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HOWARD UNIVERSITY JAZZ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Drummer, Art Blakey
Interviewer: W. A. Brower
January 3, 1985

Begin tape #1, side A
Begin Disk #1

BROWER: We would like to begin with some preliminary background and history. Let's go back to Pittsburgh and, if you would, recount to me how you got interested in music, your early development as a musician, how that came about, private lessons...self-taught...give me a sonapsus----- of that, if you would.

BLAKEY: Well, there was no lessons, and there was no... I came into music as a matter of survival, I had to survive. I'm a "Depression" baby, so therefore I didn't have much education. I left school because I rebelled against what the schools were teaching, you know...and the Board of Education found that it was best for me to get out of there. There wasn't room enough for me there and the principal and the junior high school I was in because I didn't go along with the their teachers and what they

taught about Africa and "Little Black Sambo" and I didn't go. Therefore I was barred from going to school....so, therefore I went to work.

BROWER: Let me, at this point, ask you are you from a large family, small family?...

BLAKEY: No, no, no, no...I'll tell you all that. I'll get to all that...just let me...I got it.

BROWER: Alright.

BLAKEY: In Pittsburgh, I was born of a family called the Blakeys. -----Blakey was my father. The Blakey's were somewhat of a bourgeois family in Pittsburgh...Black family...they were sort of bourgeois. Sort of a brown skin or light brown skin or whatever you want to call it...some mulattoes and some, you know... And, ah, my father was the oldest of about six kids, I think. He had two sisters and four brothers, I think. He was sort of the boss of his brothers and sisters. He

worked and took care of them...he was a good man. He was sneaking out in the country and seeing my mother, and I came about. So, when I came about, they had a "shoot gun" wedding there...Pittsburgh. After the wedding, he left her sitting in the carriage, he went into the drug store to get some cigars, I am told, and he went out the back door and he went to Chicago and he didn't see her no more until she was dead. My mother lived somewhere out there in Ca---- with her step father and her mother. She and her step father didn't get along. At that time my mother contracted tuberculosis. She passed away when I was about five or six months old. So my mother's...I think they were first cousins, I don't know how that come about...Mrs. Sarah Parren was my mother's friend, my mother's first cousin, she was there when my mother died. She promised my mother that she would raise me. She brought me to the funeral. So she said she took me up to my father and my father didn't want to recognize me as his son. So he took me home and her husband didn't want me in

his house either. He said "if you bring him in here, I'm going to leave". So, she went up stairs and packed his clothes and put them on the front porch and said "ok, you can go, split, you've had it", and put him out. Now, she had two children of her own. This a very remarkable woman, very strong. She was working at -----, she drove a crane there.

BROWER: She drove a crane?

BLAKEY: Crane, sure, first world war. She took care of me...she raised me the best she could. I thought she was my mother because she never told me anything else, and when I found out she wasn't, it hurt. So that began to confuse me in school and I didn't like what they were teaching, I began to rebel against...

BROWER: All of that was coming together...

BLAKEY: All that came together. So I said, well later for this, so I left there and I went to the coal mine. I worked in there for a while and met a friend in there and...they called him "the Big Pollock". I was small and wasn't physically able to take care

of myself like the rest of the miners, so I got the Pollock and I taught him to read and write, so he was like my robot. He could whip everybody in the mine....everybody would look down, and say "here comes Shorty and the Pollock"...that was my friend. I didn't like it, so I left there and started playing piano round Mrs. Pannen's--- house. She didn't know I was really working. She thought I was still going to school, but I couldn't stand it after I found out what was happening...her out working and scuffling for me, you know...and I wasn't really her child and I was like unwanted. Well, I was passing my father everyday in the street and I didn't know it was my father. He never said nothing, I never said nothing. During the time, I started playing piano. We organized a band and I was working down at different clubs. I was having a good time, you know. I left the house with Mrs. Pannen. I the meantime, I had gotten a young lady in a family way and...at that time you'd go to jail or you

get married, so we got married. We didn't know what we were doing. I was about fourteen, fifteen years old. Evelyn--came along, my daughter that's here, down in New York.

BROWER: That was your first child?

BLAKEY: Evelyn-- BLAKEY, yeah...she came along. I'm playing in this club, I moved and got a room for a dollar and a half a week. I had a bathroom...first time I'd seen a tub, toilet inside the house. And I lived in the house of ill repute because they liked me. See, I was playing piano, I had a car. I was a band leader...at fifteen I was a band leader, but I couldn't read music, I couldn't play that well, you know, but I could, ah...

BROWER: Would this be 1935, 1934?

BLAKEY: Huh?...1934, 1935, I don't what year...

BROWER: OK. Just relative...

BLAKEY: And we played and I couldn't play well enough. Enroll Garner came in and sat in one day...that was the end of my piano playing career. The boss at the club told me "you should be

playing drums". We had a big argument. He said "you big dummy, you get up there and play those drums". So, I went up there and played the drums and I've been playing them ever since. It wasn't a question of taking no lessons, because it was no lessons to take. At that time, you know, Mrs. Parren, she's trying to support me and two children and every day, working. There was no welfare, there was the Red Cross, and she wouldn't accept nothing from them anyway because of her dignity. She was working every day and they worked for fifty cents and car fare...all day, scrubbing floors, washing clothes, washing White people's windows, and stuff...just to make it. This was ridiculous, you know, but this is what was going on at that time. After Erroll Garner came in and took my job...I started playing drums and I've been playing ever since. The greatest teacher is experience, anyway. I got more experience and I began to learn about...and I loved the instrument anyway. I was more prone to the drums because when I had my band, and I was playing the the piano, I

always watched the drummer and always told him what to do. And it was correct and so it must have been my instrument, I think it was a good switch for me.

BROWER: A couple of three questions... the schools that you went to do you remember the names of them...?

BLAKEY: Sure I went to Mckalvey Grade School and I went to Herring Hill Junior High.

BROWER: Thats Herring Hill is when you...?

BLAKEY: Yeah, thats finished right there, I didn't get to high school, sure I remember those schools, I never will forget it. When the principle use to come in and say, "All of you colored kids now what you can do any career in your life you can be a Negro undertaker, a Negro doctor, a Negro plumber, a Negro lawyer" ... and I would say what is a Negro lawyer... what is a Negro plumber, what is that either you are a plumber or you are not a plumber... he wouldn't answer the question.

BROWER: Was this a White man... Black man?

BLAKEY: Its a White man... an integreted school... "Now you White kids have this cabinet maker"... I said that cabinet making is going out of style... so he called me to his office and he told me to bend over, he was going to paddle me... and I said not me, and to support myself we are going to paddle each other, so he had me put out of school... I couldn't go for what they were doing... you understand I never could. I wanted to know what a Negro doctor was, a Negro preacher, what a Negro lawyer was, what a Negro plumber... he is a plumber or not a plumber period. Just like I have always tried to find out in my life, what is a Negro citizen, either you are a citizen or you are not a citizen... second class citizenship... there is no such thing, if you are not a citizen, then we have not acquired that and all of struggles we have had we have not acquired that yet... we are still second class citizens... still an unwritten law... still going by that law and see that upsets me and when I learn travel

in my life my education has all come through music... travel and reading and going to the library thats my education. I think it did help make up my personality... I don't feel bitter about it because I feel it is my job to wake my people up to... start thinking.

BROWER: Going to the point of the piano... did you say Mrs. Parren had a piano in the house that you could tinkle around with?

BLAKEY: Oh yeah, she played piano too... she could read music... she was ah...

BROWER: So you just sat down and just did by ear?

BLAKEY: Yeah, cause of my family... see the Blakeys were all musicians... my fathers brothers were all musicians and my father hated musicians... my father found out when I was about seventeen years old that I was a drummer... after I find that he was my father, cause he had to sign for me to get married... you see so I went down and asked him to borrow his car to move my drums down

to----- and he said what drums and I said my drums... he said what you are a drummer... I said yes sir... he said boy nobody makes nothing on the ass but a shoemaker, say you had better go down there and get you a job somewhere. This is the mantality of the people at that time, and still is... in our case and alot of things you know, so he didn't like his brothers cause they were musicians.

BROWER: What kind of music did they play?

BLAKEY: One of them was the chorus of Central Baptist Church... one of them taught at Berkley vocal music and one of them taught in Los Angeles.

BROWER: Now the advantage that you had when you were like fifteen, what kind of music were you playing...? What kind of music was that band playing that you had when you were fourteen... fifteen-----?

BLAKEY: ----- A bunch of young kids

was trying to play... Kids get together and they form a little rock band and they go out and make a little gig, we were doing it but we were on the road see...

BROWER: Where would you play... what would the road consist for you at that point... what would be on the road... where would you go?

BLAKEY: Everywhere, Cincinnati, Indiana, anywhere... it would make no difference, you know, I had my own bus and just go... I had a lot of nerve... I could go down and talk to people about anything and get it. I needed a bus... I could go down get a bus... get a small bus, a very nice bus... I got it from the Greyhound Company... traveled anywhere, to Cincinnati and that's where I met other musicians... worked with Fats Navarro, J. J. and Snooks Russells, they were working with Snooks Russell's band at the Savannah and that was a big jazz center at that time in Cincinnati, Ohio. Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, all of the cities, Kansas City... big jazz things was happening...

BROWER: So we are talking about still the late thirties... we are not into the forties yet... we are still talking late thirties?

BLAKEY: Yeah.

BROWER: Did Erroll Garner become a part of your band at that point?

BLAKEY: No, no, in Pittsburg he did... he was too good, Erroll Garner was a professional when he was a kid, he was playing on the radio every week... he was on the radio on a thing called Candy Kids... special talented kids, you know, from all over the city... you know, Black and White playing... he was playing on that, he was the most professional kid on there. They use to call him Gumdrops, he sure could play man, just like you hear on a record now he played then, thats the way he played when he was a kid. While alot of us have talent, then there are those of us that have a gift... he had a gift.

BROWER: -----?

BLAKEY: Well----- jump up off of the floor and slap him and he would not know what hit him, it didn't make no difference to him... didn't make no difference... whatever it is he could play it... what key it was in, as long as it was a piano he would play it... he has been that way all of the time. His sister Martha she taught music, Lynton Garner is up in Canada, he is a great musician, a trumpet player, he played piano. I worked with him in Fletcher Henderson's band... I also worked with him in Billy Eckstines band. Lynton Garner... Eonrol Garner would not listen to his brother or sister play... he would say they ain't playing nothing, he wouldn't sit down and listen to them. He is gifted, he is just a gifted man.

BROWER: At that time what other musicians... other musicians I know of in Pittsburgh...Earl Hines. Did you know him in Pittsburgh.

BLAKEY: Sure. I didn't know him in Pittsburgh, but I worked

with him.

BROWER: But that was later...

BLAKEY: I listened to his music. He's much older than I am. His band used to come to the Grand Terrace. I made a "crystal set" and used to listen to the music...listen to jazz coming from there. That's the reason I can't understand people not knowing anything about jazz now, there is no excuse...T.V., radio, records. We didn't get no such thing as records. The only way I heard a record is...the nickelodeon. Put a nickel in the nickelodeon and I'd hear all the bands. That's the only way I heard them. Maybe in the block, one person had a radio, so I had to make my own crystal set and catch them coming from Chicago, because Pittsburgh is like the turn table of the west...I could get them coming out of Chicago and I would listen to these bands. People now don't want to listen to it, you see. And what makes it so difficult, is the Black people! They don't back it at all. All over the city, everywhere we go, Black people complain about

this, they complain about that, they complain...so and so. Our audience in Japan is Japanese, in this country its Caucasian, in Europe its Caucasian. They are the people who back jazz. Black people do not do it. I don't know where there're at. They're busy putting down this, busy putting down that. Spanish speaking people...Salsa Bands, when they play, you can't get in there. Its like sardines...they back their art form, you see. ...and we do not back it. I gave a lecture here at New York University, there's three Black kids in there...652 Whites. Black kids say, "well we can't afford to come down there". I say "you pay fifty to a hundred dollars to come down to hear Micheal Jackson or James Brown...and get damned near crushed to death, and you rebel about paying five dollars to see Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Basie, Duke Ellington...you got to be out of your mind". In all the universities...I don't no what's happening at your univeristy, but we played Duke Univeristy, right?...Mary Lou Williams taught down there for years, right?...Paul Jeffries is

the leader down there of the jazz orchestra, right? ...they got a thirty-two piece jazz orchestra, right?...they ain't got one Black in it! We went down there and did a program, they're playing our music, which Paul arranged...some Thelonious music, they're sitting up there playing it perfect, understand? They have the knowledge and the wisdom up there in their head...the only thing that's saving us, they got to learn how to come out from their heart, and once they do it's good bye Charlie! Just like ----- Just like they did with "rock". Once they learn it, you've had it.

BROWER: Well, it's an idea. Once the ideas are put out there, once they are played, once they are invented, they don't have any color.

BLAKEY: Yes, but it doesn't mean...see, when an idea is presented to the world, it doesn't belong to the individual or the individuals who bring forth the idea, it belongs to the whole

world to utilize, but, for gods sake, those who bring forth the ideas should be given the credit. That's what I'm talking about. You know, you get the credit for it.

BLAKEY: Well, that's part of the purpose of this project, to get that story down and clarify it from the musicians themselves. Did you know Billy Eckstine in Pittsburgh?

BLAKEY: Sure. Well, I didn't hang out with him, because I was too young...much younger...not that much younger...

BROWER: So you did know him as a musician in Pittsburgh?

BLAKEY: Yeah, I knew him. Yeah, he wasn't a musician, he was a singer...singer, dancer... He was something else. He used to work in a club across from where I worked.

BROWER: What were those clubs called?

BLAKEY: Huh?

BROWER: What were some of the names of the places...

BLAKEY: Where I worked was the "Ritz". I've forgotten the name of the club he worked across the street. He was the -----, he

was the singer, he'd sweep the floor at night...

BROWER: He did everything?

BLAKEY: Ah, sure. We made fifteen dollars a week...my band made fifteen dollars a week, wore tails. We went to work about eight-thirty, got off about eight-thirty the next morning, had a ball. And that's when the band would play, I'd take the spinet and go around the tables and sing dirty songs and make a lot of money.

BROWER: Really?

BLAKEY: Ha, ha.

BROWER: Do you remember some of the songs you'd sing?

BLAKEY: Sure. I made them up.

BROWER: Give me...

BLAKEY: No, I can't do that.

BROWER: You can't, ha, ha. Why not?

BLAKEY: Too filthy. They liked that. You know, gangsters would come in and do that. This was prohibition, there wasn't no whiskey. You'd knock on the door and say "Jake sent me" or who

ever and you'd get in. The gangsters had all the money. And late at night, after that was over, the last show, the jam sessions would begin. Basie was in town, he'd come by. Lester Young come by every night. All the cats would come by and jam. Bands passing through Pittsburgh going somewhere, they would stop and we would have a big session. That's where I met all the musicians...and I was playing piano, ha, ha, ha. The piano player would come they would say "get up, boy, you don't know what the hell you're doing", ha, ha, ha. So, I'd get up, let him play, ha, ha, ha, ha...so I just went to the drums...so I started playing drums and got a lot of confidence after a couple of years of playing the drums. Well, there was a drummer in Pittsburgh was inspiring me a lot. His name was "Honey Boy". At that time they had a lot of trick drummers. They could twirl sticks and could do, you know...Lionel Hampton is one of them...and Honey Boy, I think was one of the last drummers of that time who could

do that...twirl sticks, throw them up in the air, build pyramids with sticks...you know...

BROWER: Do what?

BLAKEY: Build pyramids! Put one stick in his mouth, connect another one here, you know... I was trying to learn all that and twirl sticks, 'til Chick Webb in one night. You know, at that time drummers had trapp tables and they had timple blocks...you know what timple blocks are on drums?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: You had everything. You had a thing like a fire cracker, you had a whistle, you know... When the chorus girls danced, you'd---- ---- - tell the lady in the kitchen, bing! weeee! It was a ball, that's where I learned how to play...watching her hind parts, see. At that time in the clubs, there was a group called the "Jewel Box Review". They were transvestites, but they were fantastic. They taught me a lot about music too...how to play the show. They were very strong

and they could really dance. And, ah...

BROWER: What did they teach you?

BLAKEY: How to play. How to keep up.

BROWER: The intensity of it...

BLAKEY: Yes sir, and what to do. How to catch this, how to catch that. Of course Honey Boy, he was busy down the street. He had another show...he'd be twirling and catching all that stuff...he was exciting. So, what I did...I took a string and tied it to the ceiling...a black string and brought it down to my drums and I painted my sticks because I saw Andy Kirk come in and his drummer, ah...Andy Kirks drummuer, his son is still alive, same name, was playing with Oscar Peterson...

BROWER: Oh, Thigpen

BLAKEY: Thigpen.

BROWER: Ed Thigpen.

BLAKER: His father came in and Andy Kirk, he'd turn, put the "black" light on him and the sticks would light up and he'd have

these gloves on. So, I stole the idea and started doing it myself. The sticks would light up when they turned the lights out. Well, nobody could see the string on the ceiling...I'm playing, hit a rim shot..bam! and throw the stick out in the audience...people would say, oh!!, and I'd catch it, twirl it...ha, ha, ha, ha...

BROWER: That was your trick, huh?...ha, ha, ha.

BLAKEY: Twirling the stick, Chick Webb sitting there... So, I got through and went over and shook hands with him and talked with him. He said "ah, you must be a drummer"...yes sir. He said "take your drum up to the dressing room, I'll be up in a minute". For some reason, the guys in the band followed me up there. I don't know what the hell they were doing. They got up there and he said "So, you want to be a drummer". I said "Yes sir". He said "the first thing you got to learn, son, is the rhythm is not up in the air, its on the drums"...ha, ha. I'm

trying to be ----- . He walked to the door, looked at me and said "Shit!"...bam!, slammed the door, and left. He sent me a note and told me to come down to the theater the next morning...I was down there at eight o'clock. He took me upstairs, put me in a room by myself with a metronome, a snare, and a pair of sticks. Put the metronome at a very very slow tempo...funeral tempo...he said "Now, roll ----". That's when I learned how to play...my first and only lesson. So when I got to New York...I came with Fletcher Henderson...we were playing at the Apollo...he said "That's it son, when in trouble, roll"...ha, ha. That's my man. I never will forget...he taught me everything I know...

BROWER: Chick Webb?

BLAKEY: Just that...that was enough. You know, I was just watching him. I never had...I couldn't take lessons...I couldn't afford it. So, from there, I went on...I stayed out there with "Smack" for a while. I came to New York with Mary Lou Williams

and went back to Pittsburgh. Mary Lou was like my mentor, you know. She'd always talk to me and keep me straight ahead...she did that to all the musicians. We never looked at Mary Lou as a woman, we looked at her as a musician...another one of the guys, you know. And what she told you was sort of like the law, because you know she'd be telling you the truth...like you aunt, your mother, your big sister, you know what I mean? You know, she'd come shooting straight from the shoulder. So, I came here with Smack and I left the band...in Boston. I played up there, organized a band up there. So, I had a band at the Tic Tock Club, right down there in Boston, Mass. I stayed in there a couple of years, that's where I met Roy Haynes and we became friends...he's much younger than I was at the time. By the way, we were together this morning, hanging. I left there to join "B", so I took a couple of my guys in the band who were from Pittsburgh to join "B". We went down...St. Louis and the trumpet player...joined Billy Eckstine. So, that came into a new era of

the music for me.

BROWER: Can we stop, go back and ask you some things about that period?

BLAKEY: Go ahead.

BROWER: How did you come to join Fletcher Henderson?

BLAKEY: Well, it was during the war and all the musicians were leaving the bands...they were being drafted. So, that caused integration. All the bands had to integrate, both Black and White to get the best musicians to play. Fletcher's band...he was grabbing his men, you know. He came to Pittsburgh. He had a band in Pittsburgh called "Tommy E----" ...he left and joined Earl Hines...a trumpet player. Then it became Jimmy Murray's Band...another little trumpet player. Then Fletcher came through and he took the whole band...we all were in it together.

BROWER: Was a guy named "Vernon Smith" in that band?

BLAKEY: I don't know, he have been with Fletcher...he wasn't in

Pittsburg. I don't remember him in Pittsburgh. See, when the band first left Pittsburgh, I didn't leave with the band, because I was out working somewhere else with my own band. There was another drummer there who was called James Small...we called him "Diz"...Diz Small. He used to set up my drums and valet for me...he became the drummer, ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: In Smack's Band?

BLAKEY: Oh boy, he was so talented, yeah. He, Diz Small, became the drummer at that time. He left to go to the Army...they drafted him and that's when I came back and worked with Fletcher so he could hold the band together.

BROWER: OK. You worked with Fletcher over, say, a three year period or so, off and on?

BLAKEY: Oh, yeah. More than that.

BROWER: Is this like from 1939 into '43

BLAKEY: Yeah.

BROWER: Mary Lou Williams, how did you come to join...to play

with her?

BLAKEY: I was in Pittsburgh. She came there to organize a band. She came there to get me, a bass player, and a saxophone player.

BROWER: Did she know you from your days with Andy Kirk?

BLAKEY: Oh, sure. So she came there and she got the saxophone player, the bass player, and myself. Shorty Boo--- was with her...ah, what's his name? I called him "Shorty Boo ---"...he was with Duke Ellington...he used to play with Andy Kirk too. He left because he and Mary Lou were married. She had divorced John Williams, her first husband. Shorty Boo-- was his-----, a trumpet player...with Duke Ellington...oh, he could play. So, we all came here to New York together, but after that, there wasn't too much work.

BROWER: Was that 52nd Street? Kelly's Stables?

BLAKEY: Ah, yeah. We were worked 52nd Street. We worked out in Cleveland. B-----, that's where I met Joe

Williams. He was working out there too, so he was working with us, you know. He was singing on the show. That's where I first met him.

End side A--Tape #1

Begin Side B--Tape #1

BLAKEY: The band broke up. After Mary Lou, I went on to...what did I do?...I went on to...

BROWER: Did you go back to...

BLAKEY: I went back to Smack. I left Smack up in Boston, because I had a lot of problems down in ah,...Georgia...Albany, Georgia. I got beat up down there.

BROWER: I've read and heard different versions of that. Would you give a definitive version of what happened in ah...?

BLAKEY: I don't know. It's just one of those things, you know, I'd just rather forget, because I don't bare no bitterness about it...it was just ignorance...on my side and especially on their side... Just ignorance, I just didn't know. They didn't

understand at that time...we had cars, we had tires, we could get gas, but we were playing army camps with Fletcher Henderson...I was suppose to join him there in Albany, Georgia. He told us where to go...to his sister's house. We went across the railroad tracks and decided to wait there for him. The police stopped us because...another boy, a white boy, was together with us, and they arrested us.

BROWER: And this was an integrated band.

BLAKEY: Yeah, but the police couldn't see that...not in Georgia at that time. We just got in jail and a lot of confrontation and they beat us up. They tried to beat the other boy up, but he was a marine.

BROWER: Who was he? What was his name?

BLAKEY: He was a saxophone player in the band, so we were riding together. We had these cars, you know,...Chevy. We just unloading and getting ready to go into the house and heard this call "Hey, nigger". I didn't pay that no mind...I hear that all

the time around Black people. Cat come over and stuck a gun on us...said they wanted to see us down at the station...what's the idea of the gun?...took us down the station...when we got in there, the Desk Sergeant said "What you got, George?". He said "I got a nigger and a nigger lover" ha, ha. He said "What did the nigger do?"...he said "Nothing"...he said "Well charge him with something, by god, he's a nigger", ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: Damn.

BLAKEY: That's how it is, my charge was for being a nigger. I got an awful whipping for that. Tony -----, they spit in his face. By being a Masonic, we stopped the battle. I was a Masonic. The Captain came in and the battle stopped, you know, but it was a horrible... I guess it's one of the most horrible things I've ever lived through in my life. Damn, I think that was the worst. It was the closest to death I've ever gotten, and I didn't care whether I died or not, I was trying to find some

way to take one of them with me. You know, because in the background you hear the Blacks back there singing "Nearer My God to Thee" and the honkies up front talking about "kill that nigger, kill that nigger...they can't come down south...". Now, here they're in jail doing that shit. The turnkey is trying to shoot us with a double barrel shot gun, but the ----- -- and the police can't shoot us. See, I'm hit. I'm up against the wall, so I put my body in distress. The Captain comes in, he's a Masonic...because I had sense enough to know that the Captain was a Masonic. I had to get to him, because these little guys, I can't talk to them. So he came in and he stopped it. He gave us a speech, knocked me down...I did a backward summersault and went out the door. We got in the car and split. They give us sixty minutes to get out of Georgia, from Albany...sixty...

BROWER: Did you really have a plate in your head from that?

BLAKEY: Yep.

BROWER: So eventually, you had to go to a hospital and all that?

BLAKEY: Oh, in Boston, not down there...you don't go to no hospital. We couldn't even stop. I stopped at a friend of mine...I understand he was an undertaker from Pittsburgh...he asked me, please don't stop because they'll burn our houses down, they'll kill all of us...just go ahead. We didn't stop until we got to Louisville, Kentucky...came on straight to Boston...

