstand, and I left my mom here and she was very ill too, and every time I would see him I would think about her, you know, that I should be home with her. So after two weeks I got out of there and came back home. It was too much for me to handle right then. But I got to play with the band for a while. I'm really not a big band guy, but it was fun.

ISOARDI: Gee, was that about your only experience with big band?

FRANKLIN: No, I worked with Gerald [Wilson], Gerald's big band.

ISOARDI: Oh, when did you do that?

FRANKLIN: Oh, that was in the early eighties. It was in the early eighties, yeah, '81 or '82, something like that. And I worked with Gerald off and on in the late eighties, but other than that— The West Covina Symphony, I was in the West Covina Symphony. That's a big orchestra and then the bass choir, you know. Other than that, I try to stay away from big bands. There were a few swing bands, old swing dance bands and stuff, like for New Year's Eve and stuff like that.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: But I try to stay away from— Oh, I worked with Teddy Edwards's big band. That's fun, too. That was about the extent of my big band situation. I got to work with— I went back to Texas and spent some time in '89. There was a club down there that I was working five nights a week with Fred Ralston.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: So that was a lot of fun. When I was there I did some work with the Texas tenors—you know, Fathead and James Clay. [David] "Fathead" Newman. That was really great.

ISOARDI: By about the mid- to late eighties, rap comes in a big way, especially in L.A. Does this impact what you're doing at all?

FRANKLIN: Not at all. It didn't affect me at all.

ISOARDI: Have you ever worked with any of those guys?

FRANKLIN: No. It didn't bother me at all. Put them on the radio and I just turn it off. [mutual laughter] Didn't bother me at all. Still doesn't. But Ron Carter did some stuff with them.

ISOARDI: Oh, really?

FRANKLIN: Playing bass behind some rap group, yeah. I don't think he likes to talk about it, but I'm sure he made a lot of money doing it. But I just— No, it doesn't affect me either way. I'll be glad when it's over with, then we go to the next phase, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But that's part of the culture, so I guess we've got to deal with it.

ISOARDI: I don't know if it's going to change until they get music back into the schools and kids playing instruments again.

FRANKLIN: Right, right, right. See, because that has cut out a lot of musicians—and a lot of money that these guys have to pay, because there's no rights to the music. You know what I mean? So who keeps all that money? The producers or the record companies?

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's been a hurt to us, because they figure now they <u>really</u> don't need any musicians, you know? What would we need a bass player for? What do we need a drummer for? We've got a drum machine. But I think people are getting tired

of that.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it seems like more and more they're— Rappers are starting to use live music. A lot of the rappers are investigating jazz. Things like that. Some are learning to play instruments.

FRANKLIN: I know they're taking a lot of samples from music. They took a sample from one of my albums. Which one? They took a sample from *Tribal Dance*. "Cosmos Dwellers." We had a tune on there called "Cosmos Dwellers." It was written by Al Hall [Jr.] And Willie Jones called me up one day from New York and goes, "Hey, man, they took a sample from your music."

ISOARDI: You didn't know about it.

FRANKLIN: No. They're playing "Cosmos Dwellers", you know, overdubbed with some rap and stuff. So you've got to watch these guys.

ISOARDI: You didn't ever get a check for that?

FRANKLIN: Well, it was Al Hall's tune, so I told him about it and he's got an attorney. But, you know, it's going to take time.

ISOARDI: Man, I thought they got that straight a few years ago in the—

FRANKLIN: Well, these guys, they'll still try to sneak by you.

ISOARDI: Because one of the things— When I talked to Freddie Hubbard on the phone, he was just saying that that for a long time was what kept him going.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: The royalties he'd get from the rappers sampling his stuff.

FRANKLIN: Okay.

ISOARDI: All that Blue Note stuff.

FRANKLIN: Well, I guess with a big label like that, you know—

ISOARDI: They're more careful about it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yeah, a little defunct label like what we were on, I'm sure they tried to get away [with it].

ISOARDI: Well, that album was never put on CD, was it? *Tribal Dance*?

FRANKLIN: No, it wasn't. Well, and the label is defunct now, so—

ISOARDI: Which label was that?

FRANKLIN: That was on Catalyst. They should have, because I thought it was a good record. But I think they're all good records, so I'm not the one to judge. They all seem to do pretty well.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

JULY 31, 2001

ISOARDI: How would you sort of sum up L.A. musically in the eighties and maybe into the nineties? Can you talk of a direction that L.A. is going? Can you talk of any different kinds of sounds that are emerging then?

