Q: Would you be kind enough to introduce yourself and tell us who you are?


Stone: Reppard Stone.

Q: Mr. Baker, how long have you been living here in Baltimore?

Baker: I’ve been living in Baltimore since 1932. So you figure that out.

Q: What brought you and your family to Baltimore?

Baker: I was raised in Washington. My father died at an early age as far as I was concerned, ten years old. And my sister moved to Baltimore with some friends, and she encouraged my mother to come here. After my father died, we didn’t have nowhere to live, but we came to Baltimore.

Q: Where did your family move to in Baltimore?

Baker: You know, it’s a funny thing, right here, almost in this immediate area, but closer down to the middle — I’d say the middle of Baltimore city, in the northwest area. We lived on McCulloh Street, McCulloh and McMechen, and there was a school about two blocks from there, and I went to school there.

Q: Some very fine musicians in that school. Ellis Larkins went to that school.

Baker: Right now, that school is some kind of a music school, 130.

Stone: Yeah, they have a musical component within that school.

Baker: But that used to be a junior high school.

Stone: Right.
Baker: When I went there. I guess about ten years ago I went there to inquire about enrolling my daughter there, and they told me she had to be eight years old to get in there.

So we never pursued it. You know.

Q: Dr. Stone, when did you come to Baltimore?

Stone: Oh, I came in 1949. I came here to go to Morgan State, at that time College. And one of the first people I met was Mr. Baker, who introduced me to my first crabs, and he explained to me, don’t eat the dead man, etc. [Laughter] I didn’t know how to open a steamed crab. I was attracted to his musical ability and his knowledge of the city and knowledge of the musicians in the city and knowledge of people passing through town.

Q: Well, Dr. Stone, your own musical ability is pretty impressive. Where did you grow up, and when did you get start becoming involved in music?

Stone: I would like to start before that.

Q: All right.

Stone: My mother was a pretty shrewd business lady, and she had been a former teacher, and there was a lady running a kindergarten in back of us named Rosa Holliman. And my sister and I used to go down and watch these youngsters when they would come outside. We would want to go over and play. So the lady persuaded my mother to just let us come to kindergarten. She taught me to read before I went to school, and my sister — I’m the first in the birth order, and the next was a sister — was the one with the musical talent so she got a music teacher, and he would come to the house and give her lessons on the piano.

He’d always want dinner afterwards. So my mother felt that she was losing money giving him dinner, so he had to teach everybody the piano to get his meal afterwards. So I didn’t have any choice. I had to start out in that John Thompson’s Piano Method, and that’s how I got really started.

And then later — well, one of the things that really started my career was that after this gentleman named Cassie Morris would have his meal, he would sit down and play jazz. I found the jazz that he played, supposedly for our entertainment, more interesting than old John Thompson’s lessons in the piano method book.

Q: How long did you study with Mr. Morris?

Stone: Oh, well until I was in high school. My father sent us to a private school. It was interesting — it cost three dollars and fifteen cents monthly. It was an American Missionary Association School called Ballard High School. Having a church background, they didn’t have music so much as a study, but they had a choir and a choir director and that kind of thing. So World War II came along and that changed everything. And that’s when they hired a musician to start a band.
He married a woman in my home town, and he was asked to start a band in my high school. I went down to sign up for the band. I wanted trumpet and all the trumpets were gone, so they gave me the baritone. My first wind instrument was the baritone. And later another person replaced him named Westin, who was a trombonist. He completely turned me around, because first of all, he showed me some things unique about the trombone that the other teacher had not, and he introduced me to the sound of a trombonist named J. J. Johnson from Indiana, and the rest was history. After that, I was hooked. [Laughter]

Q: Mr. Baker, how about you? How did you get involved?

Baker: Well, actually, in my early years my father was one of those piano players that played by ear. And we had a piano in my home. This is in Washington, growing up. Everybody in my house took piano lessons, and my father, when he came home after his work, he would sit down at the piano and entertain himself.

I started out with a violin. After I got the violin, and let me see, I guess I was in elementary school. The teacher told my father, don’t waste your money on him on violin. Because first of all, he’s left-handed, and by me being left-handed, you had to learn the strings the other way, the opposite way. He suggested to my father that it was a little difficult for me. And then on top of that, I remember getting into fighting with that violin. Kids teasing me as I had a violin.

So after that, I got very few piano lessons, but I learned some things about the piano, such as the scale, fingering, and what the notes were. But that’s all I knew about. I was seven, eight and nine years old. After my father died, everything changed, you know. And then I came to Baltimore. I stayed in public school. I didn’t have any musical training at all. I think I might have been seventeen, eighteen years old when I bought a used saxophone because I still liked music.

I got drafted in the Army. And when I got drafted in the Army, they put everybody over here that they wanted to — it was a segregated Army — and we were sent to Texas. And I was placed in the quartermaster outfit. And they didn’t really have anything for us to do. This was the beginning. When did I go in the Army? 1942 I think it was. No, ’43 I went in the Army.

They were forming all these units, and I was in this quartermaster outfit, and they had us cleaning these trucks, you know. So I’m underneath this truck with this grease all on me (that’s all we had to do was take exercises and clean the trucks), and I heard this band coming down the street, and they had on these uniforms. You know what a military band looks like. And they were clean, and they were dancing and prancing. Nobody tell me anything about this! So I started inquiring. First I wanted to find out how you could get in the band. So the sergeant in charge of the band told me that this is the beginning of the formation of the outfits. He said, do you have any musical training? Well, of course, I told him I could play the saxophone. I wanted to get out of the quartermaster outfit.