BROWER: Now, you're in pain the whole time...you had to be?

BLAKEY: Sure. I went to Mass General---, they took care of it. I couldn't play. That's why I stayed in Boston...Fletcher let...

BROWER: So you needed to recuperate...and then you-----?

BLAKEY: Then I joined Billy.

BROWER: Tell me about the Tic Tock Club and that band.

BLAKEY: A lot of the guys were from Boston...Lou Taylor...let me see, ah...well I had a couple of guys from Pittsburgh with me and I had a piano player, but he got killed...he got shot in a bar. We were working around there, and I met Roy. Roy was working with Phil Edmonds. It was alright, for the time...we stayed

there a couple of years, then I got a telegram from "B" to come and join the band. I could never understand it because I...what the hell?...you know...I didn't know anything about Charlie Parker...Dizzy, I'd just meet him passing through, you know like St. Louis when we were changing train stations of something...I'd meet Dizzy, I'd meet Charlie Parker, you know...

BROWER: But you didn't really know them and you weren't really aware of what they were doing musically?

BLAKEY: Oh no. They had no records out. My man was Willie Smith...you know, all them kinds of guys...Benny Carter. I never heard of Charlie Parker. The saxophone player with us, we grew up together too in Pittsburgh, Orlando Wright...calls himself "Muso Kaleem"---now...he was pulling my coat to Charlie. He was saying "Man you got to listen to this man. This man has changed everything." I had to listen to him, because he was a saxophonist. He knew what he was talking about. He was a good

saxophonist. When I heard him, I was just upset. I'd never heard nothing like that before in my life. When I saw Dizzy...when I heard him play...when I heard Sarah Vaughn, I'd never heard nothing like that. Then I met, ah, Billy Holiday...you know what I mean, I was like, in a cloud. I could hardly eat--- man. You know, I was just a little cat...I was about ----- ---. With Billy, I'd never heard nothing like that. I seen...I felt the change in the music and I was so happy to be chosen to be a part of it. You know, because I always wanted to be different...I always wanted to do things my way. I heard most of the drummers in the country. I learned a lot from them, but I felt there was so much else to do. But you have to get in a band or with some musicians superior to understand what you want to do...and that gave me my first opportunity, when I joined Billy Eckstine, though I didn't know what the hell I was getting into. I wasn't making no money...didn't care, nobody was making money, ha, ha. I never heard no music like that. I never

heard music written like that or the concept...the concept. It fit so much with the concept I was trying to get together. It just fit. You know, it just came right together. Everything came together...these musicians all over the country. You know, it was a wonderful thing, and that was a blessing...really, just to get with them. I was just so upset that people didn't understand it. They didn't know what the hell was going on, because you know how people are, when the winds of change blow down the hall, they holler "Yea, wait a minute", you know...they don't stop and listen. It's like the music today, people hear it...Black people hear it, but they do not listen. All they have to do is listen. You know what I mean, they will not listen and it takes patience to sit down and listen and they don't want to do that. It's just like anything else, most people, if they'd start thinking would ----- for a-----. They don't think and they don't want to think. This is the same way. When I was a kid, they'd get and say "Well, it's going to rain today", "How do

you know it's going to rain today?", "The radio says so"... They ain't thought about looking up to see... and checking it out themselves. Because people didn't like to think, and they still don't. When I joined them, I heard this music...that was the end of that. I knew just where it was and just what I wanted to do, then I found myself, and that was a blessing.

BROWER: When you got the telegram to go to St. Louis...where there was the Plantation Club and Club Riviera and what ever...where they went to the Plantation Club, which was a "Black and Tan" Club and some incident happened and they weren't permitted to play...

BLAKEY: Wasn't no "Black and Tan" Club. Wasn't no such thing as that in the forties. No such thin. No such thing. During the war...Black people ain't got no idea about what the hell was going on. During the war you rode in trains across this country. You rode behind the engine. Now, you know how filthy and dirty

that is, hot, no air condition. You rode behind the engine, all that coal dust coming in the car. Here's where all the Blacks rode with their women, their children, the soldiers, the babies, instruments, luggage...all in one car. The cars behind...air conditioned, clean, some of them are empty...you couldn't even go back there and sit down...this is the way they were at that time. All over this country was the same thing.

BROWER: But, what I getting to is the situation that caused the club the band to move from one club to another club.

BLAKEY: Well because this is a new breed. This is another thing I found out...new breed of people and I was glad to meet up with these people, because this is a new breed of musicians...new breed of men, because, I myself, was a part of it...that's the reason I couldn't stay in Fletcher's Band, couldn't stay in that band, because I was dissatisfied. I thought guys like Fletcher were a little to meak. They had to be that way to get where they are, like Stepin Fetchit. If it hadn't been for Stepin Fetchit,

now we wouldn't have Richard Pryor or we wouldn't have Eddie
Murphy. We wouldn't have them. Them cats had to come at the
back door. They can't be jumping up there being arrogant...you'd
get knocked down. That's why the Indian is considered a savage
because he ain't got enough sense to tip around and come to the
back door. That's why we have survived today...you see. But I
couldn't be a part of that. That wasn't my thing, because I come
with another breed...arrogant breed. They knew what they were
doing. They were good musicians. The shit had hit the fan. We
were traveling all over, we knew how those people felt...you
know...and we weren't going for no shit. We traveled down south
and we had pistols...shoot anybody, White, Black...we didn't give
a shit who he was...mess with them, anybody. There was a
different breed of Black kids, and if the White guys... one time
we were coming out of the South... coming into Washington this
guy was sitting in the back filling up water cups and throwing
them up in the Black car-----

oh! you dirty niggers-----

The train pulled into Washington he got up and got his bag and
walked back to get off of the train-----

jumped off of the train... Byrd and them cats waited for this cat
to get out... when this guy stepped down... bam!, he hit him...

he said "Oh! my god" like a woman, he ran back up. So the rest
of the guys had runned down the aisle, when he come back and
stepped... they hit him down he went "Oh! somebody help me...

them faggets", they said pick him up and pull his pants down...

he ain't nothing but a fagget... there is this cat is out there
bleeding, and the guys walked away like saints like they hadn't
did nothing, so we split. So I found out that we had
another-----. We had a bus in the

South... and we had a southern bus driver... three o'clock in the
morning when we woke up, he had to stopped to get some diesel
fuel, and this guy come out of the place... "Why do you have this

bus full of coons, where are you going with them coons....?"

Dave woke up and heard and he say

"-----

ten dollars I will knock this son of a bitch... he would say bet me. And after the cat got through filling the bus up with gas, he took the thing out to put it on the pump... they say man what are you doing spilling that gas on my shoe... are you crazy or something... bam! he hit him... boom! he was out... he said give me my ten dollars-----, We didn't miss a city... this is the kind guys he was... lots of heart... he would shoot you too....-----

BROWER: Are we talking about the same Billy Eckstine that is suppose to be the suave-----?

BLAKEY: Yes sir, I am so glad that we didn't run into none of them policemen down there patrolling because we would have killed them... they wouldn't have a chance, we would kill them cats man... they wouldn't have chance because we know they were going

to kill us... but we were prepared for it... it was lucky because I had seen what they do-----

I have seen United States soldiers take and knock a pregnant Black woman down and draw guns on all of us... soldiers...

United State soldiers... St. Louis Missouri... because she had went for the sake of bying to her husband who was shipping out...

to go give his life... they knocked this woman down... do you hear me... pregnant, eight months.

BROWER: So what you are saying is that the group of players that were forming the new music also had a new consciousness about themselves and about what time it was.

BLAKEY: Thats right,-----

a whole different thing about it boy... they didn't care and thought different... they were intelligent, they approached the

thing and they weren't bullies... intelligent, you know, see

things like what happened... and you know, like we were down

South we saw Tiny Bradshaw in Florida and the cop didn't like

Tiny's saxophone player... he was malatto with reddish blond hair, but he was Black, and you know, he was playing and all of the little White girls were flirting with him and he was kidding with them and playing... so when he got off of the stage the little White girls ran up to him and asked for autographs, he was giving them autographs and smiling at them... the cop was standing back there with two guns on his side... and said nigger I have been watching all night being with these White gals and so and so you know... "I ain't thinking about these girls... this is my job..." he was getting ready to shoot him. So Tiny Bradshaw had to ran out and say, "I have got him boss... I have got him" and beat his own saxophone player up to save his life... thats what happened. But see this band didn't go for this shit... they would beat the shit out of the cop first... do you understand that... they wouldn't go for it... Charlie Parker wouldn't go for it... none of them would go for it.

BROWER: Now I just want to get this... top this one incident did Charlie Parker----- actually go around and break up all of the glasses that the Black musicians dranked from because of the racial atmosphere is that club... thats the incident that-----?

BLAKEY: Oh! yeah, oh they were just turning the cat on... see the club belongs to the Egan Rats, every time one of the families, I guess so called Mafia... Cosa Nostra, they didn't give a shit about that... and you know, they were trying to pull their little shit and Dizzy was saying, "I have got a little White girl in New York that look just like your daughter" ... and so Charlie Parker was going around picking up the glasses and the kids would say "Hey, Tad man did you drink out of this one"... Tad would say, "Yes, Charles"... he would say bam and break it, it is contaminated... all of this kind of shit was going on. ----- they were all down in the basement and he turned the light on and a big rat come out,

so he took the rifle and shot him... hit him just like that and so Benny McKay said, "That ain't shit... I will shoot that stick right out of your mouth," so he said "Well go ahead,"... so he put that the stick in his his mouth and he shot it right out of his mouth. So he said "Now you put it your mouth and I'll shot it out your mouth". He said "I didn't know you could shoot", he said "We'll soon find out", ha, ha, ha, ha. ----- Yeah, Art, ain't no bigger than a mustard seed now, so don't you tell me shit, no more you ain't got no heart. I let you shoot it out of my mouth. I trust you. Why can't you trust me? My reflexes are better than yours, I'm a younger man than you...I know I can shoot. He came in and brought us some stock arrangements. He told us he didn't want to play that music. So Billy and them...and Dizzy, tore it up and threw it in his face. They told them not to come in the front door that night. Lady Day and all of them came in the front door. They told them not to go out and sit in the audience after the show. Everybody went out and sat with the

audience. So, they had to bring back the other Black band, which was Jetter Pillers---. They had been working there for years. Man, they'd been beating them Black waiter's ass...they beat their ass...they beat their ass.

BROWER: So, what did the band do after you were put out of that club?

BLAKEY: We went to another club called the "Riviera". It was owned by Mr. Chambers, a Black man up there...a Black club. See Jetter Pillers--- went to the Riviera and we came into the Plantation. On opening night, we so bad, we were so terrible, ha, ha...they switched the band and brought Jetter Pillers--- back.

BROWER: You all did all the shit on the first night?

BLAKEY: Yeah!

BROWER: Smashing glasses, violating all the taboos.

BLAKEY: Yep, yep. Mr. Chambers moved the band to the Riviera.

So we stayed in there two weeks. We went in there and everybody got mad. Instead of the Black man trying to help us...the Bouncers in the club, they get mad with the band. They start jumping on the guys working in the band, the valets and things...Shit, that band got off the stage where we were playing "Second Balcony Jump", I said "Hey 'B' ha damn everybody's gone"...beat the shit out of the bouncers, ha, ha, ha...they whipped they ass, ha, ha, ha. I got down stairs and Fat Girl had his big forty five out and had the other bouncer up side the wall and said "Is that the right attitude?" ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: You talking about Fats Navarro?

BLAKEY: Oh, wee...them some terrible cats, boy...they were a different breed. The music was different. I saw it. When we'd have the "Battle of Music" with Andy Kirk, with Jimmy Lunsford...cats didn't understand what the hell we were doing. All they knew, it was swinging. They'd say "God Damn". Some of the musicians in the band, hip...would say "Yeah!". We'd play

some time and the band would end up a tune, and people were sitting there like this...we'd say "Yeah, it's ok, you can applaud, now", yea!...they didn't know what to do. There wasn't no music like that. They never heard a man play...Sarah would sing a ballad, Charlie Parker would come out and play sixteen bars and stop the show...stop it. We'd have to take the tune out...put another tune in...a saxophonist, behind a vocalist. You know, that's the time you got to recognize what a man is...you got to recognize it...I've never seen nothing like him...to play like that, and people recognized it. But he had so much dominance you had to listen. You know, there are certain types of musicians...there's Dizzy, Fats, Clifford Brown, Charlie Parker, Gene Amons, John Coltrane...dominance.

BROWER: They grab you.

BLAKEY: You got to listen to them.

BROWER: They seize your mind.

BLAKEY: Yeah, you know what I mean? You got to listen to them

or you're out of your mind. Wynton Marsalis has that. They don't have to know what he's playing or know all about the music, but he gets them. Especially women. Same thing with Miles...Erroll Garner...certain things, I heard it and I could see it in these musicians. All the time, other musicians throughout the country, both White and Black, were saying Charlie Parker couldn't read music...ha, ha. He was playing first alto with Billy Eckstine and he was the damnest thing I'd ever seen. He'd come to rehearsal...he was the musical director, and would rehearse the music...and at night he was sitting on his music, he didn't read that music, he's got it committed to memory from rehearsal...that's two or three arrangements...maybe four a day, didn't make no difference. He's playing the first alto, a key position...can't be jiving.

BLAKEY: Did you meet Miles Davis in St. Louis at that time?

BLAKEY: Yeah, I met him. We used to play at the Riviera.

That's where I met Miles. He used to come up and sit on the floor next to me. Sat down...play the trumpet parts...the trumpet players would...that black motherfu---... let him alone, let him alone..he's my buddy, you know, because he was young...he was young. I liked him because he liked the right things. He liked Dizzy, he liked Fats, he liked Freddie Webster, he was listening to the records...any kid who likes the right things, I can see what he's doing, you know what I mean. So he came to New York and that was it. He joined the band too. He's such a likable cat. "B"...just wait a minute man, ha, ha...play---- because he-----that's where he needed to be. All them heavy trumpet players, Kenny Durham...he needed to be there. That's what helped him. He took advantage of it and he just loved Bird. He come to New York and joined Bird. Miles is very smart. He's one of my favorite musicians.

BROWER: In the Eckstine Band, I read a comment where you told Art Taylor that you didn't think the band was ever properly

recorded...that the records don't reflect what the band sounded like...

BLAKEY: That's because of the War...but Jimmy Dorsey and them...well that's...White bands, you know...they can record. They recorded...ah...Glenn Miller. You know, I still can't understand that....that's alright too...I appreciate it too, but that music is damn near fifty years old and they still got the Glenn Miller Orchestra on the road...two or three of them.

BROWER: But no Billy Eckstine Orchestra on the road.

BLAKEY: That's what they should have out there...to give the other kids a chance to play, both Black and White. You understand? Both Black and White. Give them a chance to play and give the music a chance to be heard. Give the people a choice... give the musicians a choice, they don't do that. After we played down in Louisville, Kentucky, here they go Tex Benikie and all them people... man that music is fifty years old... don't make sense. They got the Tommy Dorsey's orchestra out there...

been having it for years and they work all of the time, then they make money if they have got two or three in Tommy Dorsey's orchestra or two or three this...

BROWER: Somebody is making money.

BLAKEY: Oh boy, or they wouldn't fool with it, you know, the mess I don't think it is fair. Now what is going to happen to Duke Ellington... what's going to happen to Count Basie, this is what I am saying.

BROWER: The band at that time... how would you describe the difference between what you would typically play on a night in the band and, I guess the only record that I know of is the spotlight record, which is live engagement, you know, like it was taken like air shots as opposed to the studio recordings?

BLAKEY: Billy Eckstine, National Records that's the one that did the thing, and National at that time and the booking agency...

Billy Shaw, they weren't interested in the band and music and

Charlie Parker.

BROWER: So they pushed this vocal side...

BLAKEY: They didn't know nothing about Charlie Parker, Sarah Vaughn... They were interested in Billy Eckstine, if he didn't sing on it, they didn't want to hear it... you understand, that's where their problem was, see the first thing they want to do is squash the whole thing... "Hey man y'all better listen to this"... as soon as it gets popular they are going to jump on the band wagon and walk around like they discovered the whole shit, that's what pisses me off, you know what I mean... there is hell trying to get through and all of a sudden they act like they... Oh! yea this is mine, Charlie Parker----- bullshit, they are fresh peddlers... I don't like them kind of people, you know what I mean... it ain't necessary, it's not necessary, you know what I mean... you don't ah,...the way I was taught, learned in my life the things you hear and see you don't try to belittle it... if you are intelligent you don't question and ask questions about it

and listen to it, you don't try to belittle the things that you hear and see...only the ignorant does that. You listen to it, question it, find out about it...you don't try to belittle it because you don't understand it. This is what they have done. Squash the thing or take the best of us...Charlie Parker or Art Tatum...and put him over here and let him do something with this group or this White band...things things they trying to do with Wynton. They take him and put him in front of a symphony orchestra. He's already proven he can play that. Wynton wants to play jazz, he wants to play his own music...his own art form. He's expressed that... Now he won't go funk and rock, but they stick him in front of a symphony orchestra. What's the big deal about playing something some motherfucker wrote five or six hundred years ago?...ha, ha...it ain't got nothing to do with it. They are not playing that...there ain't no way in the hell they can play that. Ain't no way in the hell you can sit down and play something Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers play. I don't

care what kind of musicians you got, because they don't feel like we feel at the time. You understand what I'm saying?

BROWER: At that moment...what coming out...

BLAKEY: It's impossible. It's like anything else...stories and things...anything, the Bible...a trip by St. Paul to Georgia...a trip by St. Peter...you know, you encounter different things on that trip, therefore they're going to have different kinds of stories. You cannot do that. You see...and jazz has elevated to such a high quality...it's the highest performance on the instrument in any kind of music... Musicians don't know what the hell they're going to play...Black musicians get up there from the creator to the artist to the audience...split second timing. Now there's no music on this planet like that...but that. You know what I mean, yet they're going to deny it. That's what makes me upset.

End of side B, Tape #1

End of Disk #1 --- Disk is Full

ART BLAKEY Interview (Con't.)

Disk #2

Begin tape #2--Side A

BROWER: What was your approach to playing the drums prior to joining the Eckstine Band? What kind of rhythms were you playing? How would you describe them?

BLAKEY: I couldn't say that. All I wanted to do was be one of the best drummers in the world. That's what I aspired to be, one of the best drummers in the world. Where ever I worked, I didn't set out to play "Art Blakey" or set up no style or that kind of bullshit. Where ever I was, I let the punishment fit the crime. Working with Duke Ellington, I play Duke Ellington. Working with Count Basie, I play Count Basie. Working with Andy Kirk, I play Andy Kirk. Working with Art Blakey, I play Art Blakey.

BROWER: You said you were searching for a different concept...going into that band, you found, not only a new attitude toward dealing with social life, but a new attitude toward music...I mean they went hand in hand. So how playing,

how did your phrasing, how did your...?

BLAKEY: It fit. It just fit in there. It fit what I wanted to do. What I never had a chance to do. I didn't do it before, I just never had a chance. I wasn't with the type of musicians that could do that, you know, so I never upset the status quo. When I worked with bands...all of them...I'd always ask "Is there anything I can do to make you sound better or make you happy", because that's what I'm there for. I'm not there to establish nothing. I establish myself by making them happy. That's the most important... So, I knew when I come into that band, they would fit more of what I wanted or what I trying to do...I didn't know what I was trying... I didn't have no set thing. I knew that what I wanted to play, I had to have certain kinds of musicians, because certain kinds of musicians didn't understand it. They hadn't been playing...they didn't play this type of music that we were playing. Well, Duke Ellington and them cats, they didn't play the type of music...you know. They were

wonderful musicians, I appreciated them, but the music that I wanted to play...or I would have played with them. I had the opportunity to play with them...Andy Kirk...I could have stayed there. I went out there and worked with Basie, I wasn't interested in that. I wasn't interested money, I'm interested in the art form and try to play what I had in my mind to do and not sit around and let people dictate to me what to do...I didn't think they knew what they were doing. I just didn't allow it. I didn't allow band leaders to do it either...not to me. So I figure, well if you want a carpenter, you don't go get a brick layer, ha. If you want a carpenter, you get a carpenter. The band leader hire me as a drummer, let me play the drums, you understand? If I ain't doing my job, then, you know, let me go. Let the punishment fit the crime. I always said that...because that's my thing, that's what I do.

BROWER: Let me read you something Dizzy said in To Be or Not to

Bop and you tell me what you think about the statement. He says "I taught all the drummers, Max Roach, Art Blakey, on down, and they're doing things I showed them now".

BLAKEY: That's what?

BROWER: This is a quote.

BLAKEY: A quote from who?

BROWER: A quote from Dizzy in "To Be or Not to Bop". He says "I taught all the drummers, Max Roach, Art Blakey, on down, and they're doing things I showed them now"...meaning continuing. Over and over again, I keep hearing references to Dizzy as being great rhythm man. Someone who is key in converting people into playing in a modern way. Was that a role he played with you specifically, or not?

BLAKEY: Dizzy is a teacher and he always was a frustrated drummer. Sure, he has taught everybody, I think. You know, you have to give credit where credit is due. I admire him for it, but all he could do was show you and give you ideas. Anybody can

give you ideas. There's another trumpet player in Pittsburgh who used to give me ideas about how to play and what to do. I would listen to him...I listen to anybody, didn't make no difference. You know it's just like the Bible say's, "Out of the mouth of babes comes wisdom". You know, I listen to anybody. Dizzy would listen to me concerning different things about rhythm, but I don't think he means he was a teacher, because he certainly couldn't teach anybody how to play those drums...he can't play himself. He'd just give you ideas of what to do...anybody can give you ideas of what to do, but he had a lot of ideas of how things should go that you could use, if you listened to him, you know what I mean... That's what he meant, I think. I don't think he meant he taught anybody how to play. You know, that's like me saying, I taught Dizzy how to play trumpet, ha, ha. That's what he meant. He'd give you ideas...good ideas.

BROWER: Your rhythm section mate for, I guess, most of the time in the Eckstine Band was Tommy Potter on bass...

BLAKEY: John Malachi...

BROWER: ...and John Malachi. Would you give...

BLAKEY: ...piano, and "Race Riot" ah, what's his name? Co---
Wainnright...

BROWER: Guitar?

BLAKEY: Yeah.

BROWER: Would you give me some sense of Tommy Potter as a
musician?

BLAKEY: He was good musician...bass player. He was very
quite...a very private person. I don't know too much about him.
He just played. I'd see him on the bandstand. We didn't hang
out, he was very private. He could play. He was there because
he could play. And John Malachi, we hung out a little bit, we
were tight, but not so much Tommy. I didn't get to know him like
I know John. Cat was very private...I didn't get to know Tommy
too well. He's still here in New York somewhere, but I haven't

seen him. Just like Curilly Russell, he recorded with me too, but I don't see him. I talk to him about to him about five or six years ago.

BROWER: Is Curilly Russel still around?

BLAKEY: Some where in New York. I talked to him on the phone. Since 1955, I talked to him once.

BROWER: What about John Malachi? By the way, he's teaching a Howard in the Jazz Program.

BLAKEY: He is? Jazz Program? Well, John's a good musician, but he had a family and he didn't want to sacrifice and come on out. But if he would have, he'd be much further than he is today. Much further...because he sure is talented. He just didn't want to come out, to make that sacrifice. He's in love with his family, he's happy, so that was it. But I don't feel that he should have stayed in Washington...after the band...after that take off, he should have been gone, you know, because he was brilliant. He never thought too much of talent--- and his work.

He sure could play and he could write. I used to go down there and I used come through Washington, we hang out together. I'd say "John, damn, why don't you write sometime?". He'd say "Ah, let's let sleeping dogs lie", ha, ha....he never did it. He's a great writer, I wish he would have kept it up. You know...to each his own.

BROWER: Freddie Webster is a name that you hear, but there's not much about him on record and not much written about...

BLAKEY: Freddie Webster is from Cleveland. He had a big band out there in Cleveland. He was well known in the Mid-West. He was a band leader and a hell of a trumpeter...and, ah...just died. After Billy 's Band, he just pasted away in Chicago somewhere. He was a hell of a person...a personality too, I hated to see him go. Ziggy Elmand-- and all of them used to come hear him play...Harry James. He had that commanding sound...another one of those guys. They used to always come and hear us too on account of Freddie. Freddie just pasted away.

You did get to hear him much. He did this thing with Sarah, and that's the only thing you could hear, that I know of. You know... "If You Could See Me Now", Tadd's tune... that's the only thing.

BROWER: Tell me something about Tadd Dameron?

BLAKEY: Well he was something like an arranger in the band. We met in Washington. He's from Washington... where's he from?

BROWER: He's from Cleveland.