FRANKLIN: I can't think of any new sounds. Everybody was just trying to probably improve on their instrument and just— The guys were listening to the hard bop music and just expounding on that and trying to take that a step farther. But other than that, as far as any new music, I don't see any new music coming out of L.A.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: I hear some great tunes that people write, and that's not even like in the sixties and seventies, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, really.

FRANKLIN: But I can't really say any new music was coming out of L.A., no.

ISOARDI: One of the at least newer— Well, maybe not so new. But one of the places that emerges is Leimert Park.

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: I guess it begins much earlier, with the Brockman Gallery down there in the sixties and seventies, and I know they sponsor music events, but in the late eighties and early nineties, when the World Stage opens and a number of others, it really becomes kind of a center.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. You know, right before then, in Leimert Park, right around the block, the first guy that opened that stuff, that started doing something like that, was Carl Burnett. He had a place called Art Works.

ISOARDI: Oh.

FRANKLIN: It was right on Forty-third Place.

ISOARDI: And that was in the eighties?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was right before Billy [Higgins]'s club [the World Stage]. Yeah, he held it down for a couple years.

ISOARDI: Really? That long?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: What was it?

FRANKLIN: It was a coffee shop art thing, just like Billy's place was.

ISOARDI: It's like the World Stage?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, similar. Very similar. As a matter of fact, I guess when he left he gave his chairs to Billy's place.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah. Well, Kamau Daaood told me that somebody told him they were cleaning the place out and they were going to just junk all these chairs and things, so he went over with a friend and carted them all over to the World Stage.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. So that was Art Works. Carl was the first guy that was doing that over there. So, yeah, it's really doing good. I mean the whole area. I'm happy.

ISOARDI: Now you spent some time there. I know I've seen you play at the World

Stage.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I don't get to spend the time like I would like to, living all the way out here in Riverside.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But, yeah, I've played at the World Stage several times. And I go in when I can, you know. I always go up Leimert to see who I can see.

ISOARDI: You usually bring in a band when you play there?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. And Fifth Street Dick's [Coffee Company] was down the street. I didn't frequent that too much. Maybe once or twice, because it was more like an after hours thing.

ISOARDI: Just about.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and by the time I get off work— If I was working in L.A., you know, by the time I get home—

ISOARDI: It's a long ride.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so I didn't hang out there at all. But the other area is doing good. I hope it continues.

ISOARDI: Yeah, fingers crossed.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and it will. Because I mean where else is there?

ISOARDI: Well, that's what I was going to ask you. [laughs]

FRANKLIN: That's about it. You know, when we were coming up it's very interesting, because after the gigs— I mean there were so many people, and everybody

would go have breakfast, you know? It was such a unity, like they would have different spots where all the musicians would congregate and hang out and eat breakfast. One of the places was the Kite on La Cienega [Boulevaard] and Washington [Boulevard]. There was a restaurant there. So after the gigs all the guys would go over there and eat and hang out until maybe three or four in the morning, and then go home. But there's not that unity anymore and there are no places available, and— The main thing is there's just not that unity.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: That and also—there are different reasons, you know—because nobody wants to be out at that time of night any more. Drive-bys and shootings and police and everything else, you know? So all that stopped. But it did use to happen. This was really a Mecca for music and musicians.

ISOARDI: Until maybe the late seventies?

FRANKLIN: Late seventies? Yeah.

ISOARDI: Mid-seventies? Early eighties?

FRANKLIN: Late seventies, yeah. From '75 to around '80 everything changed.

ISOARDI: Man. It's sad.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Well, the other sad part is it hasn't been documented. But thanks to you it's going to be documented.

ISOARDI: Well, at least a little bit.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, I guess nobody ever thought about it, because we thought it

was just the thing that was going to keep happening, you know? And the price of gas has gone up. Gas used to be fifty cents, you know.

ISOARDI: In L.A. it's a major issue. What else are you going to do?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so you've got enough gas to get to work and back, you don't want to be making those extra drives. So a lot of factors. You used to be able to see a lot of cats all the time, you know?

ISOARDI: What would you tell a kid today who wanted to play jazz?

FRANKLIN: If he wanted to play jazz I'd tell him to go right ahead and play it. Just prepare himself.

ISOARDI: How? Where would you tell him to go?

FRANKLIN: Musically I'd tell him to get his private lessons from a good teacher, learn all he could, and listen all he could. Listen to the old masters, listen to the records, practice, practice, practice, and get the knowledge. And then you'll have a fighting chance anyway.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 1, 2001

ISOARDI: Okay, Henry. Before we get to my questions you said you wanted to add a few things from our previous sessions?