So he transferred me to the band, and he told everybody in the band we got a new saxophone player coming in. I couldn’t play no saxophone, but I did know the fingering. I had taught myself — when I’d bought this horn, they give you an instruction book, and I taught myself the fingering. And I knew the notes on the paper. I knew the lines and the spaces.
So, anyway, the sergeant found out that I couldn’t play. So he told me, he said, look, you’re in
the band now. He said I’m going to give you a chance. You take that clarinet, and you go back
there in what they call a latrine, which is the men’s room. You go back there and learn how to
play it or I’m going to transfer you back to the ground troops.

So you know that’s all I wanted was a chance. I got that clarinet, went back there. I found out
who the worst clarinet player was, and then I just tried to get a little better than him, you know.
[Laughter] And that was the beginning of my musical career, if you want to call it that.

Q: What a great incentive.

Baker: But I didn’t want to go back in that quartermaster. And I stayed in
that band for three
years. And just being in the band and being around musicians you get a chance to learn. But,
unfortunately, we had nobody to teach us. Your learning capacity is very limited. But I had
books, and of course I learned how to play the musi
cal music the band had. And I played in the orchestra,
and when I came out of the band I was a sergeant. I stayed in there three years, and then I started
thinking about what am I gonna do.

Well, I was married so I couldn’t leave the city. I could have, now that I think about it. I was
very interested in music. Had I left the city I probably would have been in a different ballgame
because I would have went to a more credited school. You didn’t have any schools around here.
Morgan didn’t really have a music department. Peabody had. I don’t want to say it, but I never
heard of Peabody. I mean as far as Peabody was concerned, in my neighborhood, that wasn’t a
word that we knew anything about. So I went to Morgan. We didn’t have a band. We didn’t have
nothing. They had an instrumental course. What is that course? Morgan is basically liberal arts,
right?

Stone: Right.

Baker: Okay. So you had the teaching to be a music teacher. But not an instrument major. So the
instrument was coming in. So anyway, I stayed, and I tried to do a few things around there to
help to get a little band together.

We had a little band together there with students who weren’t music majors, just had the desire
to play. And I’d have to say that I was the one that started that group. I was trying to get
something going.

Stone: No, no. You got something going.

Baker: Yeah. I got something going. And we played. We played at Bowie, and we played a few
dances. I don’t recall how we managed to do it, but we had about six or seven pieces. Then the
next year — When did you come in — ’49 or ’50?

Stone: ’49.
Baker: I went there in ’46. And ’47, e struggled through there with our little band. ’48 I went into the men’s clothing business. I made a little money and I invested it into a store.

Stone: Now where was that store located?

Baker: Right on Pennsylvania Avenue. That was the hot spot.

Q: I understand there was more going on there than just selling clothes.

Baker: Well, I put a piano in the back. See I had the store I guess about maybe from here to there [compares it to the large meeting room at Mondawmin Mall]. Not quite as wide as this, but maybe as deep. And the store was the front part, and in the back I had a piano, and we used to rehearse back there and musicians used to come.

See what happened, what really happened, in those days the musicians, the kind of musicians that were traveling musicians were basically the musicians that we wanted to meet, and they had no place to go when they come to town. So they came. The word got out — well you go to see Henry Baker. And my store, it wasn’t that successful as far as clothes was concerned, but it was highly successful as far as music was concerned.

All the musicians came to Baker’s, and they had nowhere to go, and they’d hang out.

Stone: In the daytime.

Baker: They had nothing to do. They didn’t know nobody, and there was no hotel that accepted black musicians at that particular time. So the word got around that my spot was the spot. In fact, one day I was in the store and a guy came in the store, a big heavyset guy. Said you Henry Baker? I said yeah. He said my name is Cannonball. [Laughter] I said, Cannonball. I didn’t know nothing about Cannonball. But that’s Julian Cannonball Adderley.

So he introduced himself and we got talking, you know. And he had been in the Army band with a fellow musician from Baltimore, Stanley Johnson, and he had told him to contact me when he come to Baltimore. And this is what happened: The store got to be the mecca when musicians came to town. I mean all the musicians that I’m talking about at that time were beginners. They weren’t beginners; they were professional, but they were starting out.

Stone: Starting their careers.

Baker: Their careers. And they all turned out to be just about superstars, you know, jazz musicians.

Stone: Could I interrupt you?

Stone: That room that he’s talking about that had the piano was where I spent my time also. I would sit back there and I was doing arrangements. And as a result of my writing, we put together a band, and because after Miles Davis had done "Birth of the Cool," I became interested in small bands. And so we had a trumpet, alto, tenor, I played trombone, and we had a baritone player.

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: And then we had a rhythm section. And I did arrangements for this band, and I would say this. These professional musicians that he’s talking about that came through there taught me more in one day passing through just talking with them than I had learned in Morgan College. And the one thing they taught me was that what was taught in schools and what was practiced among professional musicians was diametrically opposed to each other.

In institutions you’re taught the structure from the bottom up. You know, it’s like the old preacher said, every good house has a strong foundation. So you start at the bottom and build up. Well, they showed me no, no, no. We don’t do that. We start at the top and go down. Tell ‘em about your experience in the Army.

Baker: I was in the Army band, and we had musicians. And I used to go down on the beach with the piano player and he’d write arrangements. But he didn’t take no piano with him.

Stone: Right.

Baker: He had it up here, you know? And he would write the saxophone parts out, starting with the first saxophone, lead saxophone, first alto. Then he’d write the trumpet part. And we would sit there and watch the ladies in their bathing suits, and he was writing away. And then after he finished, we’d go back up to the barracks and play the arrangement.

Stone: Right. Right.

Baker: And I can’t remember having played the arrangements and him stopping and saying wait a minute, that’s the wrong note. It was all correct. You know what I mean? But this is the way it was done — out in the streets. In school they wouldn’t teach you to do it that way. I would say, from my past experience, most of the guys who did band arrangements didn’t go to school. They got it out of their band.

Stone: That’s right.