BLAKEY: He lived in Washington when I first met him. He was in a club down there. He was writing for the show. He joined us... he was on the road with us for a long time. He was writing... he was learning too. He learned... hanging around Dizzy, Bird, and Sarah because he loved them. He was brilliant. He had a different way of voicing instruments to get a beautiful sound with the band. Tadd went as far as he could. He sure was a beautiful writer... went as far as he could. I wish he'd

lived...I'd just like to see which way...you know. He made some records with Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown, you know...made that "Memorial" thing...that was all his writing you know...fantastic!

BROWER: What about Fats Navarro?

BLAKEY: He was something else again. He just didn't live. He had a... Fats died of something real silly...tuberculosis. In modern times...but see, where he comes from...Key West, they believe in voodoo, they didn't believe in going to the doctor. That's why he died. I mean he knew better, but...you train your child the way you want it to go...when he's old, it's hard for him to depart from it, so that's what he was into. He just didn't go to no doctor. He should have went...people think he died from dope. He died from tuberculosis...in the fifties...kind of strange, but he did. I hated to see it. We were very close, in fact, I put him in the hospital...took him there. Friends...nobody came around him. Musicians are so stupid. Nobody took care of him but Miles Davis and myself. In

fact Miles Davis and I got very close because he was close to Fats too. We took care of him until he passed. I didn't care what he had. What ever he had, I didn't figure I was going to get it. So, that's the story of him. And we didn't get enough of him. Just didn't get enough of him. He introduced me to Clifford Brown...him and Charlie Parker. I heard Clifford Brown in the same tradition. I enjoyed him.

BROWER: Is it true that Charlie Parker... The way it's written in books is that they way you met Clifford Brown was, Charlie Parker said, "This is your trumpet player" and the guy just showed up in your dressing room.

BLAKEY: That's right. I went to the Blue Note and that was it. He said you need a trumpet player, I'll be there. I went there, I met Clifford Brown. That's the way that was. He could play. At that time, it was the Bebop Era, and everybody had certain little tunes...cliches they would play. Everybody would go on the job and just play...bunch of guys. They all played about the

same thing...all over the country...be jamming. But those days past very fast so there had to be organization. I started turning things around. I liked organization...Horace Silver, Hank Mobley, you know. We had it organized, because people would pay to see that.

BROWER: Bud Johnson...what role does he play with the band?

BLAKEY: Well, Bud was, like, musical director for a while, he played tenor, he wrote a lot of music, and the cats just loved him. Bud was just a cat that Billy Eckstine liked. Everybody liked him and he could play. It was like he had more experience than most of us and he would share his experience with the guys... show them this and that and rehearse the band, he was a good man to have around the band and he could play. I liked him very much.

BROWER: Was he like a link to so call swing generation in a sense... was he like a link to the Earl Hines generation and

Lundford generation?

BLAKEY: Well Earl Hines band, like it was like the cradle of bebop, it had all of the musicians in it and all of them would come and when Billy left they all left...they all formed the Billy Eckstine's Band...thats what happened...and Bud and all of them left. But Bud was the link from one era to another...he definitely was...he came out of that era, the other era...the swing era and did the bebop era.

BROWER: How about Gill Fuller?

BLAKEY: Gill Fuller?...I don't know to much about Gill...I don't. They say that he was a great arranger and everything... I don't know him. I never worked around him. I just worked with him, I don't know. You know, if I don't know or really know the man I would rather not say nothing about him because I don't know.

BROWER: We will pass on that...

BLAKEY: I don't know too much about him, you know what I mean...

alot of things we agreed to disagree...so I just...you stay there and I will stay over here...so you know, I don't talk to much of him as a man.

BROWER: How about Dexter Gordon?

BLAKEY: Wonderful guy, he is here, his back, he has been ill for a long time. Sure, Dexter joined the band. I always liked Dexter...everybody likes Dexter, I think. He is a wonderful personality.

BROWER: Would you say he was the main guy on the tenor at that time?

BLAKEY: No, hell no... Charlie Parker played tenor, Fats Navarro played tenor, Gene Ammons played tenor, Lucky Thompson played tenor. You ever heard of Lucky Thompson? He was a bad man. He was one of the guys that could play. There were different styles and they had them. Gene Ammons was playing, a lot of cats playing...Leo Parker plays, Sonny Stitt, John Jackson...hell of a saxophone players. The whole front line of Billy's was

terrible...anyone of them could play, anybody...so thats you know anybody... any guy could play, there was no first or second saxophone...second or third alto. There was no such thing as the first or second nothing, all of them cats could play. Anybody could play first trumpet, anybody could play...all of them could play...that was a hell of a band. And they didn't stand up spending their time reading music...they had down the music it wasn't any bull shitting. At that time every tub---- had to sit on its own bottom, thats what I liked about the band... every tub---- sit on its own bottom. There was no, like a lot of bands they carry a lot of weight, you know, guys sitting up there ain't playing shit, getting paid, I don't like that. If you are up there you are suppose to play, do you know what I mean, you are suppose to play...and sometime the band was so big they need blowing room for the cats to develop anyway, so I don't like a big band to much anyway. After Billy's band and Lester's big

band, you have got them, I wouldn't have them.

BROWER: Around that same time in the late forties...and this is going in a different direction...a lot of the musicians began to take Muslim names...I said in the late forties a group of musicians began to change their names...began to adopt muslim names. Was this related to the point...?

BLAKEY: Some of the musicians were sincere...well you know, people just like today it is the same shit today people they are looking for their identity, you know, I don't have no identity problem, you know what I mean you are looking for identity... they don't want to be who they are, instead of being their selves they want to be somebody else which they are not...in which they haven't done any research on or nothing. They haven't been anywhere...they just go off because they have got this shit all buried within them...the hate, do you understand, so they come off they want to do something else...they want to be somebody else which they are not. But they want to be an Arab,

they want to be in Africa...now how in the hell are you going to be in Africa or an Arab. You are an American Black, so called Negro thats what you are, you should be proud of it.

BROWER: So, you feel that, just to change your name is kind of supperficial action on a lot of people's part?

BLAKEY: That's bullshit. What's in a name? Don't make no difference. Just like you get use to everything, man. You've been around Black people...say "Hey nigger!". You don't even pay that no mind until you hear it from a White person. You don't pay that no mind. You know damn well you don't..."Hey you black bastard, you black son of a bitch", you hear that all the time. What's in a name? Nobody gets angry about it, except if a person of a different race says it. It becomes derogatory, right? That's all that shit is. That's bull shit. I changed my name because I wanted an African name. I changed it by law, legally. I was one of the first to ever do it...that's all. People call me Art, that's my name, that's how I grew up, that's what I want.

Because I wanted it easy...now you can use any kind of name. At that time I wanted it easy so people could remember...Art Blakey. I wasn't rebelling against nothing. Nothing wrong with that. I was born "James Edward". I didn't know that until I was an older man. What difference is there in a name? Doesn't make any sense...you know, it's a bunch of bull shit. That's what it is, because you certainly can't prove that. If they claim they are Muslims...if you're in Islam, you cannot set yourself up on a pedestal or be set up on a pedestal and be an Islam. You're not a Muslim...bull shit. If you're going to be a Muslim, all you have to do is proagate--- Islam, don't sit around and be bullshitting. Talking about, "I'm this and I'm that", you making big money and people are looking up to you. That's not Islam. People go into that and don't even know what they're doing. It's the same shit. Like people go around and say "I'm Christian". They and no god damn Christian. They don't know about no

Christianity. They don't even know about the Bible. People can't even recite the first chapter of the Bible. Or the first phrase of it. They don't even know about it. They say "I'm Christian". Well what the hell...why are you a Christian? What makes you a Christian? Why do you believe this? They haven't even thought about it. They've never thought about it. What is this? Why am I a Christian? Who is this? How did I get to be a Christian? They don't even know about it. I say, ok, quote to why you are...tell me why...bring me into it...make me a Christian. They don't even know what the hell they're talking about. The preacher...all of them, man...it's a bunch of bullshit. You go down, you see Al Green, he's on the stage...go to Memphis...he got a church down there...he's up here preaching in the church, right? He tells the members, "Don't go down there to hear Blakey. That's the devil's music. You see them White people down there." The sisters are fighting over him...that's Christianity? Bullshit. They use religion for their own

purposes. It's become a big business. I don't like that. I really don't like it. I disapproved of it when Muhammad Ali did it...Abdul Jabbar did it...it ain't necessary.

BROWER: Why did you choose an African name?

BLAKEY: Because I was in Africa. Because I was over there. Because I knew what it was about. I was there. I never accepted Islam and said I was a Muslim. Never said that. That means making five prayers a day. That means for me to give up my music. That means I can't take any more pictures or have any pictures of myself. I'm out of business. I want to be practical, I'm living here in the United States. That's against Islam. I don't want my wife be walking around in no long dresses and all that...you can't...we're living in a modern world...you can't do that. You going to propagate Islam, you go on and propagete it. Those who are sincere in any kind of religion, Catholicism, Judaism...if you're sincere, that's ok. Solid, people need that. I will not put it down. But, people come on

with this bullshit. They want to be something, they are not. All you have to is be yourself. Be proud of where you come from, because you didn't have to be here. You're lucky to be here. Why not go along? Why say that you are...all this kind of stuff that's going on with our people here...with the whole thing, Christianity, Jessie Jackson...politician. Be a politician, don't be talking about you're no reverend. Go on a be a politician, but don't ----- in there. Leave that over there somewhere. I call a preacher, "Sky Pilot"...you know what I mean, because that's what they are. It's a business. They have a choir...and just like a club has a good jazz band as the backbone of the club, the choir is the backbone of the church...calls people and get the money. That's what it is and any minister will tell you that. Get any Black minister and say "Quote me the Ten Commandments for the Bible, quote it down verbatim". He can't do it. Now, if he went to a seminary, and

study, how come he can't do it? I can do it. I can recite the Bible from Genesis to Exodus, how come he can't? I learned to do it so I can understand. I can read the Karon-- in Arabic. I can memorize the Karon, how come he can't do it. I can memorize To---- and Ton----- in Hebrew, how come he can't do it. I'm not brilliant, I'm a musician. I want to do that to understand people, because religion, not politics really runs the world...how people think. You can't get to know people unless you know what they're thinking and what they believe in...and respect that. They don't do it. I met a sister today...says "Leaders...they ain't no leaders, they jiving". Long as they make some money...Stokely Carmicheal and all of them. All them cats, man...if they're making some money, if they're using that "White folks this, White folks that". You can't do that kind of shit. We're a new breed. We don't belong to Africa. See them cats walking around with all that shit all over their head? We are not Africans. We are a new breed. My people come from the

Virgin Islands over there. I checked it out. My wife checked it out, she's White-----...she checked it out. In the Virgin Islands...before then they were Irish. The Blakey's. Now how in the hell can I be African? Look around at my family. Look at the kids. Look at T-----, his mother is Japanese. You going to tell me he's African? Neither of my children...none of them have an indentity problem, because I teach them. They're proud of what they are. They all connect themselves right to the Black race, because I'm a Black American, I'm the father. They connect themselves right to it. They ain't got no identity problem, they ain't thinking about it. They look at you like you crazy...T---- ain't no lighter than you, Japanese...

End side A, Tape #2

Begining side B, Tape #2

BLAKEY: ...do as I do, do as I say do. They are not a friend to their sons. They want to be the ruler...they want to tell you "That's my son"...but that's his life. He's got to live it.

He's got to make his own decisions. I'm his friend, not his father...and that's all he needs. He doesn't need that other shit... the bullshit. It gets so your son can't sit down and talk to you about sex. It gets so your son can't sit down and smoke a cigareffer---. If he wants to take a br-----, let him take a br-----, but what ever it is you say "Hey man, you know what you're doing...he got to...it's his life. Everything he learns in the street...he should not it in the street, he should learn it right there in his house and then go out there. I never had no problem with mine, I teach them everything right here...about whores and everything. My oldest son...I'm the first person who took him to a whore house in Paris. Straighten him out...first time he had a woman. Why not? I'm the father. I ain't got no problem with my boys. Venereal diseases -----

BROWER: We want to slip back for a second. You went to Anfrica yourself and spent some time. What year was that? What did you

do? And what did you learn?

BLAKEY: I wasn't doing nothing. I just went over there, searching...just searching. I was trying to learn about Islam and trying to learn about the eleven religions of the world. Because always taught me that there were hundreds and hundreds of religions. That's a lie. There's only eleven living religions. People lied, because they don't know what they're talking about themselves. I wanted to find out. I was there, thank God. I'm a Black American, I play jazz and that's what took me everywhere I wanted to go, Africa, Soviet Union, China, everywhere. I've been all over the globe, lots of times. And the only reason I'm there is I'm a Black American playing Black music...American jazz. You go there and you see those things for yourself...because I wanted to learn. That's where my education comes from.

BROWER: Where did you go in Africa?

BLAKEY: Nigeria, on the Gold Coast. And before, what's his name?...Nkroma was here...remember Nkroma?

BROWER: Com-- Nkrome---?

BLAKEY: He went to school over here.

BROWER: Lincoln University.

BLAKEY: ...before his country became a state, I was there.

BROWER: Ivroy Coast.

BLAKEY: I knew him. My attorney at that time was his friend...they were friends. Now Bruce Wright is a Superior Court Judge. That was our road manager. Did you know that?

BROWER: No.

BLAKEY: Whose road manager? The Messengers?

BLAKEY: The Messengers. He traveled with us too. Sam Pierce was our lawyer too. That's the only Black in Reagan's Cabinet.

BROWER: Secretary of HUD.

BLAKEY: Jazz lovers. Quiet, powerful men...they'll scare you to death. Just like J. Gordon Liddy said, the only Black man he ever met in his life...he knew when he looked at him, didn't take

no shit was Sam Pierce. Read his book. A very imposing man, no bullshit. Those men, I respect...my idols. Sir Muhammad ---- Khan...them kind of men. Be yourself.

BROWER: Who is Sir Muhammad Sa-- fala Khan?

BLAKEY: He was President of the U.N. when it first started in New York. He's from Pakistan. He dead now, but he was a friend of mine. I was hanging out with him, he'd call my pad. That's how get the idea I was a Muslem. I am Muslem in a sense, but I have never submitted. If you submit yourself to the will of God then you're Muslem. Then I'd have to go and proagate it and all that stuff...I like to play the music and this is what I have to do. I think that is why I was put in this position, to play music and not splitting my time and talent bulshitting. People get in certain positions, get well known and come around and do a switch.

BROWER: For the sake of chronology, you went to Africa after the Eckstine Band broke up in 1947?

BLAKEY: After, yeah. I didn't stay there long. I wanted to go and see and get a perspective of what to do, how to do, how to understand... I went to church in Pittsburgh, The Church of God and Saints of Christ...Sanctified. I never agreed with the Bible. In fact, they literally put me out the church like they did in school, because I was questioning everything. I was told "You're not suppose to question the word of God". Then I told the minister that I can't worship nothing I can't question. But one thing they did, they made me learn that Bible...I appreciate it. Some of my kids still go there...here in Brooklyn. wanted to know...about Judaism...that's all. And then you write ups saying "He went to Africa to learn how to play drums, aint't that something"...shit. African drumming ain't got nothing to do with us. They're so advanced rhythmically. They've got another thing going. We're using a different harmonic scale. We use Eurpoean instruments, the Eurpoean harmonic scale. I say there

is no reason for them to carry on this other bullshit. Let's put it all together. Like you say...it's an idea, everybody is supposed to use it.

BROWER: There was a band, later in the forties, that went by the name "The Messengers". Can you give me the history on that? How it came about? Who was in it? How long it lasted...that kind of thing?

BLAKEY: Well...

BROWER: Seemed like that band evolved out of the Eckstine Band...

BLAKEY: I had a court order----in New York. The real reason why I did that was because I had a son...I got a son, his name is Art Blakey, Jr. and he looks like I use to look, ha, ha. I wanted to get him out of my shadow. You know, you see like Frank Sinatra was doing, going through all that shit. Having his son kidnapped to get popularity and all that. His son was in his shadow...Frank Sinatra, Jr, shit, nobody's going to come see that

and if they do, he's got to be so much greater than his father.
Or Liza Minnelli...how many times has that come along, you know
what I mean.

BROWER: Vis a vis, Judy Garland?

BLAKEY: Yeah. So, you can't deny that, so I court and had the
name changed to Buhana----...so he could use his own...so he's an
individual. And sure enough, as it did, he started playing drums
and then guys started hiring him. You'd see a big sign up there
on top "Art Blakey". Then, using a magnifying glass, you'd see
"Junior",ha, ha. And he was getting side man pay. I said no,
man, you don't do that Art. I tried to protect you from that,
but that's his name too, Art Blakey. If he didn't want to use
his other name, he didn't have to. I gave him another name, it
was Na-----...he don't use it, but it's legal. At least I
gave him a choice. Because I found it was a mistake to name him
Art Blakey, Jr....you know. I feel that he should have his own

name because he's an individual...you understand?...and I'm an individual. I don't think he should be smothered by things I do. People expecting things out of him that's not fair. I don't think that's fair. So that's the reason I tried to give him another name. I was fumbling about, you know...ha...I tried, but it didn't work. But he's doing alright now...

BROWER: What I was referring to was the first "Messingers Band" in the forties.

BLAKEY: Well, the reason why they did that was because my name was "Buhana----" and the first thing they did a Minton's Playhouse...they had my name up there...Abdula E--- Buhana----. I had them take that down.

BROWER: This was in the late forties?

BLAKEY: Yeah, late forties. I was rehearsing a band there at Minton's...everyday...a big band. And these guys, a lot of them had become Muslims...changed their names...because they were angry, frustrated. Wanted to be Arabs...

BROWER: Anything but an American.

BLAKEY: Anything. You know, they got frustrated, so...

BROWER: That's like, you know my generation went through the same thing. We all took different names, things like that.

BLAKEY: So, they had this band. They called it "The 17 Messengers"...

BROWER: Of Allah? By inference, of Allah? "The 17 Messengers", unsaid "Of Allah"? Was that the idea? Or just "The 17 Messengers"?

BLAKEY: No. It was "Abdula --- and the 17 Messengers". Then I had them change it to "Art Blakey and the 17 Messengers". Well, the band was good. We had a hell of a band. We had the best guys. We had wonderful guys, man. They organized the band...really. The guys organized the band. All the guys, Kenny Durham, A--- Suliman---, Shahib Shahab---, all these cats. They organized the band...and said, well you're the leader...look here, you're going to lead the band. I said ok, alright. So, we

couldn't get no work. I did everything I could. That band folded, because big bands were going out anyway. We broke the band up and Horace Silver went and got Hank Mobley, Kenny Durham...Kenny Durham was in the "Messengers" too, big band...and, ah...he said "Art, we got a group here, Hank, Kenny, Doug Watkins, myself, and you the leader". He said, "We can't call it "The 17 Messengers", we'll call it "Jazz Messengers"...Horace Silver...

BROWER: I just want to go back. I have never seen any of the names mentioned for "The 17 Messengers" except Kenny Durham, Shahi---. Can you give me as many names in that band as possible?

BLAKEY: You've never seen...

BROWER: You know, like a sense of who...I've seen a couple of key names, like Kenny Durham, but, ah, can you give me as many of the...

BLAKEY: Where's that thing...I had here...you know...a big tree with all the musicians that came out of... All the guys I named. You had Clifford Brown...

BROWER: Look, I'm talking about specifically who were in "The 17 Messengers", not subsequent "Jazz Messengers" bands. That band...

BLAKEY: Oh. You mean "17..."

BROWER: Yeah. Who was in that band? That's what I'm saying.

BLAKEY: E---- Sulimin--, Shiheb Shahab---...you know Shiheb Shahab, you know him?...

BROWER: Un huh, the alto player. Recorded with you on the Monk stuff.

BLAKEY: ...and, ah, let me see...Andy Kirk, Jr....tenor player, Sonny Rollins, Bud Powell, ah, who was on bass?...can't think who it was now...and...trombones, who'd we have in the trombone section?...I've forgotten their names...King was one of them, I forget their names, man...ah...Ta----Da---, that baritone player,

Cecil Payne... Anyway, we had seventeen pieces. Some of them were big, some of them weren't. Like Kenny Durham was the heaviest...Sulimen---, Shiheb Shahab---, Bud Powell...they were the heaviest...

BROWER: The heaviest cats...

BLAKEY: Sonny Rollins was just getting started, we was just kind of...

BROWER: He had to be about seventeen or so...

BLAKEY: Andy Kirk, Jr. was terrible...ha, ha...a saxophone player...tenor. He passed...I think.

BROWER: There's no chance that that band was ever recorded?

BLAKEY: Yeah, we did a recording under the name of "Walter Fuller". I don't even know what happened to it. But we recorded under Walter Fuller's name. It was most of the cat's music. It wasn't his music. That's when parting of the ways went down. Something didn't go down right...like taking the credit away from the guys, you know...I didn't think that was right. So, that

ended up the band somewhere along there. Then we formed the little group...Horace did. Horace was playing tenor...tenor saxophone. He stopped and started playing piano. He was playing with Stan Getz...

BROWER: I hate to keep doing this, but I want to flip back to the forties. You did some stuff with Lucky Millinder?

BLAKEY: Yeah! ha, ha.

BROWER: Give me the history on that.

BLAKEY: Lucky Millinder and Marty Minstrels---. That didn't last long. I did that because I needed to work right then and, you know, I liked the guys in the band.

BROWER: Was Monk in the band? Was he in that version of Lucky?...I know he played with Millinder too at some point...Monk did. Was he in that particular Millinder Band? Monk?

BLAKEY: He didn't ever play with Lucky Millinder. Who did Monk play with?...I don't know. I know he was playing with some

Evangelists for a while...some woman preacher, ha. I don't know who he...he might have but...no he wasn't with Cootie either...he didn't play with Cootie...

BROWER: He played with Cootie Williams...no, Bud...yeah, Monk did...no...

BLAKEY: Bud Powell.

BROWER: Bud Powell did, ok.

BLAKEY: Him and Bud was playing...I wonder where Monk was? He was in one these bands somewhere. He was working by himself or something. Oh! I know where he was. He had his first bebop band.

BROWER: With Hawkins?

BLAKEY: Monk, Max, Dizzy, and Don Byas...Oscar Pettiford...bebop combo.

BROWER: We haven't mentioned anything about Oscar Pettiford.

BLAKEY: Oh, well he was something else. I first saw, he was a little boy...so was I. He was so small, he had to lay down on

the stage to play the sousaphone. His brother was playing piano, his father played drums. He comes from a musical family. His mother was a squaw, an Indian Squaw. Yeah, Oscar was one of the best bass players in the country...and arranger too. He was in that first bebop band with Dizzy. Yes sir, I do remember that. That's who Monk was with. Then he played around with Coleman Hawkins, you know. I doubt whether he played in big bands much. That was fantastic what he was doing.

BROWER: Did you do much at ah, Clark Monroe's place or Minton's?

BLAKEY: No, I never played in Clark's place. Charlie Parker and them used to play up there, I didn't go up there. I played Minton's all the time. I knew Clark, we were good friends, you know, but I went up there too much. I didn't do that much hanging out, you know...because I had kids at that time, I was very young at that time living here in New York. I had kids, I wasn't married, didn't have no wife, lived on 117th street, so I had to take care of my kids. I didn't hang out too much, so when

I was out, I was out to make some money...get back home...take care of the kids. That was my whole thing, so I get chance to hang, you know. But it's better that I didn't, ha, ha. I didn't get a chance to meet those guys in that atmosphere. I used to go to the other joint up there where that piano player used to play. Art Tatum and all of them used to meet up there every morning. I wasn't even...into nothing. I couldn't play nothing then. I just run around with my mouth open. Cats come in every morning and play. They'd be waiting for Art Tatum...all the great piano player...Claud Hopkins, all of them...Willie "the Lion" Smith. All them cats...Earl Hines...used to meet up there in Harlem every morning...they'd all wait for Art to come in. They were drinking whiskey and playing that piano. Boy, I ain't heard so much piano in my life. Fats Waller would be playing. Then he'd stop and they say "Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please, God is in the house", ha, ha, Art Tatum just walked

in...terrible.

BROWER: Did you work with Tatum?

BLAKEY: Yeah. One night. Fired myself, ha, ha, ha. He made such an ass out of me. I thought I was so hip. That man sit down and was playing, I looked down near the piano, there was Artur Rubinstein sitting there listening to him play. This man played two tunes at once. One in this hand, one in the other and made them melt together. He was playing so fast...I was trying to play the brushes...made an ass out of me. When he got through the show, he came over, hugged me and kiss me on the cheek and said "Son, you did a beautiful job". I packed up and got the hell out of there. The man said "Wait Art, if you just must go...but Art owes you some money". I said "No he don't", ha, ha. I got the hell out of there, ha, ha, I was so embarrassed. Man play like that, you don't need nobody to play with you. He had Tiny Grimes and Slam Stewart with him. You don't need nobody when you play like that. Ridiculous...I never heard nothing like

that. I never thought of playing the piano again either...after hearing him play...man can't hardly see...play like that...and got Artur Rubinstein looking at him. He could play. But that's when I quit. I worked one night...very honored to have that opportunity, but I didn't think I should sit up there and make an ass out of myself, you know, and get in the way of this man's playing, because he was playing so much, I couldn't...I had to keep my mouth open, looking at this man. I'd never such a thing like that in my life!...of all the pianists I've heard, I've never seen nothing like that. I was trying to pick it out, "Am I here, am I gone? or what's happening?"...and that relaxes my life...relax. He went to the coast, he died and they had to take up a collection to bury him. That's what happened. That's what I'm trying to stop. That's got to stop! It's got to stop! What he's given to the world, he don't need no insurance! Bury him, you understand? Should have monuments to this man. They ain't got one. They ain't got one for Duke. They ain't got nothing.