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, there's a couple of things I remembered. Like that jam session we were talking about on Crenshaw [Boulevard] and Imperial [Highway] was called Mister J's.

ISOARDI: That was the name of the place?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: All right. What kind of a place was that?

FRANKLIN: It was like a blues club, and they had jazz on Sundays. It lasted from twelve in the afternoon to twelve in the morning.

ISOARDI: Long.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. But a lot of guys came.

ISOARDI: It was popular.

FRANKLIN: A lot of guys came, yeah.

ISOARDI: How long did that last?

FRANKLIN: Oh, I would say a couple years. Two or three years. It was run by Don Williams, the trumpet player, who is since deceased, but a lot of guys came.

ISOARDI: And that ran from about when to when?

FRANKLIN: I knew you were going to ask me that. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Or roughly.

FRANKLIN: That was in the nineties, the early nineties.

ISOARDI: Early nineties.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I would say maybe '89 to '91, something like that. Yeah, it's been that long ago. Yeah. The other one I was mentioning on Adams [Boulevard] around Hauser [Boulevard], I was saying. But actually it was Adams and Burnside [Avenue]. It was called the Burnside Inn.

ISOARDI: It wasn't an inn, I take it, though.

FRANKLIN: No, it was an alcoholic inn, yeah. [Isoardi laughs] It was a night club. And that was around in the early nineties, also. A lot of guys used to come and have sessions there and the other one was the Blue Jay, not the Jay Bird or whatever I said it was.

ISOARDI: Okay.

FRANKLIN: And the after-hours theater across from the It Club at Washington and Rimpau was called the Metro Theater.

ISOARDI: Metro.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and they were—

ISOARDI: Who ran that, do you know?

FRANKLIN: I don't know who ran that, but it went on from two to six, Friday and Saturday morning.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and it would feature a band and then a different group every week, and they would have sessions also, so that was a popular hangout. People would go there and stay all night.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: I was working at a club called Pippy's. I had a trio there. It was right next to Sherry's on Sunset [Boulevard] and Crescent Heights [Boulevard], but this was in around 1977 to about 1999. Two years we were there. I had a trio. Basically it was either Kirk Lightsey or Theo Saunders on piano, and either Doug Sides or Carl Burnett was on drums. That was a popular place, because we would let everybody sit in there and everybody from out of town would come in and hang out at Pippy's. It wasn't supposed to go on after hours, because they served alcohol, but the guy would keep the place open until around four in the morning.

ISOARDI: Serving booze? [laughs]

FRANKLIN: Serving booze, serving booze. And a lot of ladies of the night were up on Sunset and Crescent Heights. They frequented the place all the time.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah, that used to be a popular walk.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so we got busted two times for serving alcohol after two o'clock. They raided us two times and after the second time we never reopened, but it was a great jazz spot. You got a lot of the Hollywood scene. Le Grand Theatre, that was another after-hours. That was on Cahuenga [Boulevard] and Sunset, and that was in the early seventies. I think that was run by Tommy B, the disc jockey from KBCA.

ISOARDI: B? Just the letter B?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Tommy B. [in very deep announcer's voice] "Tommy B, mike side." [Isoardi laughs] But he was the host at the Le Grand Theatre and that was a very popular place also. That's about all the things I wanted to— Oh, in the earlier days, in the late sixties, I remember going over to Horace Tapscott's house on the East Side somewhere and in his garage we would always play. Ended up three or four times.

ISOARDI: In the early sixties?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, late sixties.

ISOARDI: Late sixties? Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I remember—

ISOARDI: Was that the place on Eleventh Avenue, by Crenshaw High School?

FRANKLIN: No, it was way before then. It was somewhere on the East Side. I remember the garage, we would play in the garage. And that's where I first met Don Cherry. He was there with Horace.

ISOARDI: Was that sort of a regular place where you would go to play?

FRANKLIN: Well, I just went there a couple times.

ISOARDI: Couple times.

FRANKLIN: I guess Horace had a couple of special rehearsals, jam sessions he wanted to do. Yeah, but I remember that now. Another place we would hang out was at Bruz Freeman's house.

ISOARDI: Oh, who'd hang out there?

FRANKLIN: Herman Riley. Andrew Hill was living in L.A. then.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: How long was he around?

FRANKLIN: Oh, he was there in the early sixties.

ISOARDI: No kidding?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Early sixties, yeah. Then he moved to New York.

ISOARDI: Jeez, he was a youngster then.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, he was young. Everybody was a youngster in the early sixties.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I didn't know he was out here.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: But he wasn't from this area, right? He just—

FRANKLIN: No, I guess he was just—

ISOARDI: Spending a little time?