Baker: You know, somebody in the band showed them how to do it, and they took it from there. A few went to school, but we didn’t have too many back there in the ’30s.

Stone: What is interesting is that historically this goes back through the Latin language into Africa. "Dux and comes," leader, companion, leader, companion. And that was used even in African dance. They had a leader who was usually a male who was the tallest one in the line, and he would be accompanied by companions. This was in African-American thinking. This was not
only common to dance, it was common to music, etc., etc. So they had a different perspective about how you synthesize a piece. And that’s why it was very important to have someone to serve as the leader, and the others were companions to the leader.

And a lot of the things that they put into arrangements, interestingly enough, were to accompany dance lines on the stage. They had a leader and companions on the stage amongst the dancers. And so for younger musicians like us, we had to discover that because there was nothing in any schools to teach you this. And then, once you found out about it, it changed your whole perspective about the music.

And that’s why Thad Jones, when he moved to Europe, he used the term Gruppen leader. In this country we say section leader. And he brought that term across in the ‘70 and ‘80s, and he re-established that function of a certain person as a leader. And boy there are some stories that I could tell you was behind that idea. [Laughter]

The first important band to surface after World War II was the Billy Eckstine band. Billy Eckstine was a singer. He had some beautiful background, but he needed somebody that could function as leader, and he chose Dizzy Gillespie to do the arrangements and lead the band. What happened was Dizzy got Charlie Parker, and Charlie Parker sat there on the band and he led the section, and what they didn’t know was that Charlie Parker was adding notes and filling in. He was the leader. He could do that. So when Charlie Parker left the band, they brought in a substitute. After the first show Dizzy told him to get the music and come downstairs. So Dizzy took and started playing the music with him; he played in on the trumpet. He stopped, and he said, that dirty, dirty — you know, some expletives, talking about Charlie Parker. He said, you’re reading what’s written, but Bird was adding stuff [laughter] to the music. But he saw himself as a leader, and as a leader of a section, he felt free to add, you know, to enhance, do all of that. And it was improvised. You know, it wasn’t like he did the same thing every show!

Baker: He’d fill in different things on the next show.

Stone: Right.

Baker: His ideas were unlimited. Unlimited.

Q: So I’d like to go back a little bit. Can you tell me how you came to meet Mr. Baker when you came to Baltimore?

Stone: This is interesting.

Baker: Yeah, how did you meet me?

Stone: Okay, see he had two roles. He had the role of musician, and he also had the role of businessman, which threw him into company with a lot of other people who were businessmen. And I’ve never forgotten Theopholus Jones.

Baker: Yeah. Yeah. Theopholus Jones. He was a tavern owner.
Stone: A tavern owner. And he had Baker come in. Baker had a group there.

Baker: I was going to Morgan. We had a jazz quartet.

Stone: Right. And it’s very, very significant, because not only did I meet him, but I met people like bassist Don Bailey and others who were coming, young coming musicians and so forth. And I met a lot of the local musicians who were older than him that were established. And so that not only opened me up to the musical community, but it was through him [Baker] that I learned the city.

Baltimore — I hate to say it — is culturally divided into east and west. There were musicians in east Baltimore, didn’t even know them, did you Baker?

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: So if you were in west Baltimore, an African American, you functioned either on Pennsylvania Avenue or on Fremont Avenue. That’s where the work was, and that’s were the musicians played. I’m not only am indebted to him for meeting him, but he also showed me how the city was structured so that I met a lot of other musicians. And of course, that store was a real educational process. Unbelievable!

We talked about a fellow named Pete Peterson. Remember?

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: Pete Peterson had been on the road with somebody and met a lady in Baltimore and stopped. He was a fine writer, and I’ll never forget — I sitting in Baker’s, and he came in and he was watching me work. I was explaining what I was trying to do. And he asked me about dropping a note, second note from the top down to the baritone part. Never heard of that! And he was a writer, and Mr. Baker still has some of those arrangements that he did.

And that was a tremendous experience — to be able to learn outside of school the pragmatism of what we call composition — but it’s synthesis! How you put it together. And that’s very interesting, because most of what musicians, improvising musicians, do is analysis. I mean, you know, the decision has been made that this is a course of thirty-two bars with a bridge section and that kind of thing. So all you have to do is think of what to play on that format. But when you’re writing, you have to start from the beginning and put it all together. So I prefer today to call that synthesis, rather than composition. They still list it in schools as composition, but the process, the mental process, is synthesis.

And that’s very interesting because so many people who go off to school, especially in the performance schools and study as composition majors, can graduate and don’t ever get the idea that what they’re doing is putting the parts together to make a whole. If you’re an improvising player, you take the whole and divide it into parts, which is an opposite process from those who choose to create a form. That’s the people who write it down.
Q: Mr. Baker, when you were in the Army, were you stationed in Texas with the band the whole time?

Baker: No. To tell you the truth, I was with that band in Texas, but it wasn’t long before that band shipped out, and we went to North Africa. But they dissolved all them units and put us all in one unit. All the old units were broken up.

So when we went to North Africa, we were put into what they call a repo-depot. What do they call them? Replacement center.

Stone: Right.

Baker: So from the replacement center, we stayed there for a while, but we were unattached. And then a band was formed. But one little thing I’d like to tell you about.

When we were getting ready to go overseas, you know, they were telling you what you take and what you don’t take. So first thing, they saw me. He said, you can’t take that saxophone. [Laughter] That saxophone in a big case! You had on all this equipment, you know, this big pack. The man said you can’t take that! I’m hearing this so I said, well, I’m going to take my saxophone with me. You know what I mean?

Stone: Right.