In Europe, they have. Sidney Bechet has...a big park named after him. Showed it to my wife. A great big statue. I think there's one up there on the library near 72nd and Central Parkway, a big statue of Sidney Bechet. They ain't got none yet of our great geniuses, White or Black. None. Don't make sense to me. I wish they hadn't named it "jazz" and just called it music, you know. That's got a lot to do with it too. You know what "jazz" means, don't you?

BROWER: Has to do with sex.

BLAKEY: Jazz means when the guys go to the whore house, you know. Or get jazzed up. That's what it means. Jazz, the lowest thing they can think of. It's hard to take a whore or a bitch out in the street with an evening gown on, put her in a ballroom, and call her a lady...hard, hard. Instead of just calling it music, which it was, they didn't do that...jazz.

BROWER: I want to do this before we start talking about The

Messengers. We were talking about drummers, you mentioned Chick Webb and how important he was. What about some of the other earlier drummers, Kiaser---Marshal, Sid Catlett, Baby Dodds...

BLAKEY: Kiaser---Marshal was very very important. His grand son on the West Coast...I don't know what happened. He invented the high hat...Kiaser---Marshal. He didn't get a quarter. Well, Sid Catlett, he was important too...very important.

BROWER: Did you derive anything specifically...musically...from Kiaser---Marshal or Sid Catlett.

BLAKEY: Yeah...Sid Catlett...he beat my ass for drinking alcohol ha, ha, that's what he did. He's big boy...he was about 250 pounds. He was about six-five. He beat my ass. Picked me up and hugged me...found out I was drinking...

BROWER: Smelled your breath?

BLAKEY: No, he felt the bottle in my pocket. I was trying to be hip...dark glasses. I had a pint gin...I had a straw...sucking the gin...playing the show...

BROWER: While you were playing the show?

BLAKEY: He snatched me and hugged me and found that bottle...he knocked me unconscious. ...told me as long as I had a hole in my ass pointing to the ground, until I learned how to master that instrument, I'd better not take drink and if I did, he was going to kick a hole in my ass. I was thirty-five before I smoked a cigarette...I didn't mess with him. He was important in my life.

BROWER: What about his playing? Was there anything particular about his playing that you particularly liked?

BLAKEY: He was the best there was. He played differently. He had a different concept...like Chick Webb, he's a later drummer...the concept. Sid Catlett was a modern drummer. If he was here right now, he could play with the cats...right now, sit down and play. You understand?...modern. He's more modern than Jo Jones...Papa Jo...much more modern. The closest cat I like to him is Allan Dawson...is like him in taste, touch...

BROWER: Dynamics...

BLAKEY: Yeah, show...he's a showman...the best. Another drummer out there, who I like very much...you know very much about...Ike Day out of Chicago.

BROWER: Out of Chicago?

BLAKEY: Ah, boy...terrible, a genius.

BROWER: What was Ike Day...what was his concept like? What did he play like?

BLAKEY: Like nothing you've ever heard. He's just fast. Fantastic. He always stayed up under me all the time. He liked me, very much.

BROWER: So he's a younger cat. He would be someone in his fifties if he were alive...Ike Day.

BLAKEY: Maybe. But he sure could play. You never hear nothing about him. You never hear nothing about Davey Tough----.

BROWER: He's a big band drummer mostly, I guess...Davey Tough----.

BLAKEY: Yeah, he's a good drummer. There's another drummer...Shelly Man...he's a good drummer, hell of a drummer, lots of taste. Max and Elvin, you know...they're always in. My favorite is Roy Haynes...favorite...and Tony Williams. Those are my favorites, I like them, ha, ha, you know, I just like them. I like the concept. I think Roy's the most underrated drummer in the country...I think in the world. The world's most underrated drummer. Never got his due...never.

BROWER: Why do you think that was?

BLAKEY: He...just don't take no shit, ha. Just like me, he don't take no shit...he just won't. He's very independent.

End of side B --- tape #2

End of disk #2 is full

ART BLAKEY Interview (con't.)

Disk #3

Begin Tape 3 -- side A
Begin Disk #3

BROWER: You were talking about Roy Haynes and that he wasn't getting the respect he was due because he was too independent.

BLAKEY: Yeah, he's very independent. I like that...he is very private...and he can play. Well we hung out last night. That's the first time I've seen him and we had a nice time. We're very good friends...very good.

BROWER: What about Kenny Clarke?

BLAKEY: Yeah, he's something else too. Well, Kenny Clarke is like the old man of the drums. Kenny Clarke...he's not old, you know what I mean, but he is so young, like I was. He was with Eddie Hayes and the old Blue Ribbon Orchestra. He went to Europe a long time ago when he was a kid. He came back during the War and he went back after the War. He went over there and fought during the War and then went back after the War in France, now

he's a French citizen. He can play...quite...he's from Pittsburgh.

BROWER: Would you say he's much older than you? Did you know him in Pittsburgh?

BLAKEY: Sure...the whole family.

BROWER: Was he known as a drummer in Pittsburgh?

BLAKEY: Of course. Joe Watts taught him. Joe Watts was a fireman who had given up drums. Joe Watts give him his first set and gave him vibraphones and everything. That's how Kenny can play piano and vibes...Joe Watts taught him. Kenny came to New York and first thing I knew, he was in Europe...playing. That was before the high hat came out. Kenny Clarke...something else.

BROWER: Would you say he was a major force in re-directing the music along with Parker, Gillespie, Bud Powell, and...?

BLAKEY: Well, he was part of it. He wasn't the major... I don't think anybody really was...everybody contributed...you

know, with their own concept. Nobody was the major force...no more than Bird, Monk, and Dizzy. If you want to say major, they were the major ones I think. I think they were the leaders of the whole thing. That's my opinion...I think they were.

BROWER: Bird, Monk, and Dizzy?

BLAKEY: Yeah. Backwards, forwards, anyway you want to put it.

BROWER: Dizzy, Monk, and Bird.

BLAKEY: Monk was a genius to me. He was a genius. He is the genius of our time. As time goes on, you're going to hear more and more about him. You'll hear more musicians playing his music. In the next twenty-five or forty years, you are going to hear about him. He was something, really something. In my time, it frightened them. It was too advanced, it scared them. Just like bebop...you know what I mean?...Monk scared the shit out of everybody else.

BROWER: Seem like you recorded with him, first, in 1947?

BLAKEY: Oh, were're friends. We grew up together. That's my

buddy. That's my best friend. Sure...we argued and faught everyday, ha, ha, ha. Yes sir, that's my buddy. Wasn't nothing like him, you know. I talked about him like a dog, but didn't let nobody else say nothing about him, ha, ha. He's quite different...think's different. He's really something...that man's something. But he thinks... On a record date...Al McKibben---- says "Hey Monk, shit, we ain't played this in about twenty-five or thirty years, let me run over them changes". Monk stopped and said "You been playing them changes every night on the concert tour". He said "Yeah, but...". He said "But what?". He said "I was playing the wrong changes on the concert tour because I didn't have didn't have a chance...". He said "Well, if you were playing the wrong changes on the concert tour, play on the record date", ha, ha. That's the way he'd do.

BROWER: Was this the 1971-72 "Giants of Jazz" stuff.

BLAKEY: Yeah. Oh, he was something else. Coleman Hawkins...John Coltrane... Coleman Hawkins would say "Hey Monk,

these notes are way up above the staff here." Monk told him "You're the 'Great Coleman Hawkins' you introduced the tenor saxophone to jazz, right?". He said "Yeah". He said "You're the 'Great John Coltrane' you're the upcoming youngster that's playing the tenor, right?" He said "Yeah". He said "Well the notes are on the horn, find them", ha, ha. Cats would say "Mr. Monk, Mr. Monk, how am I playing?". He said "You really want to know?". He said "Yeah". He said "You play a whole lot to be playing nothing", ha, ha, ha, ha. Oh boy, I'm telling you...ha, ha, ha. That man was so direct...I like it. We would argue everyday. We were sitting in the car he says "We're going to Jersey". Coming through the tunnel, he "bam!", run into the wall. Brand new car, we hadn't had it two hours. Smashed up side the wall. You know what he did to me? I had bumped my head and turned around. He looked at me and said "See there, you dumb black bastard, if it hadn't been for my reflexes, you'd be dead."

Ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: You got to love him.

BLAKEY: Oh boy, he's something else. I like him. He's direct. Miles is direct too. Miles do that shit too. We were down in Birdland...certain musicians would come in...you know, a certain area in the music, ah ..."Hey man I'm getting high"...using heroin...you know. Then after a while that got out of vogue, cats stopped. You know, all the major cats...the leaders, just stopped. He come one of the guys...one of the older guys too..."Hey man, baby give me a gig, give me a gig." Miles looked at him and said "Doing what?"...ha, ha, ha, ha. That's the way they are. Ain't no use arguing about it...say what you got to say and split.

BROWER: Why did the heroin thing come about? Why do you think that became so prevalent among cats?

BLAKEY: Oh, that's been prevalent among musicians...it's other people that has got on to it. Until the White middleclass got

into, until the kids started...we been getting high. Nobody said nothing about that. Cab Callaway made a song about "Cokey Joe"... "St. James Infirmary"...have you ever heard him sing them? "Dream About a Reefer Five Feet Long". Guy would have a bag of reefer, man...whole pound bag. Nobody paid no attention to that. They started using heroin because it was easier to break a heroin habit than an opium habit...that's why. Pure opium, man, you shoot pure opium, its hard to keep that habit. Heroin is a derivative of it...you see. It's the "junk". And it's an easier habit to break, so they started using junk. I never paid no attention to nobody using opium, you can do what you want to do. Shit, that ain't nothing. Smoke a reefer, that ain't nothing. We'd pass a drug store and in the drug store window, they'd have cocaine in a big thing...right there...when you could go in the drug stor and buy it...nobody pay that no mind. It started hitting the White upper middle class, shit...now you in trouble...you understand? You see them old men standing on the

corner in the winter time, waiting for the street cars...with their little vests on and little chain across the...looks so cool...reach down and get his little pill box and say..."sniff, sniff", ha, ha, ha. See there, it's the same shit. Bunch of hypocrites, man. See old ladies sitting in the bars...and they got some kind of shit they call acravete----. They drink...it's thicker than a liqueur...they drink it with a spoon, right?...it's like a pudding or something...they in there drunk as skunks, ha, ha. You know, there nose all up in the air, you understand? Nobody pays that no mind...nobody. I your grandmother's time...they had to go down in the basement to smoke. Catch a woman smoking, she's thrown out of society.

BROWER: But it would appear that at a certain time, heroin reached an epidemic type level among...

BLAKEY: It did because it was easier to kick than opium. Who's this fighter?...Bunnie...he came after the War and he was strung

out and he couldn't get off of it. He was shooting opium. He had to get on heroin. All of them, Jude---:Garlan...all of them because it was easier to get.

BROWER: So why did the cats back off of it then? You said it went out of phase. Why did it go out of phase?

BLAKEY: Because... Just like I did. I use to use it. I don't like anything that controls me...shit, but me. Other cats just had different weaknesses. I never had to go around and steal nothing. I'm so lucky... See, all my family protected me because I wasn't a hypocrite. My children protected me. They knew what I was doing, but they ain't going to let nobody else no it. I didn't have to want for nothing. When time come for me to make any job, I make that job, where ever I'm supposed to be. If I had a business meeting, I make that business meeting. Dope or no dope...ain't no getting sick, because I got something to do. The fun in getting high is not letting people know that you get high. Once they find out, you done lost.

BROWER: But wouldn't you say that you were an exception in terms of your strength and your capacity to stay on to of things?

BLAKEY: There were a lot of cats like that...Dizzy, J.J. Johnson, Sonny Rollins...I could name you hundreds of them...say "Shit no, I don't need that". Some succumb to it...just like some people drink, some don't. Some jump in a bottle, stay in a bottle. Then other cats can jump in a bottle...jump right back out...say "Shit on that, I don't want that". I'm no exception.

BROWER: One last question on this. I guess your answer will be "no", but I'll ask the question...

BLAKEY: Well ask it.

BROWER: Do you think that heroin had a negative effect on the music at any given time?

BLAKEY: On the music?

BROWER: On the music or musicians...that it held back the music or destroyed...in any kind of way was a negative...

BLAKEY: No, I don't. It didn't hold back the music. No, I

don't think it had a negative effect. The only thing that had a negative effect is when the public got in it, that's when it got negative. The public...where the musicians go to get it. OK, like dust..."angel dust"...that's when it got negative. It got way out. Women get high on angel dust and put their babies in the oven and all that kind of shit. That's negative. But that has nothing to do with it. It didn't affect the musicians. It's just like anything else...if he mess up and if he didn't make the job, we'd just fire him...just get rid of him...just keep moving on. No one monkey stops the show. Where it really got negative is when our people started doing it in the street. You come home at night, get robbed, get knocked in the head, take your horn...kill him...throw him in the river, all that kind of shit...by his own people. That's when it got negative. That's when it went out. It use to be a time, up there in Harlem or any other Black neighborhood, Washington or any place, you get drunk

sitting there...wake up, you got your jewelry, you got your money in your pocket...nobody do no shit like that. Now you can't do that, I don't care what color you are...no neighborhood...anything might happen. It's just the way things...you know, time brings about a change. Now the pendulum's gone this way. It's going to swing back the other way too. But in these times, that's the way it is. It's coming back. The young musicians of today have changed everything. The musicians I got don't smoke or drink...or fool around. I don't have no problems...not with them...they don't do that. They got one thing on their mind...music, music...

BROWER: And some more music.

BLAKEY: That's right.

BROWER: We were talking about Monk and the tremendous relationship you had with him. A couple other piano players you recorded with that were interesting to me. One is Randy Weston. Would you talk about your musical association with Randy Weston.

BLAKEY: I played with him now and then. We made some records...we made a record or so, I guess. He's alright, he's creative and a very very wonderful person. Right now I think he wants to do what he wants to do. He's playing what he calls "African" piano, ha. Well, that's what he plays. That's what he wants it to be, that's what he wants to call it. I think that's his prerogative for what he wants to do, but I don't, ah...I like it...what he's doing...what ever he's doing and he's having fun. I played with him in Chicago not too long ago, we did a concert...with him and Dizzy...you know, but that's the thing...

BROWER: How about Herbbie Nichols?

BLAKEY: Oh, I liked him too. Strange sort of a person. Never get to know too much about him. Different type of person. We talked a lot, but I didn't get to know him too well. He was different...he was different. He used to work with dixieland bands...and come out and record with jazz band.

BROWER: Yeah, it seemed so incongruous how he made his living

and the kind of music he played, which to me was real fresh.

BLAKEY: Sure.

BROWER: You know, I listen to his records and it's, like, almost as fresh as Monk in a way. You know, real unique. Nobody else plays like that.

BLAKEY: That's right. That's right. I liked him too. He was a nice person. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know too much about him. The dixieland cats that worked with him knew him pretty good, but I didn't know him that well. I sure liked him, I liked his music. It was different. I like anything different. Do your own way, you know what I mean...try it. He sounded good, that's why I recorded with him. I liked him.

BROWER: Did his music present any specific challenges to you in terms of how you had to adapt your playing to it?

BLAKEY: I just play what they want to play. I ask them what they want me to play and I just try to do it. You know, try to

do it the way they want me to do it. I'm not going to do it the way I want to do it, because I don't think that's fair. It's their music and I should do...to interpret their music the way they want it be interpreted, regardless of what I think they should do. I try to do what will make them happy. No later on, if I got my own band and I like their music, I'll play it my way...I'll record it...you understand what I mean? People do what they want to do, because they have other ideas of what they want to do.

BROWER: OK, let's ah, flip again and go to the business of how you formed the Messengers. How did you meet Horace Silver?

BLAKEY: I don't know how I met the cats. They know me. You know how musicians are. I know thousands of musicians...I can't tell you their first name for nothing. Not unless you work with them or your lives cross each other's paths...you begin to work then you begin to know him...you know his name...because you're around him all the time. But other musicians...they

just...musicians, you know them, you like them. Sometime I look around and say "Hey man, what's your name, what do you play?"... ha, ha, ha. You can't remember all that...unless he has played with you...unless he's terribly outstanding or unless I hear something in him that I like. Maybe he's a diamond in the rough. Maybe he can develop into something...it's the kind of person he is and whether he will. Sometime I make a mistake, sometime I don't...sometime I pick them and they are good...he'll develop. Then there are other guys you pick and they ain't going to do nothing, but he's got the talent. He can do it if he wants to, but he don't want to. I don't waste too much time, just move out of the way and get somebody else...there are so many of them, you know what I mean.

BROWER: But you said that Silver came to you, in effect, with a band already formed and said "Come play with us"...

BLAKEY: No, it wasn't formed. He was getting it together. He knew the cats he wanted...to rehearse and put it together. He

asked me how did I like them. I said, I know Kenny. So we started out really as a cooperation. We found out that that wasn't going to work...so...

BROWER: You mean a cooperative band?

BLAKEY: Yeah. That doesn't work, so we said we can't do that.

Just doesn't work. So, I just took over. That's what I wanted, at first, I wanted to try and have a cooperative band, but it didn't work like that because they wouldn't do the work. Everybody, you know, wanted to benefit, but nobody wanted to do the work. So I ended up doing most of the work...you know the business part of it. So, I didn't want to do that. If I'm going to do that, I'm going to do it for me and ain't going to do it for other people...you understand? I just took over.

BROWER: Now, that band came after, the band that you had, I guess with Clifford and Lou Donaldson that made the "Birdland"?

BLAKEY: Yeah, well that was another thing...Clifford and Lou

Donaldson. The Jazz Messengers, per se, wasn't formed...

BROWER: At that point.

BLAKEY: At that point. ...just ready to get it together. We had Horace...Horace had left Stan Getz. I had Lou Donaldson, Curly, Clifford and myself. That was good because it could swing and it was a swinging band. You know I wasn't thinking about going into it for real until Horace came along and said take Kenny and do this and rehearse... I was getting tired of jamming...you know. I just wanted a band...dressed up...looked nice. We had to change, because it was time for a change. People didn't want to come in, sit down and pay ten or fifteen dollars to see a bunch of ragged motherfuckers on the bandstand...high, can't get their head up...they ain't going to do that. There's got to be organization. The music had to be organized. That was my thing, because I always believed they see you before they hear you, ha, ha. You know, first impression is a lasting impression, so you get up there and you be sharp. That

stage...that's your job...you get out there and that makes you a professional. So we had to change the thing around, and that's what we did.

BROWER: The band with Clifford, Lou Donaldson, and Curly...how long did that stay in existence?

BLAKEY: Not too long.

BROWER: A year?

BLAKEY: Four or five months, six months.

BROWER: Did you do many other things other than the Birdland thing...like go to Philly, Baltimore, and D.C.?

BLAKEY: Yeah, that kind of stuff. It didn't last too long because we wanted to get out of that...after we made those records, you know, jamming...

BROWER: Those were like jamming records...is that what you're saying, that was not rehearsed? You just went in and...

BLAKEY: ...and just played, that's all...just a jam session...we were just having a ball...nobody knew...didn't nobody give a

shit, we just played, ha, ha...wasn't organized, wasn't rehearsed. We just happened to have good musicianship then brought it together...we were swinging. But the other thing that come out...The Messengers, it was organized...everything, the music, the look, the clothes...you know, change clothes...looked nice...

BROWER: Coordinating kind of thing.

BLAKEY: Yeah. Professional.

BROWER: I just want to stick on this a little bit more. What about Clifford Brown? Give me a sense of your feeling for him as a man and his music, and how he carried himself.

BLAKEY: He was just a beautiful person. He was a sweet person. I didn't look for him to be here too long. I've never met nobody that nice...a very nice person...brilliant person. He could play piano, he could write. He had a wonderful mind...you know. I used to watch him, he'd be cooking and teaching...playing

chess...a gormet cook...and piano...doing all that at once...teaching trumpet...his mind going all them different ways, right all at once. There would always be a bunch of trumpet players around him. Never used perfanity. Never seen him angry...never. He played a ragged trumpet that they give to the schools, you know...they give to high school bands and college bands...that's what he played. They offerd him the best trumpets in the country, he wouldn't take it, he played that Blessing. That's what they buried him with...the Blessing. I always told people, it isn't the instrument, it's the artist behind the instrument. That's what's doing it. I try to tell them, but they don't listen. I heard Charlie Parker play a plastic alto. He played the hell out of a plastic saxophone. Man hand it to him, he'd play it. It's just certain musicians. Give Miles Davis a bazooka, he's going to sound the same. I don't care what you give him, he's going to play it. That's the those musicians are, they're gifted. So that's what was happening.

BROWER: During that time, were you like the house drummer at Birdland?

BLAKEY: I was the house drummer there, yeah.

BROWER: How long did that last?

BLAKEY: Oh, it lasted a couple of years...more than that because I had kids and they were helping me take care of my kids. So, who ever came in, I played with them...but I needed that, because I needed to take care of them kids.

BROWER: Give me a sense of what Birdland was like at that time?

BLAKEY: Wonderful place. One of the best jazz clubs in the world, I think. I always liked that place. I miss that place. It should not have closed, but I guess business is business. I wish they had kept it going...for some reason...for any reason I wish they had kept it going, because it had the atmosphere. It was a great setting, you know what I mean? It was a great setting... But, you know, there'll be others. There is others, ha.

BROWER: Are there any particularly memorable moments, times, or stories that you have about Birdland?

BLAKEY: Many moments, many memories. I saw everything at birdland. Everything came in Birdland. They had some of the best bands in there. I played opposite some of the best bands in the country. I saw everything in there. I saw a woman give birth in there. I saw murders in there, ha, ha. It was something else...just something else. After things happen in a club, it's just no good. I don't care how big the club is. It's just when something happens...somebody get killed or murdered in a club, that's the end of the club, I don't care what you do...you just might as well close...forget it, because that stigma would never leave.

BROWER: Do you remember the ah...there's an incident written about quite often, I guess near Parker's death, 1955, '54...when you were there with Bud Powell and ah, Parker and they had a big

dispute on the bandstand, do you remember that evening?

BLAKEY: Oh, it wasn't no dispute...it was nothing, man. He was high. Bud Powell was a nervous wreck at that time, he was high...somebody made him high. Bird was high...that's all. That happens to musicians all the time...and he was just acting out a thing...you know that. It wasn't no dispute about nothing, it was just acting like a bunch of jackasses...just sometimes. And there was no control. There was nothing I could do, it had gotten out too far, and I was surrounded by...

End of side A, tape #3

ART BLAKEY Interview (Con'.)
Disk #4

Begin tape #3---Side B

BLAKEY: ...Charlie Mingus got up and said "Excuse me ladies and gentlemen, I just want to let you know that everyone of the musicians up here is crazy...except me". Ha, ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: ...craziest of them all.

BLAKEY: That was something else.

BROWER: Do you think writers make too much of these incidents?

I must have encountered that story about ten different times.

Every book that I went into... The way I prepared for this, I went threw all these books and every time I saw your name, I wrote the page down, went to that page and read what they had to say. That incident came up at least ten times and it's blown into big proportions. Do you think the writers and the people that are so called telling the story of the music make too much of situations like that?

BLAKEY: That's right. That's what they do. They try to blow it

up and make it sensational. Wasn't nothing sensational about that. How's it going to be sensational about a sick person? Wasn't five days later, Charlie Parker was dead. What's the sensation?...because he's sick. Bud was sick. Charlie Mingus was sick. We're standing up there playing, Charlie Mingus had Lou Gehrig's disease. Bud had just come out of the hospital...they had beat him in the head...you know, put a five pound box of ----- on his head and beat him with hammers...beat his hands. Charlie Parker standing up there "dead". All he had to do was lay down. If you'd get near him, you could smell it...you could smell death. I don't know what was so sensational about that. The men up there were sick. All of them died. Everyone of them up that stand is dead.

BROWER: Do you think Parker, at that point, know that he was going to die?

BLAKEY: Everybody knows when they are about to die...everybody. You'll know, I'll know, everybody knows... That's what they

mean, you live your life in a split second... I don't care if its in a split second, you know you're going to die...you know it...split second!...you say "Oh, man!"...your whole life passes before you...you're gone. You know what I mean?...that's what that is. He knew it...he was intelligent... Just wasn't nothing he could do about it. He went too far...he went over the line. His body just couldn't make it, because the soul don't stay in a sick body...will not stay. He knew that...he was an intelligent man...very articulate...just took it too far.