FRANKLIN: For a moment, yeah. Yeah, so it was Bruz, myself, Herman, and Andrew. We played quite a bit over there.

ISOARDI: Oh, this is some out guys, too. I mean Bruz was playing with Bobby [Bradford] and John [Carter].

FRANKLIN: Yeah, we were stretching out a little bit there. I think at that time we

were mostly trying to play tunes, but I'm sure we took it out quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I guess those are all the additions that I had. I never did talk about I guess the first album I was on. I wanted to mention that first album that ever was produced, I guess, and that was Hugh Masakela *Live at the Whiskey*.

ISOARDI: Oh, you didn't mention that, no.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and I think that was like 1965, '66. That was in a band. That was after I left [Willie] Bobo, so whenever that was.

ISOARDI: I guess not long after that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, right after that.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: Right after that. The Whisky A Go Go was quite a place, because that was the scene, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah, very big.

FRANKLIN: And I remember—Lew Alcindor at the time—Kareem [Abdul Jabbar], he would always come in and sit in with us.

ISOARDI: What do you mean sit in?

FRANKLIN: He played conga drums.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he used to love Big Black [Danny Ray]. Big Black was our conga drummer.

ISOARDI: Oh, yeah.

FRANKLIN: And he would always be right there with Big Black, playing the conga drums.

ISOARDI: Not many people have talked about him much. Big Black.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, well, he's quite a person, quite a musician—

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, a lot of personality.

ISOARDI: Is he still around?

FRANKLIN: You know, last time I heard from Black was about a year and a half ago, and he was living in Venice or Santa Monica. But I haven't heard from him since then, so I think he may have gone to either New York or Florida or—

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I don't know where he is.

ISOARDI: Was he from L.A.?

FRANKLIN: No, he was from Florida. But he spent a lot of time here and the last time I— Well, I worked with him five years ago with Randy Weston at Catalina's [Catalina Bar and Grill].

ISOARDI: Catalina's.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Which was a great experience for me.

ISOARDI: Yeah, I'm sure.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was Randy Weston, Big Black, myself, and alto player Talib

Kibwe.

ISOARDI: Don't know him.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, he was a good player.

ISOARDI: Talib?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. He works with Randy all the time. They came from New York and they needed a bass player. So that was a great experience too.

ISOARDI: Very nice.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, so I guess that's all that I had to add for that.

ISOARDI: Okay. Well, let me throw a couple of things at you too.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: The name I guess that you adopt in the sixties or seventies? Nyimbo? What's the origins of that?

FRANKLIN: Actually the full name was Nyimbo Sauti. I was studying Swahili at Fremont High School, night school, with [Maulana] Ron Karenga, and he gave everybody in the class a name. You know, he asked what do they like, what do they do? And I told him I liked music, I play music. So Nyimbo means low music. Nyimbo Sauti means he who plays the low music. So that was— I took it and put it on my license plate.

ISOARDI: No kidding. How long did you use it?

FRANKLIN: Oh, I use it to this day.

ISOARDI: Do you?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but the Skipper kind of precedes that, I guess.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: But at that time that's what a lot of the guys were [doing], getting black names.

ISOARDI: Yeah, definitely. So it's still important to you to this day then.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure. It was given to me, so— Herbie Hancock, I think, started that with his band, Mwandishi, and everybody had a name in the band. Mwile was Bennie Maupin, Jabali was Billy Hart, and I can't remember Buster [Williams]'s name [Mchezaji], but Mwandishi was Herbie. So that started a thing. So everybody else— Ndugu; Nyimbo; Chache Oscar Brashear; Kemang [Sunduza] Bill Henderson. So that was the time. I guess that was us showing our blackness.

ISOARDI: And on your album you listed those other names as well, didn't you?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: Was that your first experience with Karenga?

FRANKLIN: Yes.

ISOARDI: What was he like?

FRANKLIN: He was straight ahead. He was like a businessman. I mean there was no joking. He was serious, but I only saw him in that instance as a teacher.

ISOARDI: That was it.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: You weren't that familiar with US [Organization] or—

FRANKLIN: Oh, I was familiar with his philosophy, but I wasn't involved. I guess the only involvement I had would probably be Kwanzaa, but— At that time I was really into Malcolm X. So he was my hero.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Okay. Black Jazz Records. What was sort of the focus of it? I mean aside from the title? What kind of music was trying to be recorded? Did it have any kind of identifiable program other than recording black artists?