Baker: So when you’re getting ready to get on the boat, the man calls your last name and you give him your first. You know, like mine is Henry. So when he says Baker, I say Henry N. That acknowledges the fact that I’m me. Well, he’s looking at the paper. I had my saxophone on my head so they didn’t say nothing to that. Well, what happened — I guess if he was going to say something, he said, he’s already here now. He says, get on up there. So I got on the boat, but the reason why I’m telling you this is after we got over into North Africa, they put all of us in a group. So they formed different units from that group. And one of the groups formed a band, and I was automatically picked, not on my ability, but because I had a horn. [Laughter]

See they didn’t have a whole lot of horns over there. They had personnel. And a lot of saxophone players over there could play it better than me, but they didn’t get in that group. So when they formed this group, I got into what was the 410th Army Band.

Now the thing about this band, there was a band over there, and we were sort of replacing them. The 41st Engineers Band, that was the band I was saying Frank Westin was in charge of. Because we were behind them. See eventually they went up to the front line or wherever they went. Then they came on back to America. So our band was behind their band. So because I had that horn, that enabled me to stay, plus I had to practice to make sure that I was good enough to be in the band. And I accomplished that.

I played in Italy. We left North Africa and went to Italy, but we were always behind the troops.

Q: That’s a good place to be.
Baker: Yeah. Well, then our services became acceptable as special services for the troops. Because what we did — we didn’t play music for the Army, but we played for the recreation of the troops. In the evenings we played dances, and we went all around Italy. You know what I mean? And we got a little change for it too, you know. There wasn’t a whole lot of bands over there so it was us. They had to come to us, you know, and that was our job.

Q: So what, what were the cities like?

Baker: Just like in the country.

Q: The war wasn’t even over.

Baker: The war wasn’t over, but we were behind the lines. You know. First of all, we were going through a thing where the people in America were hollering let the Black troops fight. So Americans decided to let them fight. So they sent the 92nd Division up there, which was an infantry division, they sent them up there in Italy — up there in the mountains — to fight. But they really were sending them up there to keep them out of the limelight.

And we were the back-up, behind up. So there wasn’t no fighting going on. Every time the 92nd made a move, they conquered. Now that went on until the war was over, and they were bringing the Germans out of the hills and all. And it was nothing, just the fact that we were occupying Italy, and we were in Geneva, no, not Geneva is in Switzerland. Genoa. Genoa, Leghorn, and where the leaning tower is, Pisa, and Rome. We went to Rome, and then we stayed in a spot where we could in the afternoons, say like four or five o’clock after dinner, we’d get in the truck and take the band three to four times a week to a different outfit and play dances for them. You know, these guys they’re in this village. They own everything in the village. So the people really came down there to get some food, cause they fed the people. And we played music.

Stone: Right.

Baker: And we played music. And that was what we did. I guess I was in Italy for a year and then we came back to the States. When we came back to the States, we was disbanded, you know. But while we were doing all that, this gave us a chance as an individual to decide what are you going to do with your life. I’m twenty-three years old, you know what I mean? Before that I didn’t want to do nothing with my life. There was nothing exciting or interesting.

But the Army did a lot for me as an individual. It made me decide on what direction I wanted to go. And I really wanted to go to music. You know, but it wasn’t paying enough. I had to have something else to do. Somehow or another, I don’t know where it came from, but business was sort of my thing. I kept sneaking into learning about business. Well, in Baltimore a black teenager didn’t have too much — it was some potential, I’m not going to say there was none, but it wasn’t openly. You had to try to make out something for yourself.

We took all kind of jobs. I wasn’t going to be no shoe shine boy all my life, but I’d take a shoe shine job. I took a shoe shine boy job to put some money in my pocket. So I developed a taste for money. I knew I had to have it.
Of course, now is different. The cost of living is very high. But back there in them days, if you made ten dollars a week, that was a whole lot of money. And I was making ten and fifteen dollars a week. [Laughter]

Q: I was curious. I mean, here you are, over in Italy, in your very early twenties, and you lived in very, very segregated Baltimore.

Baker: Well, it was segregated, but it was accepted. All this was accepted. You grew up this way. There was always challenges back and forth. But it wasn’t really out in the open that I’m going to change this and change that.

Q: But then to go to Europe where attitudes must have been.

Baker: Yeah. But remember that we’re living out in the country in Europe. You know what I mean. We went into the city occasionally where nobody looked upon you as anything that different. You weren’t trying to crash society or anything. You weren’t trying to get into no schools or nothing. You were in the Army. You were a soldier and the Army’s got its rules and regulations.

In fact, they straightened your head out from the beginning. [Laughter] Regardless of what you think is the reason, that’s what the Army says. That’s what it is, unless you’re just a defiant person.

Q: Well, what do you see as the big changes that took place in Baltimore before you went into the military and after you came back?

Baker: Well, after.

Q: What kind of experiences were you having in terms of music and the cultural life of the city?

Baker: Well, before I went in the Army, I didn’t have many musical experiences. I just knew about it. But what Stone was talking about, this was after the war. The music started changing. The big bands were diminishing, and the little band was coming about.

The little band brought about individuality. The musicianship, the bar was higher. You had to do more with a four piece band than you did with a fourteen piece band because it was all written out for you. But with the four or five piece band, you had to improvise, you know. So that raised your level.

So then I got very interested. Because there was a separation there between the musicians who want to learn and go forward and the ones who were going to stand still. So we had a little thing going on where, in my store, was a bunch of guys that was trying to go forward. We exchanged ideas; we told each other different things to try, and the rest of the music I would have to say was standing still.
Musicians in Baltimore — very slow atmosphere, you know. And it wasn’t that many so it was easily identified. Oh yeah, you hang out at Baker’s. Oh yeah, you’re one of Baker’s musicians — you know what I mean. And we had a little group going on, and we exchanged ideas with each other. You know, we could ask each other certain things, and somebody in the group had an answer. And if it didn’t have an answer, when so and so came to town, we’d find out what the changes were or what the procedure was.