BROWER: Do you think he was a genius?

BLAKEY: Sure he was.

BROWER: Do you think Parker was a genius on the same level you think Monk was a genius?

BLAKEY: Yeah, in his way. But the only thing Charlie Parker didn't do...and I think what made him sick...I think what killed him off was he didn't know how to write. He didn't write it

down. Monk will be here a long time. Charlie Parker will be here only through the musicians. If the music changes, he's gone. Think about it sometime. You've got to write it down.

BROWER: You were probably one of the last people to visit with Parker before he passed. What was the nature of that exchange that you had with him?

BLAKEY: I don't know. Nothing...we were just talking. He didn't expect nothing then anyway...just running his mouth, like everybody else expected him to live...he didn't expect, he knew, but he didn't expect nothing at that time. But he knew he had taken it too far. He could look in the mirror and see that. You know when you're taking your body too far, you know what I mean. Look at you now. Say, God forbid, ten years, five years later look at yourself... You know, Charlie Parker wasn't no bigger than you...when he died you see what he was...one hundred and nintety-seven pounds. You look at Charlie Parker, you know something's wrong...man bloated like that. It don't make

sense...you know something's wrong. He'd never been a heavy man. He was stocky built like me...he was a handsome young cat. All of a sudden he got to looking like me, a little five by five. He began to look like Jimmy Rushing. So you know he's was sick...that's how you tell. -----the cat man here in the kidneys.

BROWER: Bad news.

BLAKEY: Bad news.

BROWER: I read a quote that he told you that he hoped that the young musicians wouldn't forget to play the blues.

BLAKEY: That's right, he told me. All he wanted them to do was learn how to play the blues. He told Hank Mobley that morning. He got mad with Hank Mobley. He told him "Learn how to play them blues, damn that shit, play them blues...that's what I want". All he wanted was for the young musicians to learn how to play the blues. Black musicians do not want to learn how to play no blues. I can't understand it. It was so bad once...the

musicians didn't want to play no blues, I had to get Chuck Mangione to play trumpet. Dizzy got him for me.

BROWER: I know there was a period in the sixties...maybe even in the seventies...when you seemed to be really disgusted with...I shouldn't say that word...you were very upset about the lack of young Black musicians that could carry on the tradition as you saw it. I don't think that was the only reason you got Valarie Ponamarav----- or Chuck Mangione or any of the other players that you had...

BLAKEY: Yeah. The Black musicians didn't want to play it. They'd rather play what they call...I don't know..."avant garde" or what they call it. It wasn't avant garde either, it was bullshit, because they couldn't play. So they wanted to make it on nothing. They wanted to be lazy. They didn't want to study, so that's what they did. So I had to get other people to play.

BROWER: Do you think that situation has turned itself around?

BLAKEY: Now?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: Sure it is turned around...completely...absolutely.

BROWER: Is that encouraging to you?

BLAKEY: Sure! ...its turned around...they're playing.

BROWER: Why do you think that happened? I mean why do you think there was a generation of cats who didn't want to deal with tradition and now you have the Terrance Blanchards the Wallace Roneys...

BLAKEY:they at now, they're gone. They're in obscurity. So the young ones coming behind them, they see that. They ain't going that way. If they have a choice, they go on and play the music...try to learn how to play the instrument. The rest of them cats who were rebelling against it are gone...finished. You don't hear about them anymore. They ain't going to come back. That's all over. Every once in a while you might hear something...Ornette Coleman playing somewhere, but you ain't

going to hear that bull shit no more. That's over! You hear me? There'll be some other kind of funny shit out there they're trying to do...sound frustrated, but you ain't going to hear no more of that bullshit. They have to play now...it's getting to that. I hear some groups playing...I mean a lot of groups are under water, ha, ha. I call it "under water". You know, but ah...

BROWER: How do you mean "under water"? What do you mean by that?

BLAKEY: Sad! They ain't playing nothing. It just ain't worth listening to. It hurts my ears. It makes me sick...then they ain't playing nothing...then they're playing out of tune...it hurts, so I cut my hearing aid off and split, ha, ha. I don't want to hear that. People want to pay for it, ok. A lot of people go in and pretend that they like it. I can't pretend. I don't like it...I don't like it. I leave. I'm not going to stay there and make an ass of my self or make them feel bad, I just

leave...smile and split...get away...it's terrible. Music is supposed to be beautiful man, not like that. You know...like you hate somebody...terrible, you know.

BROWER: Do you feel that there was anything usefull or productive that came out of the sixties in the so called avant garde or do you think it was just all a bust? And you think all the musicians were basically charlatans?

BLAKEY: No. Not all of it. There was some good music to come out of it too...good music. Sure it was good music, but I didn't say they brought it out. There was a certain group that was getting the play and getting the publicity that didn't deserve it...and the people...and the press, you know how they do...and they frustrated because they don't know what the fuck they're talking about, most of them. You know...critics...frustrated musicians... Yeah, we need them but they don't know nothing man. All they know is what the musicians tell them. Musicians make

musicians...not critics...musicians are the ones. The critics don't know. They have to stand around and listen to what the musicians say about another musician. How would he know? He wouldn't know. That's how he...listening to them.

BROWER: Eavesdropping.

BLAKEY: Uh uh. That's what they do and they're right. That's the kind of shit they do. Some young boys came down to Birdland and there's Wayne Shorter. Young cats, they don't know their ass from a hole in the ground neither can they play their way out of a paper bag. So they come up to the stand "Hey, the god damn Wayne Shorter, shit he sound like scrambled eggs", ha, ha. John Coltrane walked up behind them and said, "But it's the way he scrambles those eggs", ha, ha. The ones who put each other down are the Black musicians that can't play shit. You'd never hear Charlie Parker put nobody down. You never hear Monk put nobody down...never. You never hear Arned Jamal----put nobody down...by the way he plays, you never hear that. It's always some

BROWER: You know, there's a recording that he did with you...a particular version of "A Night in Tunisia"...that I spent a lot of time listening to this week, that's really exciting.

BLAKEY: Oh yeah? He's something else. With his chateau in France, ha, ha. He's a character. I like him so much. He was here not too long ago. The Bluenote.

BROWER: He did a weekend in Washington.

BLAKEY: He did?

BROWER: I went to see him. I always go see him.

BLAKEY: Where?

BROWER: At the One Step Down.

BLAKEY: Where in the hell is that?

BROWER: That's on, like, 24th and Pennsylvania. He usually plays there twice a year on the weekend. Like a Friday, Saturday.

BLAKEY: One Step Down?

BROWER: It's a little small club. It's not much bigger than your apartment. It's long...narrow...club. But he always comes there.

BLAKEY: That's nice. I'll tell you a club I like...I like Blues Alley, but I don't like the guy that runs it. The manager, I like, not the guy that runs it.

BROWER: Owns it...you mean John.

BLAKEY: Bad atmosphere...

BROWER: Big cat.

BLAKEY: Bad atmosphere. I told him...straight up.

BLAKEY: Tell me how you came into contact with Johnny Griffin and he got associated with your music?

BROWER: He was here in New York. I just know all the musicians. He was just here in New York and he told me he wanted to play. So he just come down and said "I want to join the band"...like Benny Golson, like all of them...Slide Hampton...all of them...just come down and join the band, that's all...McCoy, all

of them.

BROWER: When was McCoy in your band? Was that after he left Trane, or...?

BLAKEY: Yeah, after.

BROWER: So, this would be like 1965, '66.

BLAKEY: Uh huh.

BROWER: That was the band that had Slide Hampton and Billy Harper in it?

BLAKEY: We had Harper, we had Slide, and we had Bill Hardman, -----, McCoy and myself.

BROWER: Did that band ever record?

BLAKEY: Yeah. It was a good band...good band.

BROWER: But it was a short lived band.

BLAKEY: Very short.

BROWER: A couple of months?...three months?

BLAKEY: Oh, more than that. But it just couldn't get off the ground. The work was short then, you know...hard...gigs were

rough...hard to get gigs. I was running around, everywhere...off to California...back...doing everything, trying to get it off the ground...couldn't do it. But I wanted to stay home. That was my whole thing. If I had gone to Europe, I probably would have kept the band together. If I went to Europe, I would have made a lot of money...not a lot, you know, but the decent buck. So, I didn't go. I stayed here and it was rough...there wasn't enough work. That's why the band broke up. No, it didn't break up but I just started changing men. It was very hard. Slide left and went to Europe to stay for a while. Different cats went their own way...Billy Harper, he stayed here, he joined Lee Morgan. I went back to Japan, that's what I did. I took Bill. When Bill left, I had to re-organize the band...change it around...get some younger cats. That's what I did.

BROWER: Bill Hardman's the guy who has played with you periodically.

BLAKEY: A long time...a long time. Old standby...playing all the time. If I didn't get who I wanted, I'd always get Bill. He was always there, you know. We were more like friends, but he is always out there struggling to get his own thing going. If he wasn't doing anything he'd always come to work...a bunch of musicians were like that...Walter Davis----...all of them. If they ain't working, I call them, they go. All I had to do was make a telephone call. That's it. But we do have fun, man. We went to Japan with the "old" Messengers. Oh, we had a ball.

BROWER: Was that Golson, Walter Davis, Buster Williams, Freddie Hubbard?

BLAKEY: Yeah, shit! Boy that band was something. Oh, we had a good time. It was fun, because I hadn't seen Benny in a long time, he had a bald head. Walter Davis was big as a house. Freddie Hubbard had done got big and fat. I said we're going to call this the "belly band", ha, ha, ha. Those cats were something man. Benny Golson was getting a little pot...bald

head...looked good though. Band sounded good, boy, I'm telling you. After about two days it really got together, they started remembering everything.

BROWER: We were talking about Japan. I guess you went there first in 1961?

BLAKEY: Yeah.

BROWER: Tell me something about Japan and how you were received when you first went there and how you've seen that change over time...Japanese acceptance of the music or when you got there were they already for it, what was the situation then?

BLAKEY: Well, when we went to Japan it was, ah...that was the most beautiful reception of the music that I have ever seen. It was way beyond my expectations, the way the people received it and the way they had planned it. We came in...just like this country, the Beatles came into this country...we went into Japan the same way...same thing. We had everything. They had in department stores...big pictures, as big as that wall of John

Coltrane, Charlie Parker...

BROWER: In department stores. Not in record stores?

BLAKEY: Department stores! In the clothes, they had "Wayne Shorter" top coats, "Lee Morgan" suits, "Bobby Timmons" shirts...and they all got residuals from this. I've never seen anything like that before in my life. I was the leader, I got diplomatic immunity. I had a chauffeur. I had a Mercedes. I had everything. I stayed in the Imperial Hotel.

BROWER: The band when you first went there was Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Bobby Timmons, and Jimmy Merrit?

BLAKEY: Un huh, and myself and Johnny Hartman...no...Bill, ah...

BROWER: Bill Henderson?

BLAKEY: Bill Henderson...and that was something else. Believe me that was something else. We played our hearts out and the people accepted the music. Japanese knew all the tunes that we played...they knew everything. They knew every solo, note by

note...note for note everything we did. When we got off the plane it was the biggest thing I ever seen. We got in there at night...we heard this band. And the band was playing "Blues March". So, Edward G. Robinson, Shirley McClain and all those...Ephrim Thomas...had come there. They jumped of the plane first, so they said "No, excuse us but this is Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, if you don't mind". So they had to step back, and we got off. Man, they had a carpet from the plane, all the way back to the airport---...hand me the air-----. They gave us flowers. The people were so grateful. I looked around and the guys in the band were crying. They never expected such a thing. So we played, man and think that was the greatest thing. I knew it was going to happen...you always got to expect that. I saw the salsa bands come over there. I saw Machito...man those cats come and work six or eight months a year in Japan. Because the repetition of their music, Japanese copied it. Then one year I went back about two or three years later, I didn't see no Machito

or nobody else, but I heard their music...note for note, even to the solos. But they couldn't copy jazz. I've been there forty-seven times. Every time I go back, I be playing different. They say "Hey papason, so and so and so"...bullshit, that was last year, we something other shit going this time, ha, ha, ha. They couldn't copy it. That's the way they are. So I just watch it...you know you watch it go on and watch it deteriorate. So, it's still great, but not as good as it was before.

BROWER: 1962.

BLAKEY: Yeah, not as good. Then most of the bands over there when I went over that time are grown up now and they're so busy working, they don't have too much time to come out to the concerts. They got to know at least a year or six months in advance.

BROWER: When you say it was like the Beatles, what you're saying is that your audience was a young and enthusiastic...they were like teenagers.

BLAKEY: Oh, yeah...yep. But they have grown up now and gone in government and business, you know. I guess they're busy. I meet a lot of them and they tell me..."I was fifteen". They're in business now. But they have the records going on and they play. Once you become a favorite in Japan, you stay a favorite...you know...unless you mess up and do something wrong. But you stay a favorite...it doesn't matter. You know, because I keep coming back, but I keep changing and if I didn't change and they could copy...

BROWER: You wouldn't be back.

BLAKEY: I wouldn't be back. That's a fact. They can't copy this. That's the wonderful thing about jazz. I tell them, I say "Well, you can't hear the same arrangement twice"...you can't do that...that's the wonderful thing about jazz. We may not feel that way tomorrow night. We play it a different way. We may change it...because they can't improvise...we can

improvise...we're blessed with that. If the Japanese say they're going to do a certain thing a certain time, that's what they're going to do. And they are on time...and if they don't, boy you think they're going to fall out, you think they're going to faint. You know, they all have problems...ulcers...that's the main thing over there because they use twelve per cent more salt than most people. Don't let him be late for nothing. He gets upset, because he don't know what to do. But today, you see where it's at. It's a different generation. Then the musicians that come over here you know, come over to America, play a little bit, sit in jam session...they go back to Japan, they big shots. Te-----M-----smio got his own T.V. show. Can you imagine? He blow nothing but air through his horn. Ain't that something? He's over there with a black face imitating Miles. Trying to imitate...trying to be funny with his face painted black. If it wasn't for Miles, he wouldn't be. He tries to copy every thing Miles do. That's where that's at. That's just what they do.

And believe me when I tell you, I read his ass too. I read it. George Klocuchi-----came over here and they begged me to make a record date with him. They gave me so much money, I made the record date with him. Things I taught him twenty-two years ago, he's playing the same way. He ain't changed one iota! The cats that made the record date with him fell out laughing. I said "Watch him, he's going to do this". That's what he did. Oh, man it was horrible. I wasn't doing nothing on it. He'd play the same thing. When I got over there this time, he had a whole lots of Black...niggers from down there in Louisiana. They had a band...a band...a marching band. You know that nigger went over there for an ice cream cone, I guess. Just to get to go to Japan. And they're standing up T.V. with white gloves on...black uniforms...going heeeeeee...and he's sitting back there like the Lord Master on these drums. You should have seen that shit. You'd have wanted to vomit. You should have seen it. It was so bad that ah...Janice----, trumpet player, he wrote them a letter,

because he was from Louisiana. ...Japan, you see. Unbelievable!...mammy, and all that shit. Unbelievable!...ha, ha, ha. I thought that was over, but it ain't over. Lee Morgan slapped the shit out of Bill Henderson. The Prince gave a party for us at the palace. Everybody was drinking on something. Bill Henderson was on his knees singing "Maaammy" with some white gloves. Tell him yeah...tell him yeah...

BROWER: Lee Morgan wouldn't go for it?

BLAKEY: ...Slapped the shit out of him. This is a party, that's unnecessary. What is that shit?

End of Tape #3 --- side = B

Begin side A, tape #4

BROWER: ...is how the physical quality of the drums changed over time. You were mentioning earlier today about the drums you had when you were with Billy Eckstine...

BLAKEY: Oh, well, those drums I made those myself. When the drums first come out, we didn't have any tension...we didn't have individual tension. The only way you could get tension on the drums was the same way the conga drums used to do, we had to carry Sturno and heat the drum up because it was just skin stretched over a hollow area, you know, and tightened down.

BROWER: So, you had no like...

BLAKEY: ...the tom tom, no.

BROWER: No keys on it. You couldn't tune it?

BLAKEY: No. And one time on the snare drum either, you had some strings you had to pull down to tighten up the snare drum to get tension. So ----- from there. At that time, you know, I was getting piece by piece or whatever I could get. I used to use

music stands which had heavy iron bottoms, you know...in the schools...I used them for cymbal stands. I didn't get my first drums until the end of the forties. Let me see...I got my first drums...I think it would be...

BROWER: 1943, '44?

BLAKEY: Yeah...'43...the first drums. They gave them to me for my birthday. I came to rehearsal that day and in the backyard of the place where we were playing, the club, they had poured gasoline all over my old drums and set them on fire. I...ha, ha, ha...walked up the alley to come to rehearsal, here were my drums burning in the back yard. I had a fit. I didn't know what to do. My drums on fire...you know.

BROWER: Was this in New York?

BLAKEY: No, this was in St. Louis. I was so angry...so Billy Eckstine stepped up and said "Well, there are nineteen of us and you can't whip us all. Just go on in the hall". I was so angry, I didn't know what to do. I walked in the hall and looked up on

the stage and there was a brand new set of drums...cymbals and everything...pre-war and everything...everything...it was just beautiful. That's the first set of drums I had.

BROWER: What were you playing in Pittsburgh?

BLAKEY: I was playing on my home made drums. That was it. The tension in the drums didn't come out until, I guess, the late thirties.

BROWER: So, you made these drums yourself? You stretched the skins over...

BLAKEY: No, no, I brought the tom toms like that. You see some around now, little tom toms that's been nailed around the bottom like that. The hardware, I made up myself...like the peddles and the...all the stuff, the snare stand, I had to make it myself...all the hardware...I just made it and put it together...the old high hat, and cut it down...it's just a makeshift thing...I worked on them.

BROWER: About the time when your drum set was burned up and everything, was that the first Riviera engagement in St. Louis?

BLAKEY: Oh, we went back about three times, I think...two or three times to the Riviera.

BROWER: That particular circumstance, when the band gave you the drums, was that on the first hit or was that a subsequent hit.

BLAKEY: I think it was the first time...because it was my birthday...it was in October...yeah.

BROWER: In looking at pictures of older drummer's set ups, the bass drums were bigger and progressively it seems that they get smaller. Can you remember how that progression went and was the change in the size of the drum related to the way you were playing...what was that...?

BLAKEY: No, it don't make no difference, the drum is a bastard instrument. You can have fifty drums up there, you know. Some drummers do. Some can play them, some can't...some just have

them up there for show. It's just the idea of what you need. I just add on if I need it. If I don't need it, I don't think I should have anything up there I don't play...I play it, all of it. As time goes along, if I see fit to have another piece, I would put another one up there...something else. Maybe a tympani drum, maybe anything, if I need it. If I don't need it, I won't have it because it doesn't make sense.

BROWER: The modern set as we know it with the high hat and the smaller bass drums and the drums that allowed you to tune them with a key. When that all begin to come together? and how did that affect the playing?

BLAKEY: I think that came together in the late thirties...the early forties. The bass drums were getting smaller. We used to have a trap table before that, it didn't make no difference. You didn't pay too much difference to the sound. The reason I got a small bass drum later, is that I was advertising for the company. It was Gretch Drums and I was advertising for them, so

they give me some money...so that's what they put out there to model and that's what I did.

BROWER: During that period, who was making the drums that sounded the best to you?

BLAKEY: I don't know, all of them were making good drums...you know...all of them. I didn't pay too much attention to the maker of the drum or anything. I just think it's the person who's playing the instrument. That's the most important part, because that doesn't make any difference...you know...who made them or anything. I know I can look at them and say who's got the most professional or strongest drum or something or good hardware...hardware, I mean the peddle and the cymbal stands. I've always liked So-----, because they always made very substantial things. The British built good drums too, but they were heavy. One thing I liked about the small drums was that they were easy to carry around...to get in and out of cars and taxis when you needed it, but the bigger drums were hard to

manuever. A lot of times they'd see you with them big things on the street, they'd pass you up, ha, ha, ha.

BROWER: After you got to the point when you had your own drums, did you continue to repair them when problems came up with them or did you take them to a particular repairman or?

BLAKEY: No, I don't bother with no drums no more. I don't have to. What ever I tell them to do they do it. If I'm going such and such a place and it's convenient, then I don't take no drums. I don't take no drums to Japan. I don't take nothing but my cymbals, that's the most important...I carry the cymbals.

BROWER: Let's get to that in a second, but what I'm trying to get at is that during the forties and the fifties was there a drum repair shop that a lot of the cats used...or anybody that was particularly good in terms of taking care of instruments?

BLAKEY: What you mean, drum shops?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: It's hard to tell. There were a lot of them around...different shops that you could go in...a lot of good drum shops in Germany...anywhere you go in the world...England. Good drum shops all over...and here, you know, they have good ones...on ----- and around Tin Pan Alley where all those music stores are...the Professional Drum Shop. Of course I don't bother about having drums repaired no more. If something happens, I always have two of everything. I call and tell them that something happened and they send something else on the job. When I go to Europe, they have the drums over there...the drums are there when I get there. All I have is my cymbals, but they have the exact same setup that I use. The only thing I have to do is tune them to what I want to hear, that's all.

BROWER: What is your approach to tuning your instrument?

BLAKEY: To my ear. Just tune it to my ear...what sounds good to me, you know. It's got to sound good to me first before I can make it sound good to anybody else. It's like having a

microphone...audio system...it's got to sound good to the musicians first.

BROWER: When we were in the studio today, you hit the drum and you looked like they were sad to you...like you didn't want to play them or they weren't responding. What did you hear that you didn't like? Was it too loose, too tight...?

BLAKEY: Oh, maybe something was, but I just go on and play with that way anyhow because the temperature of the room changes the drums change...you know. When more people come into the room, it'll change, so you just wait. As you go along, you tune them up. I don't come in and tune up no certain way and all that. I just tune them to my ear...what sounds good to me, not what sounds...you're supposed to do this or tune the bass drum or this or that, you know, I tune the way I think...the way I play.

BROWER: What do you like in cymbals?

BLAKEY: Zildjian...the original. I don't care what kind of cymbal comes out, Zildjian's got it...that's the cymbal. Like,

now they've got...been had it been having it since they come out.
A lot of guys use different cymbals...there's different kinds of
cymbals out now. I've tried them, they're good...very good, but
I just prefer Zildjian.

BROWER: You say that was the most important part of the kit to
you...the part you travel with...

BLAKEY: The cymbals? No. All of it's important. It's just the
idea that if you've got them, you're use to the sound and you
just take them. I don't get nothing special in cymbals. I just
tell them to send me a certain size and I play them until I get
use to them...to the sound. I see if they respond to me the way
I play, which is very unorthodox. If they don't, I send them
back and get some more...try until I get the cymbal, but I don't
fuck around too much. I get along because before I got those
drums with "B", you know, I was playing cymbals that had a cut
out of them at least four inches...

BROWER: Like a wedge.

BLAKEY: Yeah...had to cut them out, because they began to split. They got so old, you had to cut them to keep them from tearing apart. So that's what I did. I had two cymbals like that...they sounded good to me because I was getting use to it...I don't care what it is. I use to play with chair rounds during the War because we couldn't get no sticks, so I'd take me some chair rounds and make me some sticks. Yes I did...play with them too...sand paper the head on the stick and play...make's me no difference, you got to play. You don't think about the equipment because that's the company's thing...they got to package and sell the thing..."This will make you sound better, so and so." May make it easier for you, but it ain't going to make you sound no better. It's the artist behind the instrument that does that.

BROWER: What do you like in sticks?

BLAKEY: I use any kind of sticks. Anything I can pick up. What they send me is "7-A"...anything, anything. I may pick up the

stick backwards, both of them...don't make no difference. I look down and say "Oh shit, I got the sticks turned around", because I don't think about that. I just think about the music. I ain't going to think about the drums...I going get some kind of sound out of that sombitch...before it's over, I made a sound. You got to get a sound so you can play...I don't even think about it, unless its really, really negative.

BROWER: We were talking about different drummers yesterday that you liked, appreciated, or influenced you in some way. A couple of drummers I want to ask you about. Sonny Green, for example.

BLAKEY: Yeah. I know a little of him, but I liked him very much. He got me to play in his place one night with Duke in Pittsburgh when I was a kid. I really enjoyed that. He couldn't make it that night, he was celebrating...he got a little inebriated. I got up there and played it and that was a great, great experience for me. I never forgot him for that. Everywhere I'd see him...I just love him, I love to talk to him.

Sonny Greer...something else. He was as old as water, you know, ha, ha. I don't know how old Sonny was, but he was something. There're two musicians, Claud Hopkins' father and Sonny Greer...those men, I admire them. They were ----- and very alert. I like that. He still was playing...before his demise, he was playing.

BROWER: Jo Jones...Papa Jo Jones.

BLAKEY: Papa Jo? Papa Jo's sick now...terrible. The other day he broke his hip. In fact, I got to go over there. I went, but he told me Lenox Hill, I thought, on the phone. But I went up there and he wasn't registered. I'd taken another patient up there, but I couldn't find him. But I'll find him. I have to find him.