FRANKLIN: Well, it was designed to record black jazz artists. You know, at that time, what it's still like now, there's a multitude of great jazz musicians in Los Angeles and most of them are overlooked for one reason or another.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: And Black Jazz was designed to take up that slack.

ISOARDI: All right. So the focus was black jazz artists in L.A. who hadn't received enough recognition.

FRANKLIN: Right. And not necessarily L.A., but all over the place, because he had groups out of Chicago also.

ISOARDI: Right.

FRANKLIN: But basically— That was Gene [Russell]'s job, to handle Los Angeles as much as he could. And he did a great job. He got Doug Carn out there and Jean Carn. She's still out there.

ISOARDI: A few albums from them.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. And a great artist, Rudolph Johnson.

ISOARDI: Did he record for—

FRANKLIN: He recorded for Black Jazz, yes.

ISOARDI: No one has really said much about him. Can you talk a little bit about Rudolph Johnson?

FRANKLIN: Well, Rudolph Johnson is one of the greatest saxophone players I've ever heard. Modern saxophonists. He is now and has been for the last twenty years with Ray Charles, so that's why you don't hear much of him. Because when he gets off the road, off of that grinding tour, he just stays home and— [Isoardi laughs] You know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: He doesn't get out as much as he should. Because he's a great player.

ISOARDI: Are his roots L.A.?

FRANKLIN: Columbus [Ohio].

ISOARDI: Really? When does he come to L.A.?

FRANKLIN: He's been in L.A., I would say, a good thirty years.

ISOARDI: Since the seventies.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yeah, he was here in the seventies, yes. But he's a great player. Ray Charles— He's just hanging out with Ray. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Okay, let me just mention a few other individuals, since we're at it, and

offer what comments you want.

ISOARDI: Okay.

ISOARDI: Well, first— You've mentioned him quite a bit, because you played with him, but— Harold Land.

FRANKLIN: Mmm. Harold Land is, I think, one of the finest saxophone players ever. All through his history he's been on the front line, and he's going to be really missed a lot, by me and I'm sure everybody else. He was just a beautiful person, also. Harold looked out for us young guys when we were coming up. You know, if we had some attention, he would be the first to have us over to his house and play all day long with him.

ISOARDI: His place in the back?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, and his wife Lydia [Land] is just as beautiful. And Harold [Land] Jr., too. I play quite a bit with Harold Jr. now, and he's just like his dad. He likes to play long, too. [mutual laughter] But Harold will really be missed, because he was a beautiful person.

ISOARDI: Always seemed too such a classy man.

FRANKLIN: Classy man. That's exactly the word you could say, yeah.

ISOARDI: Bobby Hutcherson.

FRANKLIN: Bobby is just the same. He's always got a smile on his face. And Bobby's a class act also.

ISOARDI: Musically.

FRANKLIN: Musically he's the greatest vibe [vibraphone] player I ever heard.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah. Can't see anybody who can touch him for a long time. I mean he's unequivocally the greatest. Pound for pound, you know what I mean?

ISOARDI: He came out of L.A., didn't he?

FRANKLIN: Pasadena.

ISOARDI: Pasadena. He went to high school, etc., in Pasadena?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think he went to John Muir High School.

ISOARDI: So you sort of hooked up with him after—

FRANKLIN: After high school, yeah, we played and met each other in different places, playing places. And I was just happy to have worked with him later on in life, you know, and hope to do so again. Because when you play with Bobby, I mean you come to play. Bobby loves to play fast and he loves to play slow, and these are two things that most people can't do.

ISOARDI: His music, too, his recorded history, is pretty broad.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, he's played a lot of avant-garde—

ISOARDI: A lot of different stuff.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. He's played with Grachan Moncur [III] and those guys, outside guys, and then he can come right back and do “Om” with Harold Land, you know? Yeah, but Bobby loves to play slow, like I say. I mean real slow. And that's something that most players can't do.

ISOARDI: Very hard?

FRANKLIN: Yes. And he loves playing real fast, which is another thing a lot of guys can't do. So Bobby is— I give him five stars.

ISOARDI: All right.

FRANKLIN: Gerald Wilson.

FRANKLIN: Five stars—

ISOARDI: Now you played in his band a little bit, right?

FRANKLIN: Five stars again. [mutual laughter] Yeah, Gerald is the father of all this stuff.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Great writer, great arranger. Great person.