So we had a good musical atmosphere in that little store. And all the main musicians, Miles Davis, Red Garland, John Coltrane, Clifford Brown, they all came through that store.

Stone: That’s right.

Baker: At different times, you know. Sometimes they’d spend all day.

Stone: Now here’s the thing you must get in here. Not only did they come through there, but frequently you had to dress them.

Baker: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I had the clothing of the musicians. At the time of my existence in the store, the three-button suit was a label of the jazz musician. The jazz musician was a well-dressed man. Yeah. Oh yeah, he was well dressed. And he didn’t give up on the bandstand. In fact, he had uniforms, you know. In fact, when Miles Davis started that first group here, I got them their uniform, a blue blazer and a gray flannel slacks. When they left here, they went to California. When they came here, they was just getti

But anyway, they used to buy clothes. I got to tell you this: I had a job. I had to have a job, I wasn’t making no money. I had a job working for Joseph Banks, which is a very big company now. Well, at the time I was looking for somebody, Baltimore was a well-known clothing area. And I was looking for somebody, and I met Joseph Banks. They had a little place down there on Redwood Street, and I was going in there, and I got to talking to him, you know, and I told him. He was just beginning to switch from manufacture to retail. And he was doing both. He was selling his merchandise. From what I heard, a lot of the major stores had canceled out on him and left him a large inventory, and he was sort of forced to retail it to survive.

So anyway, I met Joseph. I didn’t meet Joseph Banks, [I met] his son. Joseph Banks was the father. He was paralyzed, and he used to sit at the end of the table. I met his son, his name was Howard. And Howard used to sell me one suit. If I needed two suits, he’d sell me two suits, you know.

So the point I want to get to was there was a time where his clothing was in demand (and this is in the early ’50s), and he didn’t sell to nobody in Baltimore but me, because his competitors were mostly Jewish. They had a falling out. And he didn’t do any business with them, and plus he was developing his retail. But I was no threat. I’m just a little guy who wants a suit every now and then. So, you know, he’d sell me the suit. And sometimes I didn’t have to give him the money. I would take two suits, but I would always bring him the money the next day, because when I took two suits I knew where I was going to get the money. So we had a, maybe a
seventy-five, eighty dollar suit that we’re selling for forty-one, forty-five. And after the guys saw the merchandise, you know.

Well, the musicians coming from New York, which is much further advanced in everything than what’s in Baltimore, that’s all they wanted was that three-button suit. So when they saw that I had the contact and you could get them in Baltimore for forty-two dollars, half price, Miles came down here and bought two or three suits. Well, when they would come to town, most of them at that particular time I sold suits to. Jimmie Heath. I remember Jimmie Heath and Kenny Dorham. I sold them both suits. And then I was helping to bring the musicians to Baltimore.

When I say helping, I was finding jobs for them. You know. I was into a lot from the beginning.

Q: Well, I never would have thought of Joseph Banks as the tailor to the jazz age.

Baker: Oh yeah, because I was the one. Well, I believed in Joseph Banks, you know, because I liked their clothes. But Joseph Banks is a big company now. They’ve got it, you know. I left them. I didn’t see no future for me. And then I was kind of hooked on music a little bit too. But me and the family, we got along very, very well.

And I was lucky enough to — he told me one time, he said taste is not something that you acquire. He said to me that I had good taste as far as clothes was concerned. He said you’re born with it. He said, it’s not something that you read in the books. When he would go to New York to buy clothes for the company, he would sit down with all the salesmen. He would be going to this clothing house, and they would have swatches, one piece of cloth maybe as big as this table, and they’d have about twenty patterns in there, and he’d ask you to pick out the ones that you’d think would be good for the spring and be good for the fall. And fortunately I would pick out nothing but winners. [Laughter] And fortunately, you know, I’d pick out nothing but winners! I don’t know how I did it, but I see a piece of goods over there, I’d say oh yeah — that! That’s a nice piece there.

And Miles, every time he’d come back, he’d say you know what, you’re the winner. [Laughter] And so we had a good relationship. I worked for him. When they started that business, they started on what was called Hopkins Place. It’s across the street from Day’s Village. And Howard Banks, a fellow salesman named Schockey, Howard, myself, and Leonard Ginsberg, we had about four salesmen, and I was one of them. And we didn’t do nothing but sell suits and sport coats. We didn’t carry no shirts or nothing, you know.

I was there from the beginning. And then they got swelled up because what happened when them people from Washington with all that money, senators and all, when they found out about this wholesale place, they were jammed and packed all the time. Jammed and packed. And that was the beginning of that business. And today they’re a billion-dollar company, you know.

I worked for them for about two years. I worked there, and I sold suits in the evening. But it wasn’t enough to keep me going. And then Mondawmin [Mall] was built in 1955. When Mondawmin was built that was the end of Pennsylvania Avenue. You couldn’t see it then, but now you can look back and say Mondawmin took the business away from that area. And then the
bottom part of the Avenue started moving north. Everything in this particular city moved north. Mondawmin’s still here because it’s right in the center. But all those stores down there, they eventually all went out of business.

Now it’s a troubled area. Even Lafayette Market is not surviving, or can hardly survive we should say.

So 1955, ’56 I was out of business. The music business never did pay me enough money to live off, you know.

Q: But when you came back, both of you, at the end of World War II, Pennsylvania Avenue must have been in its absolute glory days.

Baker: It was. It was. Everything we had was up there. Because you got to remember this, if you look at it from a business point of view, you had a huge black population in the city. And nobody wanted their money. I mean really went out and said give me your money. So when the word integration came in, and the guy over there say, well you come eat in my restaurant. Well, his restaurant was better than this lady’s restaurant over here. So the business went to the white owners, and they found out it wasn’t so bad after all to get that money.