BROWER: Was he an influence on you as a drummer?

BLAKEY: Oh, sure. All the older cats...I was like a kid when it comes to the drums, man. I'm very impressionable that way. Even

cats out here now, young drummers. That's why I say I don't listen to records, you know, because my mind... I hear some things and like what they do, it sticks in my mind...I catch myself doing it...but I don't think about it, I just do it and it cuts off your creativity. I like to keep moving. I like to be innovative...I don't like to stop too much. You know, to me it's like running a race. If you turn to see who's on the side of you, who's in back of you...when you turn forward, they done past you, you understand? So, you've got to keep getting up...there's not too much time to find new things, you know what I mean...different ways or another approach...and find it legitimately...they can understand...put it together. Not to try to play something no other drummer can play, I like to play things any drummer can play. That's what will stand. That's what will stay here...not how difficult you can play. It's the sound of the drum...the feeling of the drum, and it's so important.

BROWER: What about Oneal Spencer?

BLAKEY: Oneal? Well, he was something else. There's another man who played with brushes. A great drummer, Oneal Spencer...and, what did he do?... That guy was a monster with the high hat, I don't know...Oneal did something...I'll think about it. He was a great brush artist. I didn't get to know him either. I just heard him, you know. I didn't get to know him, I was too young. Anyway, they scared me to death. I kind of understood musicians too. A lot of musicians, you walk up to and say "Hey, so and so...", you start to ask a question and they'd growl at you. You don't understand, man. After you get out on the road and get to traveling, you're tired...you're really tired...you're very tired. You don't even what city you're going to. You don't know what day it is, then somebody comes up to you...you know. You just go by remote control...airplane, arrrr..., out of that, boom!...in the concert hall, back at the hotel, get up early, catch a plane, arrrr...you don't know what's

happening. Then somebody comes up and asks something off base and you growl back at them. Ordinarily, you wouldn't...it's just because you're so tired. So, I never bothered them too much. If I see the opportunity on something, I'll talk to them. But I never go up and bother them or interrupt their conversation or nothing like that, I got too much respect for them.

BROWER: Another drummer, but it's coming from a different tradition, Chano Pozo. You know, who came, I guess in the late forties and some impact. What were your thoughts on his role in the music at that time?

BLAKEY: Oh, I think he was something else. He was highly spiritual too because he would play all those things...and say belonged to some rituals. He was a very spitual person and a great, great drummer. He has done more with the congo than I have seen anybody do to this date. The fact is that maybe somebody is out there, but I havn't heard them...I havn't seen

them. Chano was just something else. He had a hell of a beat, you know. He turned Dizzy around, ha, ha, ha. He's very good. That's the only cat I've seen that he had in the band too. He didn't have no cats like Chano in his band, because most time the musicians didn't go for it at all.

BROWER: What's your concept of what the drummer's role is in playing an arrangement and supporting the ensemble?

BLAKEY: You're supposed to be in the rhythm section where you belong...that's called the rhythm section. He's got to play with the rhythm section. He's got to play the bottom, he's got to play the bass drum. He's got to make accents and play the bass drum all the time...four-four. Play under the soloist. Don't try to play over the soloist...try to support the soloist and make him play. That's his role. He's got to interpret the arrangements. He's like the "stoker", you know...you stoke a fire...he's got to be the fireman. He's got to turn the musicians on...make them play, even if they don't feel like

it...he's got to make them feel like it. And if they don't play, they'll be so embarrassed, ha, ha, you know...they'll be embarrassed and they got to play...make them play. That's your job...that's what you got to do. You've got to listen. You've got to learn the arrangements, know what's happening...know what to do. Most of all you've got to make the guys play. That's the most important.

BROWER: You've been considered to be sort of an emancipator of the drums in the sense of bringing the drums out of the background and being much more aggressive in fulfilling the role of making musicians play...almost as a second voice happening concurrently with the soloist...commenting on the solo, pushing the solo. Seems like a little bit more than just being in the background.

BLAKEY: Oh, yeah, of course. He always leaves places for you to do things, because he's got to take a breath...but you don't do things the same time he does things because then you cut off his

ideas...what ever he started to do. If you're playing loud...if you start making things when he's trying to do things, you make him forget and break his concentration. That's the most important thing, trying to soloist from breaking his concentration. Still, when he takes a breath, you can fill in there...sometime, not all the time...sometime. Sometimes he needs that. You know, little things you feel that he needs at the time he's playing. Each time it's different. You'll never know. You can't nail it down and say "You do this here, you that there". You don't know, but where ever it is, you're supposed to be prepared to help...you know, if he needs you.

BROWER: What about dynamics and another thing I've heard you talk about, the intensity of the beat. The intensity of the beat not necessarily meaning being loud.

BLAKEY: No, no. If you're playing loud and you come down soft, you ain't supposed to change, you're supposed to keep the

intensity. You're supposed to have that intensity just as much as when you play loud. You know, you got to keep that same thing going. This makes people listen to you. If you play loud, all you can do then is play louder and when you play louder it becomes noise not music. I like to hear music, I don't want to noise. You get loud, then you play softer. It's the dynamics in playing music...using dynamics, that's the fun...no matter what you play.

BROWER: I want to go back and ask you a little bit about Mary Lou Williams. I read about her house as being a kind of a salon that musicians used to go to and exchange ideas and, I guess, receive some leadership from her or some encouragement from her. Did you participate in that?

BLAKEY: Yes, she'd sit down and talk to the guys. She was a great person. She was watching over the musicians like a mother goose...like a mother hen...she'd just watch them. If she'd see you going off the wrong end, she'd pull your coat and tell you.

Anyway, she would tell you...if you listened, that's another thing, but she would tell you. If you listened, you'd hear a lot of wisdom.

BROWER: Did you visit her home often?

BLAKEY: I would see her once and a while, but you know, I was working with her all the time and we would talk. Intermission, we'd talk a long time...some nights we'd just sit up and just talk...drink coffee and talk. Other musicians, maybe two or three of us, would be sitting there.

BROWER: More about life or about music?

BLAKEY: Music, life, everything...she'd talk, yeah. Good person...very good.

BROWER: The place I want to ask you about is the Autobahn Ballroom. Did you play there often?

BLAKEY: Autobahn, uptown?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: Yeah. We had a thing we called they called the "Three

O'clock High"...John Collins, Dave Bailey, and myself...Dave Bailey, now head of Jazzmobile. Dave Bailey started playing drums and he went off with Gerry Mulligan. We had that thing up there...we'd have musicians every week. We'd have Miles one week, we'd have Bud Powell, we'd have...who did we have?...we had Art Tatum one week...Art Tatum and Bud, I think. Then we had Elmore Garcia. He was the Salsa Band...he played, people danced. They had the concert...Erroll Garner played...Ella Fitzgerald. It was nice. Musicians were putting it on every Sunday. We had a big crowd. It was nice.

BROWER: This was late forties, early fifties?

BLAKEY: Yeah, late forties, early fifties, I think...but we had a ball. That was nice...really nice...Didn't make no money, but we didn't owe nobody either, ha, ha...you know.

BROWER: John Collins, he's a guitar player?

BLAKEY: Yeah. He was living here at that time. He hadn't

joined Nat. Later on he joined Nat...King Cole. He split and went to the Coast. Then David went with, ah...Bailey...Dave Bailey is a pilot also, he was flying Bailey...

BROWER: Oh, F. Lee Bailey.

BLAKEY: F. Lee Bailey...he was his pilot. Then he got tired of that and said "Shoot, I'm coming back to jazz". He was with Gerry a long time...Gerry Mulligan. They went all over the world...everywhere.

BROWER: I wanted to ask you how important you felt 52nd street was?...and what it was like.

BLAKEY: Well it was a place with little small clubs in the basement. You know, like the townhouses and they'd have a basement downstairs. Well they'd make a club there. The Famous Door, where Basie was working was a little tiny place no bigger than this apartment...that's where they were working. They almost next door to each other. They'd just go on 52nd Street and stay down there all night. Go from joint to joint...hear

everybody. You know...it was nice. They had Kelly's Stable down the street. Spotlight...

BROWER: Kelly's Stable is a place that you worked a lot.

BLAKEY: I worked Mary Lou Williams a couple of weeks...not long. Then that's when...I really dug New York...boy, New York is something else...it was nice. That's when I made up my mind that I was coming here.

BROWER: Would you say that was like the Golden Era of the music or the Golden Era of New York?

BLAKEY: I wouldn't say so...I wouldn't say so. It might have been for that time, of course, but it wasn't the peak because the money wasn't...you know musicians...man, they didn't make no money...just getting by.

BROWER: What would you make a night or a week down there?

BLAKEY: No me. I wasn't working down there. You might make anything. You might make fifty dollars a week...sixty dollars a week...lucky to get that. When we were with "B", we made ten

dollars a night...didn't make no difference about the money, the music was important...it wasn't the money...and we were just glad to be together...glad to be somewhere playing...just pay your rent and you eat...that's all you worry about...just go on and play. If you come into some kind of prominence, you know...now, yeah, you didn't think like that. If cats get a little write-up or something now, ha, ha, they're liable to form a band or something. They run and get lawyers and all that stuff. You don't need that. If you come into it, you just go on and play. They'll come looking for you, you don't have to go looking for them...if you're doing something...you know, really. So, that's what was happening back there...cats played just to learn how to play.

BROWER: You think money consciousness changed the music or changed the musicians?...and, if so, when did you feel that that began to happen or happened?

BLAKEY: After Birdland, things got really bad. It's never been that good, but it got worse. The economy changed. The economy is the thing, because the musicians are only a product of the society in which they come out of.

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End of Disk #3 --- Disk #3 is full

Begin Tape #4 --- side = B

BLAKEY: They had gotten spoiled. Then they took advantaged of them because they like to play. So they had to turn around...they did some thing else. Rhythm and blues and rock came out the cats could make some money. That's what they needed, they needed that money...that's what changed it. Then there was no place for them to work anyway. To play jazz, you had to get out of the country. I was just one of the lucky ones. I was able to stay working, you know...and a lot of the time, I didn't, but you know it didn't bother me. I wasn't going to change and play nothing else...not that. That isn't what I wanted to do. I've always been the type of person, I do it my way or I ain't going to do it, you know what I mean? I'm not going to live and look back in anger. I can look back and say "Well, I did it my way". This the way I wanted to do it and very few people had that chance. Some have that chance, turn around and give it up for some money...I didn't want to. I just wanted

to be myself and do just what I'm doing. I can't miss what I never had because I was never rich. I can't miss that, so I just go on and be myself...and be happy anyway. I see a lot of my friends make a lot of money, you know, they walk around with bodyguards, I don't need no bodyguards, you know what I mean that's ridiculous..you know, and you don't see them or they run around in a big limosine, they have to keep themselves away from the guys...I like to be around musicians...I like them, I like them and that's what keeps me going, they have respect for me and how much they like me...that keeps me going. So the money, if it is going to do that I don't want that kind of money, you know what I mean, I just want enough to take of my family...that's all and play...play. All is not done that I want to do and so I say well I rather play, than just be out there making some money...after I get though out there making some money, when that stops then I can't play...no way you can play then, cause you

have been away from it, you can't stop, you have got to keep playing...you can't stop and come back to it, very few people can do that, there are some exceptions to the rule, but I don't feel that I am an exception...so I just stay at it and just keep playing, you know, some musicians can do anything...either go out there and play or come on back there and play, you know, whatever...but I don't think that is for everyone. I couldn't do it, so I just stay with it, what I am doing...I don't even think about them...I don't even try to do that...just be myself and be happy at it you know, I can do this. I can do that too, but that doesn't worry me...but those who are doing that, I would like to see them come over here and do this, what I am doing. They can't do it, you have got to play everyday to do it, you can't play like that, you have got to do it everyday...there is something new to learn everyday...you always learn... see and other things that you are working, especially in rhythm, so drums you just playing a certain thing all of the time, all of the time, it get

to be a bore, it gets to be a job, you know, and it is a drag, but its got to be done and thats what the people want and thats what they pay for...you do that and you do what they say do and they pay you the money. Do like I say do. Shit no. ...War in time of peace, I don't believe in that. Sitting out there trying to be brave. That ain't got nothing to do with that. I hate the sight of violence and blood...I hate that. That really upsets me. I don't want to see it. ...Something happens ...bring bring him home, I'm splitting, I don't want to see him...thats terrible. To see what it does, if most people could see on TV these violence things they show and they show the part where the people are hurt and they suffer, I wouldn't be too quick to go into that shit...violence is a trip man. I was reading today about the cat in London with a rock group and he was in an automobile accident, and severed his arm off and they were trying to sew it back on and put it together...one of the guys in the band, it is in todays paper you know, ain't that something, now

that don't make sense...you know, they are out drunk, driving in a car...severed his arm and he is a drummer you know what I mean?

BROWER: He want be making too many more gigs...

BLAKEY: Unless he learns how to play one handed, but how long can that last?

BROWER: He could play a drum machine.

BLAKEY: People giving you gigs because they feel sorry for you, you know you don't need to do that...so that what he did...it is terrible...that is terrible. Its like-----a piano player what is he doing out there, you know, he's got to protect himself... he can't do it with his hands...he has got to support his family and everything going down the drain...so you have got to do something. I don't care what the law is. In New Hampshire and up there...Vermont, can carry a gun right out there where everybody can see it. They don't have that kind of problem.

They make such a big to do over it, you know. It's gotten necessary. Just like I was reading, If the politicians had to ride the subways, this would make a big difference. If they had to ride the subways or be in the street like every body else...or walk somewhere, but they got a body guard. You know what I mean, they turn around and tell the body guard to take care of that. You're out there, you know what I mean. I don't intend to let that...I'm always trying to watch out. I'm always looking for a surprise. You know, because the element of surprise is terrible. You got to watch for it. You got to be like a cat out there in the street watching. No body walking behind me at night. Noooo sir. I'll wait...let you pass, ha, ha. None of that...no walking up behind me. I go in a joint, I sit facing the door and I know where all the exits are. I don't care what joint it is. You don't know what's going to go on there...the people...it's crowded. We've been in so much shit, boy. We were up there...where was that Canada, we were up there? We got in a

fight with Hell's Angels. It was intermission. It was a big fight and Wally-----was back there taking care of business. Somebody told me he was back there fighting them guys. I went running back there...everybody was fighting. I was getting ready to kick this cat and he hollered "Look out that's Eddie", our trumpet player. I didn't know he was bald headed, because he wore a mop, ha, ha, ha, ha. Somebody knocked his mop off, see...he didn't have it on...he was bald headed, I was getting ready to kick him in his head. I didn't know who he was.

BROWER: Eddie who?

BLAKEY: Eddie Henderson. We laugh about it all the time. We were talking about it the other day. I saw him.

BROWER: Where did you see him, in town?

BLAKEY: He's going to live here with his mother. It was real funny, because I didn't know. I said "Why didnt you tell me, man?"..."Well...the rug, I didn't know you had it up there ha, ha, ha. I didn't know...he just got up there himself...shit, so

what?...but I didn't know. He almost got offed about having that piece...expensive one, but it come off when you get to fighting ha, ha, ha...you can't be identified. I didn't know anything about it...never dreamed it was like that ha, ha. Oh, we laughed about it. That was really funny. And then, I had another friend...came back John Collins, he came back from the coast after years, I ain't seen him in about twenty-five years, he come into town and say, "Hey John", and he had something wrong with his head, but I didn't say nothing, so he said "Man lets drop by and see Roy"...Roy was work down at that joint...just before he got sick. We went down to see Roy, and when we walked in...you know how Roy is. He was standing at the bar and talking to some people, and he never turned around and paid no attention to us yet...you know how musicians do...so Roy just kept on talking...you know, we sat there, we ordered drinks, we ordered another, he is still talking...he turned around and he looked at

John Collins, he said "What the fuck did you do to your head?"
Ha, ha, ha, John was so embarrassed, he wouldn't admit it that we
took it off and wouldn't wear it no more. He said that he hadn't
seen him in about a quarter of a century.

BROWER: Just before we get into the messenger, did you spend
some time with Earl Hines in a group in the early fifties, will
you tell me about that experience, how long it was?

BLAKEY: I don't know, I hadn't worked with him too long, maybe a
year...a couple of years, but he didn't want me to leave and I
learned a lot from Earl Hines, you know, and I learned about show
business, presentation, and how it is done...I learned a lot from
him, he is very brilliant and he never, I don't think Earl Hines
ever knew how much piano he could play...cause I had never seen
him practice, he just sit down and play, thats the way he did
it...and he would sit down, I would say man can't you sit down
and practice? He would say, "No, I ain't got time for that right
now," and he would be playing so nice, he would play some things

boy I ain't never heard of before...he would be playing... he would sound like -----

He would just be playing with a big smile on his face, and this guy never practice. He knew about the business, he knew about show business, about bands and stuff...he was a real character. He had this thing about "Rhapsody in Blue,"

after Billy Eckstine had left...had this big band to play out there in one of those towns...Idaho, he said he had some taping...you know how you decorate...come from the stage, across the pit band down to the audiences, and it looks like a floor that you can walk from the audience straight up to the stage you know, say that the pit band was down there, but the pit band wasn't playing that night, so Earl Hines sat on stage...so they had this all covered over, but they never moved the drums you see, they left the drums sitting down there, you couldn't see them. And the band hit you know, "Rhapsody in Blue", da, tat, tat, da, da, Gates comes walking out there, sharp as a tack...a

big cigar in his mouth, hand in his pocket went out there...out side, said "Hey Gates, don't step back on the paper, you'll fall". "Thats not what I am paying you for, Blakey". I said "Gates, don't you dare step back". And he slipped back, boy, and went down through that paper and hit the drums and the cymbals...doom!, bam!, ha, ha, ha,. Everybody say, "Haaaa, ha, ha". He went down through that, ha, ha... you know, ha, ha...so, we waited, man. We must have waited. We must have waited about a minute...two minutes...and his head come through the hole with dust all over, ha, ha, ha, ha...he said "You fired, Blakey" ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. He fired me, on the spot...ha, ha, ha...he fired me. Everybody else was laughing...couldn't nobody play...people were on the floor, ha, ha, ha. He was down..."Help me out of here", ha, ha, ha, ha. Everybody fell out... I was down there... said "Gates, get up out of that hole", ha, ha, ha. Boy, he was so mad at me, he didn't know what to do, ha, ha, ha. It wasn't

my fault, I tried to warn him ha, ha, ha, ha. He said I was fucking with him. I wasn't fucking with him ha, ha, ha. He fell, I tried to warn him ha, ha, ha, ha. He's a classic...he's a classic.

BROWER: He hired you back, didn't he?

BLAKEY: Oh, no...he didn't mean that. He was just mad. I went back. I didn't care no way. He wanted me with him, you know.

BROWER: Was this the same Dunlap that was with Billy Eckstine?

BLAKEY: Yeah, the same one. He wrote "You Can Depend on Me". Dunlap didn't play nothing, he was just the valet. He wrote that tune...tune is still popular. He passed...still popular. That girl made it...White girl. He and his partner did "Perfidia".

know you can depend on me"...that's Dunlap. Ain't that something? Boy, that man, he was really funny. Even until the time that I left the band, he was so mad with me, he didn't know what to do and I was cracking up...he was mad at me!...he said "I

should have let you stay fired" ha, ha, ha...ok, whatever ha, ha. I went with Buddy De Franco, you know...I wanted to play a little more. He was playing...what was he playing?...he was playing some dixieland things. He was just going everywhere. But you could play...well...it was just something else. Who did we have on bass..Tommy Potter?

BROWER: Which band, Buddy De Franco?

BLAKEY: No, Earl Hines...Tommy Potter, Harold...Harold the tenor player, Jona Jones, Benny Green, and Etta Jones. Boy, he had everybody dressed up so pretty, you could hardly play. Oh, man, he had special tuxedos...a blue one, a green one, a grey one, you had everything. He really respected musicians. He didn't want you to pick up nothing...when the band was traveling...bags or nothing. When you'd get in your hotel room, he'd send the valet around with bath robes...beautiful bath robes. And every morning he'd send you a gardenia to your room. He'd say "You don't know when the press is coming and walk in your room, so you want to be

prepared". The curtain never comes down...he's always on stage...that's the way he lived. Always had a smile, and was dying like a dog. He could hardly remember things...he'd forget. He Alzheimer's Disease. He didn't never let nobody no it...to proud...he was a very proud man. He was sharp. Every time you see him, he looked like he jumped out of band box. I don't care what kind of day it was...walking suit in the morning...he'd be changing, but that was his way and that's the way the guys use to dress back then. He'd take his...what do they call it?...his constitution, ha, ha,...and he'd walk. Then he'd come back and change his clothes...be out there at lunch with something else...a sport ensemble, you know, ascot...dig it? He'd come back, he'd have on something else. And when he'd get to the stage, and come out, he's got on something else...always a big long Cuban cigar...expensive...five dollars a piece...in his mouth. Bad, boy I'm telling you...bad. I've met lot's of men like that. That the way ah, what you call him used to

be...what's his name, man?...funny name, piano player...way back there...light skinned cat...ah...before Fats...this other cat...what is his name?...

BROWER: Jelly Roll, you talking about?

BLAKEY: Jelly Roll Morton. Sharp...boy, if you see some pictures of him...silk top hats, man. Boy, they were shaaarp, man! Stripped pants...he'd cross his legs, he got on spats ha, ha, ha. Boy, he'd ride around in Rolls Royces and shit, you know...bad!...that's the way they were. Those kind of musicians, the curtain never comes down with them, they're always on stage...from the minute they get up until they go to bed. That's the way they are...something else. I see J ---- H---- or Earl Hines coming to rehearsal, he'd be sharp, god damn. He'd take off his jacket or something and he have a special lining...he'd through it across the back of the chair. We'd say "Go on..." ha, ha. He had all different kinds of shoes and shit...wild shoes,

great big long shoes, you know...shinned, you know...all stitched around...everything is in place. He's something else...everything...I've never seen nothing like him. Even Duke, who sort of changed his thing, you know...started wearing them collarless coats and them western bow ties. His hair left, and I said "Hey Gates your face is getting longer" ha, ha. He went and got him a hair piece...man that mop...I said "Ah, no" ha, ha. He had an auto accident and knocked his eye out. He went and got another eye...he was still smiling ha, ha, ha... I don't care what you did. I said "Go on Gates"...he meant that. That was nice, the way he treated musicians...paid you good too...for that time. You working out there...you'd work some classy rooms. But I just didn't want to feel like that too much. Like Lucky Millinder...Lucky Millinder and His Modern Minstrels, ha, ha, ha, ha. Listen man, that was an experience! They had a minstrel show. Have you ever seen a minstrel show? The all sit down in circles...their heads man...they'd be cracking jokes and all that

shit. The whole crew sits out on stage. They get up and do their number and sit back down on a little block, ha, ha, ha. We opened this show and they had a great big domino out there in the front. The band hit up this tune like "The Mule Face Blues". Boy, that was the corniest thing... Lucky Millinder would be there putting his coat on...then he ran out there and he jumped up on the domino and went straight out...ha, ha, ha, ha. I hit a rim shot and split ha, ha, ha...I couldn't play, ha, ha, ha, ha. Oh, boy that was the funniest thing, man, ha, ha, ha. He jumped...boom! He and Tiny Bradshaw used to off the piano and do splits. We were playing...he'd jump on the piano and go into a thing, do a split or do a flip. You know, Lucky Millinder and them cats used to do that. They be doing that shit on time too...Lucky Millinder. If you were a drummer and you sit and watch Lucky...follow the whole band...he'd catch every cue...cue you in on everything. Boy, he knew that music. If a note hit him up side the head, he wouldn't know what hit him. He knew

that music...what the needs were supposed to do, how they come in and all that. He knew...and be singing that shit...directing that band. He run out there on his domino and went way up in the air, ha, ha, ha...I saw him come down...boy, ha, ha, ha. See he hit that domino and had on some new shoes, they slipped and he came down on his ass and he went straight down, ha, ha, ha...that thing was about this high, ha, ha, ha...a great big thing. He went straight down in them, boy, ha, ha, ha. Nobody could do nothing...ha, ha, ha. Now he couldn't understand that. Boy if they had a video camera, boy... Tiny Bradshaw did that too. He jumped off the piano, went into a split, and ripped his pants all up under here...ha, ha, ha...because his ass was out, ha, ha, ha. The band fell out, ha, ha, ha. It was funny. I was up there playing with Billy Eckstine, all of a sudden, whooom! I disappeared. I'd fell off the drum...this thing was way up there and fell backwards. Yeah, I didn't know. Shit, them cats

died...Bird and them laid back, ha, ha, ha. They didn't come back to see if I was hurt or not, ha, ha, ha. I did some roll up there, showing off, you know...went off the back. You know, that was something...there I went, down in the floor. Fats Navarro, he run around the back to help me with his horn...you know them wires that move the stage out and back, big heavy cables?...he tripped over that and fell on his horn. We picked his horn up and it was curled up, ha, ha, ha, ha. We couldn't finish the tune, ha, ha, ha. I'm laying down there and he's got his horn...ha, ha, ha. He said "Art, is that the right attitude?" ha, ha, ha. He had that grease all over his uniform, ha, ha, from the cable. Oh, man it was terrible. Those things happen. I mean we laugh because it was funny, but they got other cats, they couldn't laugh, ha, ha, ha. I had to laugh at that. I laughed a Fletcher too. He got so mad at me...at the Apollo...you know Puerto Rico... Puerto Rico at the Appolo...cats backstage. They had a mike that goes up and down out front...he

worked it...pull up a lever and mike would come up... We're playing...here comes Fletcher...ha, ha, ha...went to say "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen" and Puerto Rico brought the mike up...boom!...ha, ha, ha, ha...Lord have mercy!...ha, ha, ha, ha. I'm up there...now you can't let the people know you're hurting like that, ha, ha, ha, ooooooh! ha, ha, ha. They had to bring in ----- to take that fool off, ha, ha, ha. He screamed, man. Put his hankchief...the skin was broken a little bit... he said "Ooooh!" ha, ha, ha, ha. Everybody...the audience was rolling! ha, ha, ha. You know how the audience is at the Apollo. I liked to died. He laughed at it later, but he didn't laugh at it then. You ain't supposed to do that out there. You make a joke out of it and go on, you know. That was funny, boy. He'd get mad with everybody...want to beat everybody up and fire everybody...screaming at his man in his dressing room. You could hear him screaming all over the place. That's my man, ha, ha...something else. I'd asked him why he'd write that shit in

them weird keys. He'd say because it's brilliant...and they're there to play, that's what you're supposed to do. Cats would be playing a solo...change the key... Some them cats would jump up there and jump into that shit, boy it was a damn shame. You know "One Sweet Letter from You"? Shit. They're all natural "A", ha, ha. No, it ain't they can't do. That's why he did it...make them cats learn how to play. He used to tell me about Coleman Hawkins and how he used to make Coleman Hawkins do that. When Coleman Hawkins left, he didn't want nobody else.