ISOARDI: What's distinctive about his writing and arranging? Is there anything you can point to that—

FRANKLIN: Well, it's about— I like his counterpoints and the way he handles his melodies and stuff. Like this one tune called "Romance" that he'll start off as a ballad, and he'll double up and the next thing you know it's up to a frenzy where it's got the whole audience. And it's just the way that he handles his band. It's loose, but it's tight. He's one of those band leaders that just has the respect of everybody in the band. Without demanding it he gets it.

ISOARDI: Rare.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: That's rare.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, what you can say about Gerald is rare.

ISOARDI: He's still going strong.

FRANKLIN: Yes, indeed. He's always got that big smile on his face, too.

ISOARDI: Yeah, he's amazing when you see him in front of a bandstand. I think last year I saw him at the Music Center [of Los Angeles County]. He was just kind of a guest and it was a Central Avenue tribute, and they had the Clayton-Hamilton [Jazz] Orchestra at the Music Center.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: They brought Gerald out, I guess as one of the Central Avenue alumni, and he conducted one number with the band. And as wonderful as John Clayton is, when Gerald was in front of that band, conducting that band, it just sounded different.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: They were so different. I mean they were so great.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I'm sure.

ISOARDI: It was amazing.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, Gerald has the knack to do that. He can do that.

ISOARDI: Man.

FRANKLIN: Well, I hope John Clayton was watching what he saw— Gerald doing that.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure he respects Gerald tremendously.

FRANKLIN: Oh, he's got to. He's got to, sure.

ISOARDI: Oh, somebody that we haven't talked about at all— [laughs] It's sort of a huge omission on my part, at least, but we can rectify it now.

FRANKLIN: Okay.

ISOARDI: Charles Mingus.

FRANKLIN: Charles Mingus. Charles Mingus is one of my favorite players. Charles is quite a guy. [mutual laughter] I remember one time my wife, she saw him at the workshop. My wife CB—Blanche [Franklin]. She was up in San Francisco hanging out for a weekend with her friends and she saw Charles Mingus at the Workshop—

ISOARDI: The Jazz Workshop?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. At the time it was run by some little Chinese guys. I mean they're little guys, you know? So he's up on the bandstand and some of his shirt fell out or something, his shirt opened up a little bit.

ISOARDI: Some of one of the musicians?

FRANKLIN: No, Charles's shirt opened up. Maybe a couple of buttons were down. And the bartender was just laughing with somebody, one of the other guys, and Charles Mingus saw that and he started screaming. "What's the matter with you? You like seeing my titties?" And he opened his shirt up all the way, and he was getting ready to go over there and jump on this little Chinese guy—about three feet tall, you know? Poor Chinese guy, the guy ran out of the club. I mean I don't think he came

back for a while. [Isoardi laughs] Those are the types of stories that I'm sure— You'll hear a lot of those about him. They say there's a thing about him that— They say that he's not happening unless he had a good fight.

ISOARDI: From what I've heard that sounds true.

FRANKLIN: They say he hasn't had a good gig unless he's had a good fight. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Did you ever know him in L.A. or encounter him?

FRANKLIN: I never met him. I used to encounter him a couple times from the old Marty's. I was kind of a youngster.

ISOARDI: Marty's on Broadway?

FRANKLIN: On Broadway, yeah. He would catch that Red Car and go back to Watts, and we'd watch him put his bass on the Red Car and go to Watts.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: He'd be playing at Marty's and—

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So this must have been in the later forties or mid-to-late forties?

FRANKLIN: No, it was after that. It had to be after that. It was in the fifties. Probably the early fifties, because I was just getting— I wasn't even into the bass then. Yeah.

ISOARDI: [laughs] Did you ever see him playing on any of the Red Cars?

FRANKLIN: You know I never got to— Well, because I had to get my ass home. [laughs]

ISOARDI: So you never saw him play, I guess. By the time he went to New York you were still pretty young.

FRANKLIN: I got to seem him play one time in New York at the Five Spot. That was the first time I was there, with Willie Bobo, and we went into the Five Spot and saw him and he was playing. I didn't get a chance to meet him. He didn't look like he was too open to meeting people, so I never met him. But as far as music he's one of my favorite bass players. He's a good bass player and a great writer.

ISOARDI: Oh! Really.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Is there anything particular about his playing that you admire?

FRANKLIN: Well, he's very articulate. I mean he's very articulate and he knows the bass upside down. So he just plays the bass. I mean there's not a lot of sustaining and not a lot of slick stuff. He just plays the bass, and that's what I like about him.

ISOARDI: Okay, shifting gears a bit, we've talked a little bit about how things start dropping off in the mid-to-later seventies. Not as many clubs, etc. One of the things that I found out in doing the series, from what a number of you are saying— Because Harold, when I was talking to Harold, was also saying how things weren't dry here in the sixties. They were really poppin' for jazz musicians.