So that actually put the black owners out of business. But as long as it was segregated, the blacks were getting stronger businesswise, economically. Because they had all the business, and also they were beginning to buy property. They were doing the usual things that capitalists and the capitalistic form of government provides for the low-income people. But once integration came, that weakened the Black investor.

Stone: Well, while we’re on this subject, the thing is, really, it wasn’t integration so much as the post-war efforts to reward the veterans. When they passed these GI Bills, and you could either go to school and get paid or you could buy a house.

Now I’m of the impression that when the war started, the Black population went up to about Fulton Avenue and stopped.

Baker: Go ahead, stopped there anyway.

Stone: Right. Okay. So what happened is, the war caused the movement of people here, especially the biggest employer, Bethlehem Steel, was hiring African Americans out of North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, and they were just coming in droves. They had to have somewhere to stay. So what this did is say somebody who could buy a house, say like Baker, they’d push you past Fulton Avenue

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: — to buy a house. And what happens is.
Baker: Well, excuse me for cutting you off, but when you say buy the house, then there were some white owners that took advantage of that, and they made it possible for you to buy the house. Even though they charged a little more interest, but they still provided the neighborhoods to become integrated. This man down there on Franklin Street, Goldseker, he had houses all over the city that people could pay for by the week. And today he rewards the black community — even Morgan College. Every now and then I see donations from the Goldseker Foundation.

Stone: Goldseker Foundation. I know.

Baker: That was something that happened, but you couldn’t keep it from happening. There was so many people in the area, they had to purchase

Stone: Right. And the movement out also forced a lot of people of European decent out. They moved further out.

Baker: Oh yeah. Everything’s going out.

Q: The white flight.

Stone: Yeah. White flight.

Baker: That’s the beginning of Towson and all of them.

Stone: Now you see the reason I raise this point is I don’t want you to get the idea that all of a sudden somebody said, you know, let’s integrate and it happened. No. It was just a matter of money.

Baker: That’s all.

Stone: That it took place — I can remember how we used to go to Mr. Baker’s house, and you’d pass Fulton Avenue. It was a big thing then, you know.

Baker: Oh yeah.

Q: Now where was this happening?

Baker: Well, that was one of the houses that I had. I had a couple of them.

Stone: I forgot the name of that street.

Baker: Bryant Avenue.

Stone: Bryant Avenue.

Baker: Yeah.
Q: Well, World War II provided a lot of benefits. Baltimore Symphony Orchestra — if you were a woman, forget it. You couldn’t play in many orchestras all across the country. They were male only until they couldn’t fill those chairs with male musicians, and, then women were able to get in. And women were suddenly allowed in the defense industry here. Ruth Van Hulsteyn, who was one of the first women violinists in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra worked at Bendix building radios with Tracy McCleary.

Stone: Right.

Baker: With Tracy?

Q: Neither one of them would have been allowed in that industry before World War II.

Stone: Right.

Baker: Well, Tracy’s still living isn’t he?

Stone: Yeah.

Baker: Tracy’s got to be in his nineties.

Stone: You know, if I could, I’d like to take Mr. Baker on a trip up Pennsylvania Avenue, so he can bring out some memories of very significant evenings. For instance, to people traveling to Pennsylvania Avenue, the 21 trolley was a big thing. And it’d pull up at [Dolphin Street?]. Because then you could move north on Pennsylvania Avenue, and that first block was important. It’s a school there now. All of that’s gone. But there was a very famous hall on the west side of the street, up on the second floor. What was that hall called?

Baker: Pythian Castle. Where we used to go and play sometimes?


Baker: Oh, the New Albert.


Baker: Yeah. Well, that’s where the bands used to go.

Stone: Right. Now you see the reason I mention this is even though I knew him, I went there to see Count Basie’s movement back to the big band from the little nine-piece group. And his drawing card were the two Franks, Frank Foster and Frank Wess.

Baker: Frank Wess, yeah.

Stone: And I went to that concert, and, you know, they had a balcony in there.
Baker: Let me ask you something. Did Miles sit in that band that night we were there?

Stone: I don’t recall.

Baker: Go ahead.

Stone: But he was very instrumental in booking that group in there — Baker was.

Baker: Yeah, I was.

Stone: And this was the last really important event to happen in that hall.

Baker: It was on a weeknight.

Stone: Right.

Baker: I think we got him for six hundred dollars.

Stone: Now, the thing that’s interesting is, if you read the literature, Fletcher Henderson was on his way to that same hall to play in 1933 and was involved in a Pennsylvania Railroad wreck on the way to Baltimore, and he as such and his musicians were paid more for being in the accident than they would have been paid in New Albert Hall, you know.

Now it’s interesting, you know, see this is the kind of stuff that’s not in books — facts that are really interesting. Now one of the things is that we had a gentleman down there named Dixon. He had a club, and the second and third floors he had what he called a hotel.

Baker: Ike Dixon.

Stone: Ike Dixon. The man had to sons. Right. Who are still around I think.

Baker: One of them died.

Stone: One of them died?

Baker: Yeah. But little Ike is still living.

Stone: Right. Okay. Now Ike Dixon, as such, always kept good entertainment in his club. And I remember all of the mirrors. The place was covered with mirrors, and how I sat at the piano one day in there, and Miles Davis came in. And he wanted to know what I was doing, and I told him that I was writing. He was fascinated, and he stayed there for quite some time and watched me working. He talked and that kind of thing, and I was just elated. That here I was in the Comedy Club — that’s what it was called, you know — talking with Miles Davis. That just wiped me out.

And, of course, on the other side of the street was the northwestern police station. Didn’t have any bad policemen then either.
Baker: No. You might have had five or six, but they weren’t around the place.

Stone: And we had the Royal Theater. The Royal Theater was a part of a circuit. They called it TOBA.