End of side B, tape #4

Disk #4 is full

ART BLAKEY Interview (Con't)
Disk #5

Begin Tape #5 --- Side B

BLAKEY: You know, after Coleman Hawkins made that "Body and Soul", if you couldn't play that, you couldn't play no tenor saxophone. You had to play it just like him and try to sound like him. You remember that? And Pres and them come out, and Bird and them come out with that straight sound... I use to like Willie Smith and all of them cats...you know all of them cats had vibrato, you know. They listened to Johnny Hodges. What's that thing? "Do da de de da de de"... "Jeeps Blues". I use to listen to that all of the time. I thought that was the way...you know. Then when I heard Pres...I heard Bird...I said "Jesus Christ"... Them cats just changed...wiped out everything...just wiped it out...changed everything...the sound of the saxophone and everything. And they said that he couldn't read...that he didn't have no sound. If you had heard Billy Eckstine with him playing that first saxophone...boy...woooo! He was sitting on his music.

Everybody else was trying to read it the new music, because we only had two weeks to learn it. If you didn't learn it, you would get fired...and he is sitting on his music...

BROWER: Who?

BLAKEY: Bird!...playing that first part. All he did is rehearsal... ..Run it down rehearsal two or three times and it goes to memory...he would play. Sometimes he would do something he would change it, and John Jackson and Leo Parker would say "Hey man, so and so". He'd say "I'm playing first alto, follow me", ha, ha, ha. And when he changed something it was for the better...it was for the better. In "Second Balcony Jump", you would hear the difference...like in Earls band...when they made it, "Do da do do..."... When Bird got in there he changed that, you know "Do da do da da...". You know, they were going somewhere else with that thing... The phrasing, he changed it. I like that because Jerry wrote it. Jerry, was with Billy too.

Brower: Jerry Valantine?

BLAKEY: Yes sir. He passed too, I heard. Billy told me. Yeah...He passed somewhere in California. Wasn't that something? He wanted to be with "B". He quit, he wouldn't write, he wouldn't play no more... He came here came here and worked somewhere...in the steel mill. He just wouldn't play and wouldn't write. "B" told me he was in California, but you couldn't get in touch with him. He wouldn't talk. He have been hurting. I didn't realize he was that sensitive. I didn't realize it. I didn't know that. I use to see him...he was so nice, you know. He'd always be on a deep study on the bus. But I loved to see him write, man. I'd sit there and watch him...on the piano...how he puts that stuff...oh, man. That's a lesson, if you ever see one. He'd be doing things...had a band of his own. He be playing "HMMMM, hmmm". You could see it man. Boy, you could see it coming out...see what's going to happen. Boy, it would be so pretty. That thing "I'll Wait and Pray"? You heard that? Beautiful. The way he wrote, he'd play it on the

piano. But he played trombone in the band. ...He had some talent, he was like Tadd, he had different voicings. Tadd was there, Jerry Valintine, Edgar Sampson... You know Edgar Sampson?

BROWER: Edgar Samson was around Billies band?

BLAKEY: This is writers, he carried writers...I am telling you musicians, they just went for the music. There wasn't no money. They just went for the music. Boy they liked that shit. I was tickled to death, man. Sure...we use to play army camp in the day, and at night, play a concert. Black and White, they would be segregated... Then play a dance and the Blacks would be right there and they would put a rope down right there in the middle of the goddam tobacco warehouse. Whites on one side and Blacks on the other. Then the cat on the cat walk up there walking around...police with great big riffles. They'd be drunk and mixed up anyway...dam that rope. Police come down and beat them niggers ass if they had seen them, you know. They were weird

boy. And thats the way it went down. We did that everyday and sometimes rehearsed too. We would be rehearsing and playing every night. The cats liked to play music, it was no problem...rehearsal...they were so critical., the way they sound they were very critical. They would play something down, boy, and the arrangement would sound pretty good. Tadd, he would be sitting back there with a little shitty grin on his face... After they get through...as if to say, "What do you think fats?" He would say "Well, Dizzy, it sound like little children", ha, ha. He'd say "Pass it in". We'd pass it in, he would tare it up and through it back to him and say "Man go on and write something, go on!". Boy, I've never felt so bad for somebody in my life, and they would do that to everybody. I don't care who you are. I've seen them jump on Bird. They got me one night. I was sitting back there shuffling on something...Sarah was singing "Do ya do da..." You know, I'm sitting there but I'm

playing a shuffle. He said "Art Blakey, what are you doing?". I said "Diz, what the fuck...shit, I don't know". He said "Why do you do it?" ha, ha. I said I heard Cozy Cole playing it on the record "Chicken Ain't Nothing but a Bird" when you were with Cab Calloway and you took the featured solo. He was playing that shit behind you. He said "That's why that Black nappy head mother fucker ain't here", ha, ha, ha. Boy, they are something! They are terrible...and they just get on your butt. Whatever it is, they get on you. And all of them could play. The most...that I admired, was Leo Parker...seventeen years old, boy...take that baritone, get up there and play behind any god damn body he wanted to...Charlie Parker...he didn't give a shit...he'd take his baritone to the mike and play! ha, ha, ha. Swinging his little ass off, whoooo! Like Lucky Thompson, he get out there playing his saxophone, have a big towel around his neck, ah, he'd be playing his ass off. When he'd get through, he'd take his reed off and toss it at Bird, ha, ha, ha, ha. Boy,

and then Bird would go out there...kiss it goodbye. He'd be playing, boy. They weren't playing with no malice or hate, they were playing with love, boy. They play to each other. All the need section, Dexter, Gene Ammons...boy it was something! All the saxophones would be out there playing on "Blowing the Blues Away" and all that shit...Fat Girl would take his tenor and come out there, boy...put some shit on all them saxophones players, ha, ha, ha, ha. He just didn't have his chops...because he was a saxophone player and changed to trumpet. He had his trumpet and boy, he put some shit on them...you hear me? He put it on them..."I use to play the saxophone", ha, ha, ha, ha. He played alto too. He switched from trumpet. He was bad. They'd be playing their ass off. I said "Man, I hope he would hurry up and finish, so Fat Girl can get in there, boy...playing, man! He moved me...ah, like Clifford...Clifford Brown...that kind of trumpet...that big sound...that sound...big sound...Spanish sound. He was making all the changes...clean...making it, you

know. He really had that sound. I got hook on it. Bird had it. You should hear that sound of Fats Navarro playing first, J. J. playing first trombone, and Charlie Parker playing first alto...leading those sections. They had that shit together, boy. Aha man, uhmmm! Them cats be leaning...be leaning, boy. Bird be leaning...boy they'd be bending right together. Look like they rehearsed the shit. They'd say make the band come that way. That's what I'm talking about. Swinging!...my god, they'd be swinging...uhmmm! They got to swinging so hard, they started crying, ha, ha, ha...swinging...oh, they were swinging. When we played opposite Jimmy Lunsford in Brooklyn, I felt bad...because I liked that cat...I liked the band. You know, but the band had really broke up. They just had other people...but had some of the mainstays with them. But boy, "B's" band put some shit on them cats that night. Boy, I ain't never heard like that before. Boy them cats...uhmmm! You know, wasn't no race horse involved.

He said come out Jug. Jug went out there and played "Second Balcony Jump" and had the whole house shaking. They started fighting and going on. Jug was playing...oh!...he was marching on them. Boy, he was having a ball out there. Then "B" comes on, Billy Eckstine...we don't announce him, you know..."Oh, baby..."...walking on the stage...band comes in, boy. Then they start really fighting-----. Broads be hollering, taking off their panties, throwing them up there, boy friends bust them up side their head, he'd go an fight somebody...oh, he was terrible...Billy Eckstine. One time some cat threw a Coca Cola bottle up there..."You god damn faggot"...he stopped the band and said "Just a minute fellows"...walked off the stage, went down there and said "What do you mean, so and so and so..."...bam!...this cat, boom!...on the floor...he went back up on the stage..."Hello baby...", ha, ha, ha. Terrible. That was aggressive...they were very aggressive. They didn't take no shit. That's when I recognized that that was a new breed coming

in out of different breeds...people every ten years...change. Man, they just wasn't taking no shit, that's all. Anywhere, let's get it on. Now they got the shit going pretty good...the shit went out somewhere, I don't know...went under water, ha, ha, ha...weird now. Now you could go up in Harlem, get drunk, fall out in the street, wake the next day in the door way...you got your money...ain't nobody going to bother you man...nobody. Now, you can't walk up there at twelve noon...you'd better not. You better be cool, you know...it's a shame. It's changed. Time brings about the change. The change is going to be better. But the change don't come over night like a lot of people expect...it takes time. Because they plan a city. Every twenty-five years, right...every twenty-five years, hence...what's going to happen. So nothing stays the same. All you have to do is get the attitude, "I'm going to groove with it, I don't give a shit which way it goes and when they get them airplanes that go to Europe in forty-five, fifty minutes, I'm going to be on that too"...hope

they get the fare down so you can come back and forth home every night. Just work in Paris and come on home. Work in Scandinavia, come on home at night, go to bed, be with your family. That's important. ...speak them languages like them other people. You can speak it, it's not problem. All that worry on your head. You just go to work and come home. That's the way it's going to be. The shit we travel in now is like the covered wagon anyway. ...Flying to Europe on them propellers. I wouldn't think about getting on a propeller now...not me. I'm very upset because I got to ride these jets...since I was on the Concorde...I don't want to ride nothing else. ...You come Europe...look at that man...two hours and thirty-five minutes. That ain't nothing. The cat was telling me that as soon as the people get acclimated to speed more, they can sleep at home everynight. The fare will be down. ...You could work until you're a hundred and fifty if you live that long, you'll be so

relaxed, you know what I mean, you can. But this kind of
shit...rushing to make the plane... You know, two hours and
forty-five minutes...zoom!...straight up man. ----- -- coming
down, they were serving, they said go over to New York where they
----- . I said now ain't this something. Yeah, but fifteen
hundred dollars. They'll have to the fare way down...but they'll
have it. You'll be surprised, but they're going to have it.
The world has to get together, becuse its going to be like
this...small, very small. There ain't going to be no blowing
away either. They think they're so far away, everybody feels a
little safe. You ain't safe, nowhere. I notice how these people
over here raise hell about them atomic places being here...the
plants and shit. Man, in England, they sitting right on the
street. It's a fact, a fact of life...here it is. People over
here fighting that shit. They going to do it anyway if they want
to. They do everything they want to. I don't know, they may
find something to replace that shit. Who knows?...if they're

going to do it... People remind me of roaches. Man, they'll survive anything, ha, ha, ha...all this shit we're breathing now, playing games. ...When we first to Japan. They told them people "Look out, watch them, watch this, watch that". They thought you were crazy. I was on the T.V. in Boston...people were calling..."You love them...". It wasn't the idea of love, it was the idea of respect. I learned respect in Japan. You don't have to love...you can't love a person unless you respect them. The first thing that comes is...I just respect. You got to respect -----. If you don't respect the man, you can't love him. What they were doing...how they were putting that thing...Hitachi, Sanyo...ain't none of that shit new to me...we saw it...I saw what was coming. In Japan, you don't see no American automobiles over there do you? No, no. Their city and population is one and a half times the size of our city here in New York. They don't have no killings and crimes. They have

crimes and things like that...not like we do. A woman can walk in the street at four and five o'clock in the morning by herself...down them little narrow streets...I mean...you know. Ain't nobody going to bother them. They live up tight. ...Their whole apartment is no bigger than this apartment here. They know what to do. They have a different thing. It's like a family. So the United States let them build the cars, the radios, let them build all that... They let them have that because the United States is not interested in that. They're interested in selling tanks...you know how much they get for a tank, one plane...selling them arms, man. You see, them people are buying that shit, man. It's important. Let's fight...you want to fight?...here. They sell it. They make all that money. Japan is no problem to them. If they want to, they just turn to Japan and say "Look, we don't want that, we want...". What's Japan going to do...really. You know what I mean...but that's the way they are. But the Japanese are slick. While they were busy

trying to Americanize Japan, Japan was busy "Japanning" America, ha, ha, ha. You know, it's a whole different thing. So, I think the people who are in charge, have to keep that stuff and keep some of them arms...keep people buying that shit...buying them tanks...you realize how much one tank costs, you know...or one of those planes. ...get rid of that shit, they don't use that. The use of the computer man...use it to get it together...learn about it...you got to know about it. They got computer instruments out...horns, computers and all that stuff, you know...Herbbie Hancock...that's nice. That's good! You can't put it down. You see, because that's where it's going to be...right there... The computer is just out of sight. We saw the exhibition...the computer as a maid... In some places now, you can see the computers...the robots working...cleaning up the office...and they're cleaning it buddy, ha, ha, ha. You can't even jive it, you know. They give the man...you know...for a days pay, they

give him a days work. Boy, they ain't playing. I said "Well, I'll be damn". They had one that comes to wake you up and gets you coffee...that had barred on something...I don't know what ever happened...because the thing had breasts on it...that's why some people hate them. You know, they're scared...strange...and that's the way it's going to be. You've got to face it. All that stuff we use to see as kids...I use to read Buck Rogers...you see that shit now. You know, planes...jet planes...you know. That's what happens...and with this computer mess, that's what happens. People got imagination now...young people, you know. They get out there...they can do it...and I do don't blame them...and I love it...that's what I like. And that's the way the music is going to be...get on out there...it's going to be good...good. I see, ah, better musicians coming. You know...scholastically, morally...a different type of person all together. It's a new musician today. I'm very proud of them, you know.

BROWER: Are you speaking of...like, Wynton, Terrance Blanchard...?

BLAKEY: All the young musicians. They ain't no drinkers. They ain't no addicts...dope addicts. All they want to do is just play music...and learn more about music. They know...know a hell of a lot now, but still they want to learn more. And a lot of them are religious. You know, and boy, that's something to see. You know, because musicians are always branded as some kind of freak, you know. Never had a regular family life. They always branded musicians like that because they didn't understand them. They wanted to belittle the thing that they see, that they didn't understand. 'Just like everything else. But, ah, now the musicians that are coming up today, man, are something else. They show them, you know. They love there parents...they love their mothers. You know, it's a little different. I mean they show they love their mothers... They really show it, they don't forget about them. A lot of musicians come here and forget about

them...they don't write them... You know how kids use to do, but they don't do that no more...they're more intelligent. So that's why I like them...I'm crazy about them. So ah, I think it's getting better...all the way around. It's getting, better and better and better. It just takes time.

BROWER: Speaking about family, how many children do you have?

BLAKEY: Well, I think...seven...eight...eight. That I'm----- father. Then I adopted other children. They're not mine. I'm not the -----father, but I raised them. I did the best I could and I'm proud of all of them. But now this young baby, Tikashi-----...and things seem to be going along pretty good now. I've never had any problems with them, you know. I think I'm lucky...no kind...health, anything...they're all healthy...and, ah...I'm lucky, just lucky...wasn't thinking about it. I got a nice family now...nice wife, you know...good wife...keeps getting better and better and better. She's the

best...in many, many ways, you know. She does exactly as I want to do. She's like a help mate...she helps...helps me...don't complain. She understands...she's in it...in the business now...she likes it. So, I guess we just struggled along together and let it happen. It will happen, you know. So, we just go on, it's getting better. Doing much better to me...well at one time it was doing very well...doing very, very well. But, you know, that wasn't music...that was other people helping me too. But this is on my own. I think it's much better...you know. I don't need no help, ha, ha you know. I can stand on my own feet and make it...you know...that's good.

BROWER: You mean as far as like management and booking all that's concerned?

BLAKEY: Everything...family, everything. You know, and I changed. I changed my life style...changed it. I couldn't stay in the same groove I was in before because it was different times, you know. Only a fool don't change. I've changed.

BROWER: From what to what?

BLAKEY: Changed for the better! I don't hang out like I did when I was a kid. I realize that I'm older. I realize that. There ain't nothing out there happening that I haven't seen. If I want to go out, I go out...right here where all the energy is...that's why I stay in New York. If I feel like going to hear some music...I'm in walking distance...I can walk down and hear all the music I want. I come on back home...this is a nice area here...that's the reason I don't want to leave the area. I like this area. If I'm away, my wife...everybody knows...it's a community, like around...you know...she goes...everybody knows who she is... They don't know her maybe, but they know who she is...and, you know, it's good for her...it's good for me. I don't have to worry too much...if I'm out somewhere on the road. Because usually, I like my family with me, but this time she can't be with me...when she get her thing together she can come. She's got to get her green card...she's Canadian. She's got to

get her green card and everything. But she has permission to live here, but now she's married, she's got to change her whole thing...you know what I mean...get her shit together so she can travel with me, beacuse I like my wife with me...when I'm traveling, I like it. It gives her a chance to see. I gives her a chance to get educated to what really is going on out here in the business, you know. She can handle it better...meet the people and all that. So, that's what that's all about.

End side A --- Tape #5

Begin side B --- Tape #5

BROWER: We were talking about the Earl Hines...you know...period and that led to a lot of other things. What about your period with Buddy De Franco?

BLAKEY: I had a good time with him. He had a quartet...Kenny Drew, Curilly Russell, myself, Buddy De Franco...had a good time. He was a wonderful person to work with. It was one of the good times, musically, that I'd had in my life too. We played and had

a ball. Wasn't but one horn and we just had a ball. We stayed together a long time. I don't know what happened...oh, I must have went on my own...or I could have went to Birdland, I think...

BROWER: Yeah, see that was like 1952, '53...in that period?

BLAKEY: Yeah.

BROWER: ...and I guess that's when you started being the house drummer at Birdland back during that time. Did you record much with De Franco?

BLAKEY: No. I was the drummer all the time I was with Buddy. I was just on leave.

BROWER: Did you record much with De Franco?

BLAKEY: No...I made a couple of dated with him I think...yeah, a couple of dates. But we sure had a wonderful time. It was a good thing. It was a good marriage. We got along good. We traveled together...with the road manager, Buddy and us. We had

a good time. Everybody liked each other.

BROWER: What kind of places were you playing, clubs?

BLAKEY: Clubs, everything...concerts, everything. Buddy De Franco was pretty popular at that time. He had won polls a couple of times and he had been working in different places. He worked with Tommy Dorsey. You know, he'd been around...he had a good name for himself. Then he went in front of the Glen Miller Orchestra or something...Tommy Dorsey, I don't know. He fronted one of them orchestras for a while...he didn't like that...he quit and went on back to Florida...and he got sick. He's an inventor too, you know. He invents things. He went back there and stayed in Florida. I saw him when he played Fat Tuesday's. I hadn't seen Buddy for years...since he was leading that big band in Japan. I met him in Japan once too and we talked. He's a good friend...a good friend. But I think he's mostly now staying around Florida. He's got some kind of business down there, I don't know what it is. Kenny Drew's in Europe. Curly,

he retired. That's it.

BROWER: You ah, first recorded with Monk, I guess, in 1947 and that was the beginning of your association with, ah, Blue note records...

BLAKEY: Yeah, that was the first association.

BROWER: Do you remember those particular sessions that led to the two volumes, "The Genius of Modern Music" with Monk?

BLAKEY: I don't know...we made so many. We made a lot of them. I don't know what was special...what ever they could call it...we got it out there. But, ah, I just like playing with Monk. I just like anything he did...I liked it. We were very close...he was my friend. He was one of my best friends. He was the guy I was with most of the time. You see Monk, you see Art. You see Art, you see Monk, you know. We were together all the time. We are both libras. We were born just one day apart...I think I was the eleventh and he was the twelfth...or vice versa...yeah, I'm the eleventh, yeah. But we were just always

together. We liked to argue...just like kids...hang out...and stay together...and play. I just like what he was doing, you know...I liked it. I argued with him about it. But he believed in what he was doing, so I stopped arguing with him, ha, ha, ha...he believed that...that's right...and he did it. That's the way he did it.

BROWER: What about Alfred Lyons-----?

BLAKEY: Wonderful. He was the best recording company I've ever known. He treated musicians better than anybody. He had a lot of respect for musicians, he treated them better than anyone in the record business...jazz musicians. And he made the best albums...the best sound...technically and everything. Rudy Van Gella-----was the engineer. We started in Rudy's house. Rudy was really an optician...he just went from that into sound...he was in both of them and boy, he was good. So, that's what happened...so they both grew together. They became a wonderful

thing. It just had to come to the end...it was sorrowful, you know. They got tired. Alfred got tired. Frank got tired...

BROWER: Frank Wolf?

BLAKEY: Yeah. You know it was a little company that out grew them. They both made good money. Alfred wanted to stop. Frank stuck around to see that everything goes down right with Blue Note because they wouldn't sell their records cheap. They kept the price up through all that crap...they wouldn't go for it...and I admire them for it. They would never sell a Blue Note record...you couldn't get a Blue Note album cheap or a record or anything...seventy-eights, on...you couldn't. ...That's what they did and they treated musicians wonderfully. But the thing got too big, it got to be a monster, so he sold it...sold the catalog...because he was tired, you know.

BROWER: So, was that basically when you drifted away from Blue Note Records or broke your association with them?

BLAKEY: Yeah. When they left, I left...wasn't no point...we

didn't have no contract or nothing, we just had a verbal agreement, no contract. That's the reason I liked them. We were friends. They would spend their vacations at my home up in Vermont. They'd come up there...every holiday...him and Frank...every holiday...good friends. And when they left, it wasn't no point. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to be bothered with that. I did some things with Riverside, you know. I just started doing one shot deals...no contract. I didn't want to get hung up. I don't know why, but I didn't. I did sign a contract with Riverside, but at that time, they went "Kapoot" also.

BROWER: How was Oren Kepnews---- to work with? Was Oren Kepnews the person that Riverside...

BLAKEY: He was one of them and Bill Grower-----. Bill Grower, I don't know what happened to him. I don't know.

BROWER: How were they to work with?

BLAKEY: Good. I had a good contract, but he just couldn't

fulfill it. The company went under for some reason.

BROWER: Do you remember how you met Alfred Lyon-----?

BLAKEY: I just met him. I met him through Monk. He'd come around up to the, ah, Minton's Playhouse where we were working.

BROWER: So they came out to hear the music.

BLAKEY: Sure. They came out to hear Monk. They were going to record him. He knew about Monk. He knew what to listen to. They always did like jazz. They had Sidney Bachet in Europe. They knew about jazz. They had been recording dixieland and they wanted to get into the modern jazz. They got into it...they come to the right place. They came to Monk. They had Ike Quebec. Ike Quebec recorded for them. Ike Quebec was one of the officials down there.

BROWER: I get the impression that Ike Quebec had quite a bit to do with what direction they went in musically at Blue Note.

BLAKEY: Sure. Absolutely. Sure because they liked him. They

listened to him...what he say do, they listened to him. He made a lot of records for them...beautiful records...best he ever made, I think he made with Blue Note. I like the records I made with them. I just liked them because I enjoyed them...man I enjoyed the sessions with them...I enjoyed them. I don't remember one session that I had with Blue Note that I didn't like. I had a ball, you know...and it was relaxed, it was nice.