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: There were a lot of players. You know there is this image that it was as soon as rock came in that it was all over, and that doesn't seem to be the case. One of the things that does start happening in the mid-seventies/later seventies is the economy starts going down. A lot of people are losing their jobs, a lot of blue collar workers, certainly in South Central, in the community. And also the gangs are emerging.

FRANKLIN: I think that—

ISOARDI: Now does this play a role? Does this connect to this decline?

FRANKLIN: Oh, sure. I think that had more to do with it than the rock and roll. I mean people have been shaking their booties forever, you know? But the main thing, I'm sure, was the gangs and the economy. But I think the main thing was the gangs, because you don't want to be out late at night if somebody is going to drive by and shoot you. You know what I mean? And that's the other one. I know that's what scared the white people from coming on the South Side, what they call South Side now, you know. You're liable to get beat up, you know. So that was more than the rock and roll. I don't think the rock and roll had anything to do with it, to tell you the truth.

ISOARDI: So I mean the number of musicians and the music was alive and well until this stuff hits.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Within the community.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: So all those neighborhood clubs that people could walk to, like the Zebra, [Club] La Deus, etc., they just disappear then?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because how could they stay open if there's going to be a bunch of gang members around? How can they get anybody to come around in that area even, you know? It's hard for musicians to come in that area.

ISOARDI: You can lose your axes.

FRANKLIN: You can lose your axes and lose your car while you're in there playing. Your car might get ripped off, so you're not going to really— You're going to think twice about taking that gig. And with the economy going down too they're not going to be able to offer to pay you as much, you know? So I guess that all kind of blends in. More than the rock and roll.

ISOARDI: Yeah, it makes so much more sense.

FRANKLIN: Yeah.

ISOARDI: Well, let's see. The last thing I had down to ask you, Henry, was sort of if you could kind of think back over your career to date and talk about your own music. How has your music evolved or changed, or has it, over much of the last thirty-four years?

FRANKLIN: Well, yeah, our music has changed. When we first started playing, like on our first album, *The Skipper*, it was more out than it is now. You know, tunes like "Outbreak" and all that stuff. "Plastic Creek Stomp." They had an out flare. I mean, it was still in, but it was out. You know what I mean? And now we're just trying to

create more energy, just by good bebop. Just trying to play some hard bop, like Art Blakey called it. Yeah, some hard bop. You get in there and everybody blows and has a good time.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And that will make the people pat their foot. They'll love it.

ISOARDI: What about Latin influence? Do you go back to that much?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, we do, we do. We do because that's a very strong influence. That makes people shake their booties also, without playing rock and roll. You know what I mean? [mutual laughter] And Latin is a good feel. I think it's a good feel.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So we try to explore that as much as we can, too. Good Latin, you know?

ISOARDI: What do you see happening now, and what would you like to see happen in the near future, in L.A. and with you personally?

FRANKLIN: Well, I'd sure like to see more clubs open. I'd like to see people coming out again. I'd like to see the neighborhoods merge together like they were and everybody just come out and have a good time.

ISOARDI: More of a community kind of feel?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, yeah. And I'd like to see music in the schools.

ISOARDI: That would be a big step, wouldn't it?

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I'd like to see music put in the schools, too. Give the kids a

chance, anyway.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: I'd like to see record companies give me my royalties. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Going back to record number one, right?

FRANKLIN: Right. I'd like them to 'fess up and be honest and give me some money that they owe me, you know? But it's tax deductible, I guess. You live and learn. But those are some of the things I'd like to see.

ISOARDI: Good things.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, but the main thing, I think, is getting the music in the schools for the kids.

ISOARDI: Yeah. Especially when they're very young.

FRANKLIN: And all the arts. All the arts, you know? They should have artists, they should have [them] in the schools, you know, see the kids that have got potential for art, and just keep our art thing going, because we're really getting surpassed by Europe and everybody else. Yeah, you've got to go there to be appreciated. They know more about you in Japan than the average person knows about you here who grew up with you.

ISOARDI: Yeah, truly.

FRANKLIN: That's the only time that I've really been treated like a king from the airport on, was in Japan. We got off the plane with Freddie Hubbard and the people had bouquets of flowers for us right at the plane.

ISOARDI: Jeez.

FRANKLIN: You know? From then on they took us to the hotel, treated us well, just gave us everything we needed, and the feeling was just so— They were so happy to have us. It wasn't that way when we left. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: What do you mean? [laughs]

FRANKLIN: Well, I'm just kidding. We were nice, we were good. But I was with Freddie, though. [mutual laughter]

ISOARDI: Oh! Oh, well. [mutual laughter] Yeah, really. You understood him, but how many other people did?