Q: Tough on Black asses

Stone: That’s it. I didn’t want to say it.

Baker: What was it?

Stone: Tough on black asses. [Laughter] I thought she’d know it. So what happened was they would come down, you know, start from Apollo, worked the Earl in Philly.

Baker: And then they went to the Earl.

Stone: And then from the Earl they would go all the way to Washington to the Howard because Baltimore had the worst audiences. If you weren’t good, they’d throw things on the stage at you and boo you and that kind of thing. So it was like make Baltimore the last stop.

And then, according to how you made out with Baltimore audiences, would be the decision whether they would send you west to Detroit and Chicago and this kind of thing. So they had this circuit.

Now this is very important for our generation because the younger musicians came through playing the theater. The night clubs were not just the only place they came through. In fact, I watched Lionel Hampton introduce someone called Betty Bebop Carter.


Stone: Right. That’s what he called her because of her scat singing. Sounded like somebody playing a bebop instrument. She went on to become a great star. I saw Ella Fitzgerald down there and the pianist in the band was John Lewis, who went on to become a great international star.

So what I’m trying to say is that the best in Black entertainment came through here. That was really a help for us young guys — to give us incentive to go on and do things. Of course, then later on Motown came in.

Baker: Let me just hold you for a minute. Before that era that he’s speaking about, we had an era when I was maybe fifteen or sixteen years old where the bands came here and played in the New Albert.

Stone: Right.

Baker: See, now you’re talking about that time that Basie was there.
Stone: That’s the end of it.

Baker: That was jazz. But before that, they used to have dances. The dances — the basic concept was the people who wanted to listen to the music would sit up front, and the people behind the chairs were the dancers. That way we had a cycle of bands such as — well Count Basie wasn’t even around then.

Stone: Right.

Baker: We’re talking about Jimmy Lunceford, we’re talking about Erskine Hawkins. Duke Ellington never played any of those dances.

Stone: Lucky Milander.

Baker: Lucky Milander. And you had a band called the Sunset Row. You had a circuit of bands. And then, of course, sometimes white bands would come in — Charlie Barnet, Tommy Dorsey. And right next door to the Royal Theater was another hall upstairs, that was called the Strand. And these places — come to think of it, I have to take that back. Count Basie did come because I used to wait and take Lester’s [Lester Young] horn upstairs. [Laughter] That’s how I used to get in. [Laughter]

Oh yeah, he’d wait for me. But that was our little thing, as youngsters. But we had a following for these bands, and some of us, including myself, we knew every member in the band. We didn’t know them that well, but we knew their names. And we had a little arguments outside. Well, who plays sax for?

And I could tell you who in every band. Gee, I could even tell you who the arranger was. But that was our little thing growing up. That went on for quite a little while. And, of course, the dances started having rumbles, and that cut them out. But the theater was still going on. I can’t even tell you how far back the theater goes.

Q: Well, and there was the Regent.

Baker: Well, the Regent was a picture house.

Stone: That was the movies.

Q: But early on didn’t they have?

Baker: Nah. They may have had something. Nothing much. Nothing much. But I can remember seeing Louis Armstrong.

Q: At the New Albert?

Baker: No. At the Royal.
Stone: At the Royal.

Baker: I saw Lunceford, Duke — just about anybody that had a name from the records, you know. And they were good shows. I mean very good shows. Until the birds came in. When I say the birds, I’m thinking about the groups, the Swallows, the Orioles. When they came in, the quality of the shows went down.

But those early shows, the comedians, "Pigmeat", and what’s going ‘round — they were fantastic. Butter Beans and Suzie. All them acts, they all came through Baltimore. Cause it was like you said, it was a circuit. They left New York, they formed a show in New York, went to Philadelphia, went to the Howard. It was a circuit.

Stone: And then went west.

Baker: Yeah.

Q: But there were a couple of places that I’d like you to talk a little bit about. One, you had mentioned Skateland where they had music and jazz.

Baker: Yeah, I remember Skateland.

Q: And girls that jitterbugged on roller skates.

Baker: That was on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Q: Now, who played there?

Baker: I saw Stan Getz there one time.

Stone: But the group that fascinated me, and they had them more than once.

Baker: Who?

Stone: Was Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt.

Baker: Oh yeah. Oh that was a hard bop group.

Stone: Right.

Baker: They were swingers. Yeah.

Stone: It was just a thrill to be able to talk to the people on that band cause every player in that band was a terrific improviser and player. It was awesome. And they would be down.

Baker: Well, that was sort of like the beginning. Well, really Basie started the two tenor players, with Lester and Hershel Evans. You know, and then Eckstine came with Dexter Gordon. But this
small group what he’s speaking about, with Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt, we saw them.
Hey look. Plus across the street from my store there was a place called Gamby’s, and they used
to be over there.

And when the bands used to come to the nightclubs, they came on Tuesdays and stayed until
Sunday. And we were there every night. You know, every night! And we got a chance to talk to
the musicians and ask them about different things. Some of them were very helpful.

Then there was [James] Moody’s band.

Stone: Right.

Baker: That was swinging too. Moody had a swinging band. And the Comedy Club kept a
little something going all the time.

Q: Well, Tracy had the band at the Comedy Club.

Baker: Huh?

Q: Tracy McCleary.

Baker: No, not at the Comedy Club.

Q: He said he did.

Baker: He was at the Royal. I was in that band at the Royal Theater.

Q: I think he said when he first came he worked there.

Baker: Oh well, you know, let me say this to you. When he first came here, those bands, they
weren’t much of bands. I don’t want to knock them.

Q: Well, he did mention that.

Baker: I don’t want to knock them. You know what I mean, but they were just bands.

Q: That’s what he said.

Baker: Yeah. That’s all it was. But these bands we’re talking about now were players. Gene
Ammons and Sonny Stitt would be playing all night long.