BROWER: Did they feed the musicians? Did they...?

BLAKEY: Ah, they did everything. It's like a...everything. The record dates were like a big banquet or something, you know. It was nice, very nice. All the time it was like that...rehearsals, everything. It was nice to even come to rehearsals. They were the first guys I know who paid musicians for rehearsing...paid them, right there...after rehearsal, you'd get paid.

BROWER: You did an awful lot of records for Blue Note...I mean, Jimmy Smith's records, Miles Davis records, Thelonious Monk records, your records, the percussion records, ah, Herbbie

Nichols records...I mean, just...you know...I have a list of sixty, seventy, a hundred, I don't know how many records you...

BLAKEY: I mean, you just go on and record it. You just record with everybody. You know, you're in with the company...you know, you're there with them...so you just...

BROWER: Was it the situation where the musicians said "I want Blakey"?... or Francis Wolf said "Why don't you use Blakey"? How did you become such an integral part of...

BLAKEY: They'd come and ask you. They come and ask you to do it...the musicians. They pick any musician they want.

BROWER: So they didn't try to control who the cats used or what they played...?

BLAKEY: No, no, no. They didn't care. They recorded anything. I remember recording with eight pieces, ten pieces, twelve pieces...it was alright. It was what I wanted to do. They would do it. If you come up with an idea, they follow through. They didn't think about how much money it's going to make. They'd

listen to what you say and they'd do it.

BROWER: When you did the drum recordings...I guess on the early Horace Silver album when you did the duet with Sabu---, and then later on, the organ rhythm things, Holiday for Skin things, ah, the stuff behind Kenny Durham's Afro and Afro-Cuban album, where they used the percussion section...where did you get the idea to begin to do the drum choirs or just work with, either in a small unit with just another drummer, or the drum choir idea...?

BLAKEY: No, I just wanted to do that. That's what I wanted to do, because most of us didn't want to play with congo drummers...most jazz drummers. I didn't mind...it didn't make no difference to me. I wanted to play with all of them, because I like rhythms...I like them. I just wanted to do that. That's just an idea I wanted to do. Get a whole lot of different drummers and try to get it together, you know. There were times it didn't work out so well, but you know, at least it was a

start. Some good things went down on the album...very nice. It was nice to get the guys to things because at that time drummers didn't like to play oppisite each other for some reason, I don't know. But, you know, after they got to understand, and started thinking about it...ain't but one drummer in a jazz group, so what the hell, where's the competition. Let's get together and play. Horns can do it, we can do it, you know what I mean? So that's what we were trying to puvex...the messege we were trying to get over, you know. Now it's very simple to do it. You can get the cats to play together. They have more experience I guess and there's more cohesiveness among the drummers.

BROWER: Would you like to do that kind of thing again?

BLAKEY: I'm going to do that. That's what I'm going to do, but it'll be different. I know more about it. I learned a lot. I know what to do. Before, I wasn't too sure. I was just experimenting anyway.

BROWER: You said you felt some of the things worked, some of

them didn't, but are happy about those drum records, unhappy about them...?

BLAKEY: Sure, I happy. I'm happy I had the chance to make them. Of course if I make another, I'll make one much better. I know what to do now, I have more experience, you understand? Sure I'd make one more...sure I'd do it. Glad I made them. People like them, but I sit around and you know...I'm very critical. Why shouldn't I be? You know what I mean, I'm never satisfied. There's danger in being satisfied...I'm not satisfied with that. No, I'm not satisfied, but at least it was an experience. I know better. I know what to do next time, ha, ha. I know. That's why I want to do it again.

BROWER: Ah, is that something on the drawing boards or is it something you know you're going to do?

BLAKEY: No, it don't have to be on the drawing boards, I just know what to do. I know who to pick. I know who I want...

BROWER: Well the thing is...do you have a date in mind?...like

I'm going to do it in April or...

BLAKEY: No, no, I don't have no date yet...no...because you've got to get all the guys together, see if they're in town, where they're going to be or how you're going to put it together. Because, you know, drummers, they be spreading going everywhere...you know.

BROWER: Have you heard the group that, ah that Max, I guess is the leader of, call M'Boom?

BLAKEY: M'Boom? Sure I've heard them. That's a different...that's another kind of concept. It's good too.

BROWER: How does it differ from what your concept is?

BLAKEY: Oh it's different. He was into something else. They were full of everything. They have vibes, they have tympani drums, and all that. I didn't use all that. They had bells, they used everything. It was fantastic what they did. And then it was well rehearsed too. I didn't rehearse nothing. I just

called the guys and we went and made the date, ha, ha. That's all it was. Just walked in the studio and said "Hey, how you feel, how are you?"...boom!...sat down and played.

BROWER: How important was Sabu Martenez in that...and how did you...?

BLAKEY: Oh, Sabu, we just worked together a lot...nice congo player...could play...I liked him...a lot of fun. He knew how to play. A lot of congo players at that time didn't know how to play with jazz drummers, but he did. So did Chano. Ray Manteo----, he's good...he listens, you know. There was another one...he's big out there now...Ray Baretto-----. He knows. He made a lot of things with jazz records way back...he's good. But all of them don't understand it. I think there's more now than there has ever been. So it wouldn't be no problem, because they know. A lot of cats can play now...Black, Hispanic, all of them can play. It's different. It has improved...they've come along too. They can play.

BROWER: You also recorder, I guess, in the early fifties anyway, a fair amount with Prestige Records. How were they to work for? Bob Weinstock----- and them.

BLAKEY: I don't know. I didn't make none for them myself. I just made some with other guys.

BROWER: Yeah, I mean what were the sessions like?

BLAKEY: They were alright...good...those that I made. One, I think was with Gene Ammons...I don't know...I made quite a few Prestige...

BROWER: You made several with Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons. Seems like you recorded with them frequently.

BLAKEY: ...Yeah, different people...I made them with, you know. But I didn't know too much about that. I knew the guy that owned the company...Bob Weinstock----, but you know, I didn't make any records with him. So I really didn't have to deal with him...so I don't know...about him...about that company. But I know it's an old company. After Blue Note came, it looked like it just

squashed Prestige, ha, ha. Blue Note was just taking care of business. Prestige...so he finally sold out...just the name. He sold the name. It wasn't too much...I don't know if he really got into it any more. Unless somebody picked up the thing...I know they sold the catalog so who ever owns it, they couldn't come back out with it.

BROWER: That's what they've been doing on Fantasy Records. The original Jazz Classic Series on Fantasy Records has a lot of Prestige titles and Riverside titles.

BLAKEY: Fantasy has them?

BROWER: Yeah, they own the catalog...Riverside catalog and Prestige catalog, Jazzland, New Jazz...Debut Records, they own, as well as...

BLAKEY: I forgot that cut we made..."Golden Boy"...that company?...Coldpicks?-----

BROWER: Coldpicks?-----

BLAKEY: Yeah, I think it was. We made that album...that's a good album, man. I want to get that album.

BROWER: That's one I've never heard.

BLAKEY: You've never heard "Golden Boy"? You'd better get that one. With Lee Morgan...you got Freddie Hubbard...

BROWER: Both of them?

BLAKEY: Yeah. I got ah, Curtis Fuller, and...who else we have on that date?...we had a French horn player, who died...

BROWER: Buffington?

BLAKEY: ...Julius Watkins and...oh we had a hell of a band...hell of a band...Wayne Shorter...and, I don't know who played...alto, baritone, tuba. It was nice and each of the cats wrote tunes...took one tune from "Golden Boy" and arranged it, Boy, it was nice.

BROWER: Who was playing piano?

BLAKEY: Cedar. He arranged one of the tunes.

BROWER: So that had to be what?...1962, '63, '64?

BLAKEY: 1962, '63...somewhere in there.

BROWER: About records, if you were thinking about records that you really particularly liked...I know you said you liked all the Blue Note albums...but if you were to single out particular albums, particular performances on albums, what would you pick as favorites or things that you think really represented your band or yourself well?

BLAKEY: My performance?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: I ain't never done one, I got that yet to do. But the performance of some of the musicians on the albums was just fantastic. Like I was telling you, I like "Golden Boy" and I like some of the playing on the big band album I did for ah...big band, it had everybody on it...John Coltrane, you got...

BROWER: On Bethlehem?

BLAKEY: On Bethlehem, yeah...that was a good album. I like that. It's a big band. The cats are playing. They're really

playing. The performance of the soloist was very good, you know. I'm always critical of myself...things that should have done that I didn't do...I couldn't think of at that time, but I know it now, you know...what to do. A good one, man, I've got to make a real good album...when the time comes, you know. I'm not going to rush and do it. It will happen. I like that album with Miles Davis I did too...I like that one...and J.J., Jimmy Heath, Percy Heath and myself...and Gilly Cogins-----on piano. Miles ----- got that date together that day, boy, and come out of there...it was a hell of a date...it's a classic...it's a jazz classic. We made that on Blue Note too. That is a classic. I mean, I like that. I remember that day...I felt very very good, physically...very good. I was having a ball, ha, ha. I can tell I was having a ball by listening to it, you know. I was having a good time...brings back a lot of memories. That was on Miles' date. I like Miles. I like to play with him. He's got a lot of

imagination and stuff like that. I love him. We just had a good date. Did you ever hear that record?

BROWER: Yeah. I was listening to it the night before I came down here.

BLAKEY: What's the name of that album?

BROWER: Now they call it "Miles Davis, Volume 1 and Volume 2". The versions I have...I have it two ways, I have a re-issue on United Artists, which is just called "Miles Davis", then I have the, ah,...the original Blue Note version...well not the original, I have the twelve inch not the ten inch...I don't know what called as the ten inch...but as the twelve inch, it was called "Miles Davis".

BLAKEY: Was it a seventy-eight?

BROWER: Blue Note 1501 and 1502. With "Dear Old Stockholm", "Woudn't You Needn't", "Lazy Susan",

BLAKEY: ...J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Heath...Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Percy Heath, and Art Blakey... That's something else.

BROWER: But the date that you're particularly fond of is a playing on "Tempest Fuget", "Enigma", "Ray's Idea", "Ke----", "CT"...

BLAKEY: ...CTA

BROWER: Ok.

BLAKEY: Chicago Transit Authority...yeah... Why is this... They got all this stuff down here and ain't got nothing...

BROWER: You're speaking of the Japanese?

BLAKEY: Manzel Johnson...I don't know him. Jona Jones, ----- They got everybody...everybody. But I can't find that record of ah... Is that "Golden Boy" thing in here?

BROWER: No, this is only Blue Note.

BLAKEY: Only the Blue Note things?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: I made a hell of a lot of records on Blue Note.

BROWER: They're all in here. That's where I got all these listing from: 1501, 1502, 1507, 1508, 1509, 1510, 1511, 1518,

1520, 1521, 1522, 1524, 1535... So out of the first thirty-five titles in the fifteen hundred series, you're on 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12... In other words, you're on thirty...a third of the first fifteen records. The first thirty-five records that they issued, you are represented on. I mean in the fifteen hundred series in the twelve inch series. You're represented on fifty-one albums in the Blue Note catalog.

BLAKEY: Oh yeah?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: Uh, uh, uh.

BROWER: So you've made about five hundred, right?

BLAKEY: Yeah, almost.

BROWER: So that's about ten per cent of your over all productions with them.

BLAKEY: That's very good. I've got to find them now...get them together.

BROWER: The albums?

BLAKEY: I know I can find them in Japan. They have them. They got everything you've ever heard of. I'm going to get all of them. ...get every one of them and listen to them. I'm going to have a hell of a library when I finish up.

End of Tape #5 --- side B"

Disk #5 is Full

ART BLAKEY Interview (Con't.)
Disk #6

Begin Tape #6 --- Side A

BROWER: We just finished talking about records. The Miles Davis session, "Diggin", which a record came out call "Diggin". It became the first long playing record. The first record that people didn't have to think in terms of a shorter performance, but could think of more in terms of a eight or twelve minute performance and like that. What impact do you think that that had on the music and what was that session like?

BLAKEY: I don't know, we just went in and made the record, and I always liked to record with Miles. Miles in that way, he was a chance of bring people together. He would bring musicians who had never played together and go in there, they didn't have any music but he would come out with a date. He would come out with a full date and that is something he could do, that not many people can do. He can do that, and that was interesting, very interesting. and I like to play with him any way so it didn't

make no difference, do we just made the date whatever it was, we just made it. And I always liked to make...we always made recordings together but I liked to play with him, I liked him, I liked to play with him thats the whole thing. So it was good cohesion there, I liked to play for him, I liked it, I had a ball. So all of the dates...and I know specific date that he ever had that I was on it was no drag, we played, we had a ball and I had no bad moments no time. Not even in Birdland...we were working in Birdland we had a good time man, we had a good band, an excellent band...

BROWER: Who was that band, who was in that band?

BLAKEY: Well we had Bud Powell on piano, we had J. J. on trombone, Sonny Rollins on tenor and Percy Heath on bass and myself on drums.

BROWER: Did Fats Nevarro particpate in some of that off and on or not...did Fats play with you at Birdland with Miles?

BLAKEY: No, I don't know, it might have been a session or

something...he never really played...I don't know so much was going on, man. I made some records with Fats...

BROWER: On Savor?

BLAKEY: Well I don't know who it was... I think that I made some with Dexter too...I made some with Chano Pozo. I don't know what company.

BROWER: Those records were good.

BLAKEY: I guess they will always be... I guess...yeah, if they don't get transferred into this new thing, you know, we would have to tape them it would be a lost. Tape machines go out, you know, something else because we use to have a wire machines, recording machines and tape machines go out. Something else come in. I think they will find a way I guess to put them on tape. If no one knows...I don't know. Have you got any idea how long those tapes last?

BROWER: The CDs or these cassettes...well they do deteriorate, I don't know the actually life of them, but they do deteriorate,

especially under certain heat, you know, temperature is very important...it can't be kept in an environment that gets too warm. That promotes deterioration, like if you really have an important tape library you want it at a kind of cool room temperature, as oppose...you don't want to have like seventy to eighty degree heat or like the heat source or they will deteriorate.

BLAKEY: That's very difficult, because they are going to have to keep it, you know, I made it for prosperity to keep so you know, younger people can hear years and years later. A lot was lost, you know, Louie Armstrong and them cats was playing and records. What did they come out with?...the first seventy-eight, right?...or something...you know. You had to have a certain Victrola to play them on and they're not as clear, you know...a lot of the stuff gets lost.

BROWER: They now have other technology. Like the digital

transferring technology which will permit them to go back and, in effect, re-construct some of the earlier music...and clean that sound up too. So, the technology will do a lot to, ah... It's at a point now where a lot of music that was on the verge of being...of deteriorating and being destroyed will be able to be preserved if the money can be put into it. Technology is the question as to whether or not the money and the will to do what will come together, because the capability is here to preserve all that stuff...and to clean it up...you know. You'll be able to hear people like Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver in a way that we've never been able to hear them before. If those things come together.

BLAKEY: Oh, they can do it. I think...maybe they will. If the public buys more and they can hear the cash register ringing, I'll bet you they'll do it. They'll get it going. They'll have it out there. All they need to know is that they'll make some money. That's necessary...you know...that's necessary for them

to have that...to know that, because they've got to run a business. It's necessary for them to be able to pay the people to do that. Because they have to deal with other things to make money...that's the way it is...the economy. Technically, if they can get these guys to do it, it'll be nice. I would like to hear it...if it's that clear on that, ah, laser beam. How long has it been out?

BROWER: Oh, I guess the last three or four years or so.

BLAKEY: Now on the direct disk, after you make it...you got this disk, right?...so, what do you do?...you make other records off of it?

BROWER: Yeah.

BLAKEY: You have to go through playing it and editing the tapes and all that stuff?

BROWER: Ain't no editing, ain't no tape. It's what it is. What you play is what becomes a record. There's no editing process. There's no "Let's stop, go back". There's no cutting a track,

punching out a note, putting in another note, none of that...it's exactly what's played...goes on the disk.

BLAKEY: That's good. That's very good. ...And you can play. You get a chance to stretch out and play like you always play. That's the way to record it. That's good. That's very good. I just hope that they can transfer a lot of that stuff that has been done in the past on those kinds of records, if it's that clear. I'd like to hear what it really sounds like. I've heard some pretty clear though...some things pretty clear, but it's not as clear as it should be, even on the tape...even after they recorded it on tape and you hear it in the studio, you know. Something ain't up enough...the bass ain't up enough or something, you know.

BROWER: The mix.

BLAKEY: The mix is terrible, sometimes...if you get a man don't know what he's doing. One of those cats record a rock group and

turn around and record a jazz group the same way he records a rock group...you can't do that. If you record a symphony orchestra, it's all different...some guys just, I don't know. Sometimes when we play, ah...in different countries, the sound man...if the band would do something...the people would "Yeah!"...he'll jump up and turn up the thing...turn the button...turn it up or do something. He wants to be a part of it, ha, ha, ha...what's going on on the stage, so that makes it terrible. You can do that in rock, but you can't do that in this kind of music. Just leave it stay right there. When you get the sound...if it sounds good, let it stay there. They leave the bass up too high, the piano too high...because the musicians will take care of that other thing...the dynamics and stuff...you understand? You don't have to be turning it up and down...but you can't get that through their heads...very difficult. I have to say "Man don't touch the..."...

BROWER: Once you get a level, leave it there.

BLAKEY: Yeah. That's the way Rudy used to record us. Just turn one level...sit back there and listen to it. Let it go on...make the record...sound good... If necessary, they may decide "Well, we'll have to turn this up a little bit more", but he wasn't sitting up there trying to do dynamics with the band. He wasn't doing that. That's the way we made better records. It's hard to tell people that...it's very difficult. But Van Gella---was about the best. And they had another guy at Columbia who was very, very good too. I know there were a whole lot of others, but I didn't record for all them. I'm just talking about the ones I had experience with. I thought it was wonderful. That had a wonderful studio at Columbia and they had a wonderful enjoyed recording out in those kinds of places. But this thing with the laser beam, I think that's going to be something else. Is it recorded in the same way as direct disk?

BROWER: No. Most of the C-D's are recorded using some kind of a

digital process...using a digital process. Ah, which translates notes into ah...basically, it's a computer process that assigns each frequency or each ah...yeah, each frequency on the spectrum of the sound that's happening, a specific numerical value. So it's encoded that way, numerically. Then, when it's played back, the numerical values are transferred back into sound. So, it's a whole 'nother thing. ...Each particular sound has it's own given value. So this makes it a much cleaner, purer thing. When you put the digital process together with the fact that there's not surface...you know, no interfacing of surfaces involved, you get a much better sound. But you could probably go to any good audiophile shop or place where they sell equipment and just have them demonstrate it for you. I think, in fact, the record you made with George Kiwgugi---, is available on a ah, C-D.

BLAKEY: Oh yeah. No kidding. That's something else. I'd like to hear that...ha, ha, ha...I'd sure like to hear that one. That's something else. I didn't play too much on that one. I

didn't like that too much, but that was alright. I didn't think too much of it. I didn't get much chance to play music. I was his date. We were doing the way he wanted to do...and did what he could do, you know. It wasn't a question of just bringing something and telling him to play it because he wasn't acclimated to the kind of stuff we were doing, you know. We were just playing stuff he told us to play. ...what he did...was a long time ago, which is not being done today, but he did it and we just went along with it. He got to be a big shot too after that. Back home he is all right, now that was good too.

BROWER: Want to talk some about the Messengers?

BLAKEY: The Jazz Messengers...which ones?

BROWER: Which ones?

BLAKEY: The one now?

BROWER: Well we could start now or go backward or start backward

and come forward.

BLAKEY: How far do you want to go?

BROWER: I want to go back to the first group.

BLAKEY: I told you about that one...

BROWER: Well thats where we stopped. We stopped yesterday talking about the Messengers.

BLAKEY: Oh yeah...we was with that group and then when that group broke up I went out and got another group. We had Donald Byrd and all of them and when that broke up I got another one. I had..who was it?...I got Donald Byrd and I had ah,...out of Chicago..played trumpet...Ina

Sullivan, Wilbur Ware and myself. I don't know who played piano with that group. I don't know but that didn't stay too long and we just kept fooling around and when Donald left I got Bill Irington and we went on and we just kept building from there. We changed all the time until I got what I wanted, you know, we just kept changing...and Magione...went through that...Keith

Jarrett...just went through one thing to another.

BROWER: What about the group that you had with Lee Morgan and Benny Golson, Bobby Timmons and Jimmiy Merritt?

BLAKEY: That was a good group...a very good group. There was Benny Golson...he was in that group. We went to Europe with that one. That was the first time in Europe... and... you know, it was all right we had a good time. The guys was playing. The group was good and they just started taking care of business. As I say, moving from one to another. Then we went back and we got Hank Mobley. Then Hank got sick...he left, and we were playing a concert in Canada and Wayne Shirley was with a Maynard Ferguson, so we got him for Maynard Ferguson. I went and talked to Maynard and he let Wayne come with us, and Wayne stayed with us. Lee left...we got Curtis Fuller, Freddy Hubbard...Bobby left and we got Cedar Walton and Reggie Workman. Then we came into another group. We traveled everywhere..it was a good group. I think it was one of the best in the country. The best in the country at

that time...it was a good group. It was very hard...it worked very hard on that group and it was very hard at that time, they didn't want to give us no kind of credit or nothing...no kind of credit...I have never heard of nothing like that...

and we were the first group to enter Japan, but you never knew that. The first organized jazz group to enter Japan, they never said nothing about. The press never said nothing about it. The "AP" said a little bit about it...couldn't help us... Over there at that time we were bigger than bubble gum but, they didn't say nothing. Come back here and play everybody out. They had about two hundred and five arrangements committed to memory...they could play. It was a good band, but it just didn't get recognition so we just----and Freddy went his way and organized his group and Wayne went with Miles and Curtis went somewhere to be with Basie. Everybody went somewhere else, so I just organized a new group, you know, just keep organizing something new. Oh, I

had a lot of groups, in between, building up to it...it just build up into the present group that I have got now...just kept changing. It just keeps changing, keeps changing. I just go on and play anyway, it don't make any difference to me.

BROWER: What was Lee Morgan like in your group, what kind of impact did he have?

BLAKEY: He had a good impact, he could play, he was a leader, he had a lot of heart, he was good, he was original. He played himself and he played from his heart...the man could swing. He was a hell of a musician, a nice person to work with, he was like one of my family though, he was very close, but he was alright, did very well, a hell of a trumpet player, you know. All of them were, you know...Kenny Durham...all of the trumpet players that we had they were tops, they came out to be way up there, the best in the country. We had very good trumpet players...very lucky like that...saxophones too...very lucky...always had good musicians...pianists...very good...and it just keeps changing.

BROWER: Do you really have a rule that says you don't keep a player more than five years?

BLAKEY: No, it ain't that. In five years, you know, he's about ready to go on his own anyway...because other cats, you know, they want a chance too. It isn't like coming to work in the Messengers like working in the Post Office...you get a pay check every week. It ain't like that. When you come in here, you know, try to develop on your arts...get the hell out the way, because other guys want to learn too. You know what I mean. It don't make no difference. That's the way I just run the band...no prima donna's...no stars. The band is the star...the "Jazz Messengers". If you get so you feel like you want to leave the band, you get on out there, because you've learned how. That's why you're here...to learn how, so you get on out there. If the opportunity is right and your timing is good, you get on out there. If your timing is bad, then you're in trouble. Most of the time we try to help the cats, you know, with their

timing...to get out there and have a band. Sometimes the timing is bad, that's no good. You've got to draw people. You know, you've got to make money. If people hire you and you can't draw four dead flies, you're in trouble. You have to...really build up your equity...really...and that takes time. To have a band...you come out with a band, it takes four or five years to build a band. You can't just come out and have a band. You'll always have a combo, where cats work together, but if the band isn't cohesive...it isn't a tight band, you know...tight...you know, like I've got now...I got a tight band. The cats play together. The only thing is, they've been together a long time. They've been together two or three years...now they play together. That's what happens...and we've been working.

BROWER: This is Terrance and

BLAKEY: Yeah, we work very hard. Sometime I work them so hard, they're so glad to come home they don't what to do, ha, ha...

Because they work, and we're playing...every night you've got to play, you know. This is it...it makes it tough...makes them understand the business...makes them play. Nobody's walking around the street, taking bows, you're playing every day, you're learning, you're rehearsing...in different countries...you're always moving. You've got to keep your health up...you have to, because you ain't going to make it. So you keep your health up, you take care of yourself, you get out and play. That's all you do. ...Kids...I say what kids. I don't play with no kids I work with men. You're thirteen years old you should have your bar mitzvah, ha, ha, ha. So, you are a man. You can make babies, so you're a man...so you treat them like men, they'll act like men. I got one fourteen...fifteen...fourteen, fifteen...fifteen, I think...he's a man. I treat him like a man. He's got a mustache, ha, ha...you know...he can become a father...date... Shit, when I was fourteen, I was a father. That's what it is. If they're in that groove, bring them into it. Treat them like