FRANKLIN: Oh, boy. They really treated us good, though. You know, we got to get back on track here, but I think that they're not interested in that. The government is showing that they're not. So what are we to do? Just try to do the best that we can and, like somebody said, "each one teach one." Keep going from there. I got a couple students that I try to work with.

ISOARDI: Really?

FRANKLIN: Yeah. But, uh— [laughs]

ISOARDI: Are these advanced students?

FRANKLIN: No, they're not advanced and I don't think they're going to get advanced. Neither one of them really has any— You know, nothing to work with hardly.

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: So I don't know if it's me or them, but I'm sure trying to think that it's

them. But they're trying, so I keep trying with them.

ISOARDI: Any other thoughts, Henry?

FRANKLIN: Well, let me see.

ISOARDI: Anything we haven't chatted about that you'd like to get down?

FRANKLIN: Well, I'm just thinking. Yeah, it looks like we covered most of it, I guess.

ISOARDI: All right. Many, many thanks.

FRANKLIN: Thank you.

ISOARDI: Very good.

FRANKLIN: Thank you, Steve.

[tape recorder off]

ISOARDI: Well, we have an addendum then, right?

FRANKLIN: Insert.

ISOARDI: Insert, yeah.

FRANKLIN: Well, let's see.

ISOARDI: Current and future projects.

FRANKLIN: For the last three and a half years I've been working at the Mission Inn in Riverside with a duo, myself and David Bradshaw, a young player in the area, and we're down there five nights a week.

ISOARDI: You've done five nights a week for three and half years?

FRANKLIN: Yes. Except when I take off. Like I took off to go to North Africa this

year. In May I did the first annual Casablanca jazz festival.

ISOARDI: Did you bring a band?

FRANKLIN: I was part of three different bands: Sweet Baby J'ai, Cal Green, and Eldad Tamu. So it was a jazz and blues festival, they called it, and I played with each one of them every night and that was fun. That was interesting. It was my first time in Africa.

ISOARDI: Would you like to go back?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah.

ISOARDI: Maybe go south a bit?

FRANKLIN: Oh, yeah, I'd love to go south. I'm waiting for that. I need to collect some statues and masks and stuff.

ISOARDI: You've have— Oh, you'd love that.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. I took off in June to do the Topeka Jazz Festival in Topeka, Kansas, which was fun. I got to play with my old friend Marcus Belgrave, so that was really good. Three years ago I took off from the hotel to go to Europe for six months. We did 119 concerts and festivals in Europe.

ISOARDI: Jeez. Who's we?

FRANKLIN: Myself and Donald Dean, the drummer. We were from here, and we played with Rene von Helsdingen and his wife Luluk Purwanto, who live in Holland. And I know you'll be calling back for some—

ISOARDI: Spellings.

FRANKLIN: On that one!

ISOARDI: You can count on that. [laughter]

FRANKLIN: And that was quite a tour. That was all through Europe. And we traveled in a big tour bus, and they had beds in the bus, so we would sleep while we went from country to country. We could always sleep in a hotel at night, but it was for our convenience. And they had a VCR on the bus, they had an icebox. We had a great time. But 119 festivals in six months is quite a bit.

ISOARDI: Quite a lot. That's like the old days on the [road] with the big bands.

FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yes, it is.

ISOARDI: A lot of time on the road.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, because it would be nothing to go two thousand kilometers in a day, to be there the next day or two days later. But, you know, we really got to see places like Sweden, where they're government funded for jazz, you know?

ISOARDI: Yeah.

FRANKLIN: And Germany and places like that, man. The government takes care of them, to put on concerts and pay the musicians and all that stuff. We can't even get a CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] plan around here anymore. Yep. But other than that I'm working, trying to keep my band working also. We just did the LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art] concert in April. We're going to do the Idlewild Jazz Festival in August, August twenty-sixth, and the [Simon Rodia] Watts [Towers Jazz] Festival in September. And we're working on a new record, so—

ISOARDI: All right. You're always in motion.

FRANKLIN: Trying to keep on the move. Like Benny Powell used to tell me, it's hard to hit a moving target. [laughs] So we're just on the move.

ISOARDI: All right.

FRANKLIN: Okay, that's about all I can think of.

ISOARDI: All right. Thanks again, Henry.

FRANKLIN: [adopts very deep announcer-like voice] Thank you, Steve.

GUIDE TO PROPER NAMES