Stone: It was just awesome. I used to be spellbound to listen to them when they would do their
dialogue exchanges. You know. During the dialogue they would say "let’s eights." And that
would go on maybe for ten minutes. "Fours." And then they’d say "twos." [Laughter] And then
they would just be playing over each other. And we were just in awe of that group. In fact,
Ammons even drew old Don Bailey out of here with that band for a while.
And for us, it sort of gave us a push technically. We started to play on a higher level after having contact with them. And one of my favorite memories was of Baker one day walking out of store with his horn, and he said he was going to the repair shop. And Sonny Stitts said let me see it. [Laughter] He was on the sidewalk out in front of his haberdashery with a crowd around. He’s just playing the horn. He said, well you can take it, but I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it. [Laughter]

Baker: First time I met Sonny Stitt, we had a little quartet in the Frolic, and Sonny was working in the theater, you know. So he came in and stood on the side. So he came up there and whispered in my ear, he said, can I play one? I said, yeah, Sonny. You can play one. [Laughter]

Q: Where was this?

Baker: Club Frolic. It was a little club across the street from the Royal Theater. Sonny came in and he — well, you know at the time they’d lock their instruments up when they got off from work. Yeah, because they were all dangerous with them instruments. They’d steal them and pawn them, you know.

So he came in there that night, and he whispered in my ear. I knew who he was. I said, yeah, Sonny Stitt, you can play.

Q: Now was the Avenue Bar a part of this?

Baker: Avenue Bar? Never had much of a music thing going on. They had bands. Tell you the truth about it, I don’t know if I ever told Stone or not, but one of the best saxophone players I ever heard worked played in the Avenue Bar. He was a tremendous saxophone.

Q: And who was that?

Baker: His name was Ross. Long before you came to Baltimore. I’ll tell you how bad he was. He had the train sounds in the thirds. He had the high register, large tenor sound. His name was Ross. He came out of a musical family in Washington. That’s where he came from. And he worked the Avenue for, when I came out of the Army (I came out of the Army in ’46), and he was working in there, but he had been in there.

Stone: Right.

Baker: But he was an alcoholic, you know.

Stone: I’m glad you mentioned that because following him was another tenor saxophone player out of Washington named Bill Swindell. And Bill Swindell —

Baker: But Swindell made his rep as an alto player.

Stone: Right. But he had the local young Turks, guys who played with us worked in there with him. Everybody around him was much younger than he was.
Baker: Oh yeah. Well, he was in Milander’s band you know.

Stone: It’s really interesting that some of these places were never written about because the media was not interested in those kinds of activities. And let me say this: segregation was never practiced on the Avenue. We saw white couples.

Baker: Oh yeah. Well.

Stone: They would come, you know, they would come, and they would enjoy just like everybody else.

Baker: The whites, the white trade took over the Tijuana.

Stone: Right.

Baker: You know, they took it over. And the Tijuana was really — I don’t know if you can remember or not — but it was really the first jazz club in Baltimore.

Stone: First-class jazz club.

Baker: Yeah. And the whites took over, took over the Tijuana. I brought Bird in there in ’52.

Q: What about the Ritz? What was that like?

Baker: The what?

Q: The Ritz.

Baker: Well, it was more of a dance. Wait a minute now, there was a couple of Ritzes, you know, but the Ritz downtown?

Q: Right.

Baker: That was more of a dance club. Beginning of the, what do you call it, disco? That was kind of beginning of that. They had Arthur [?] down there one time. That was the old Playboy Club. You don’t remember the Playboy? You weren’t around here then.

Q: I do remember that.

Baker: You remember. Well, that’s what the Ritz was.

Q: Jimmie Wells used to play down there.

Baker: Yeah. You know Jimmie Wells interview?

Q: I do indeed.
Stone: You know what’s interesting too is that while Bird [Charlie Parker] worked up at Tijuana for years, Sticks Dorn and I took Bird over to our house. You know, he was going back to New York every day, every night.

Baker: On the rails. I took him to the train station damn near every night.

Stone: Sticks Dorn and I said, man, let’s take Bird over to our place. We had a place over in East Baltimore.

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: And we took him over there and we didn’t sleep all night because the guys that had been in combat told us that before these guys would die said they would always, you know, like ahhhh inhale and it would be over. And man, Bird would inhale, ahhhh, and you wouldn’t hear any breathing. [Laughter] Our eyes would get big.

But that for me was a real nice place because we had Charlie Mingus and the fellows off his band come by to that apartment and what not.

Baker: You all had a little thing going.

Stone: To be able to stay right on top of what was going on in New York.

Baker: Baltimore had it going on around here for a while, but somebody had to be doing something to make it go.

Stone: Right.

Baker: Then the Left Bank ext [Jazz Society] came along, and they made some contributions as far as bringing New York artists to Baltimore. They had a little run there. [Pause] Have you talked to Wells lately?

Stone: Yeah. Yeah.

Baker: That’s good.

Q: Now, I wanted to ask. You were a member of the Musicians Union, 543. And were you [Baker] a member of the Musicians Union?

Baker: 543.

Q: So you both were, you both joined before the —

Baker: Merger.

Q: Before the merger of the two unions.
Baker: Oh yeah.

Stone: Oh yeah.

Q: Can you tell me, do you recall the feeling in the community among the members of the union about the joining together?

Baker: We didn’t associate with them too much because they were basically alcoholics. You know? They had a club house about a block from my store, and we didn’t go up there.

Stone: And most of the musicians in there

Baker: Were older guys.

Stone: Were older, and they played with Rivers Chambers.

Baker: They played a different kind of music.

Stone: They played different kind of music. And they played for Rivers Chambers and worked some of the places on Baltimore Street. One of the things that our generation — it was like we were liberated from Baltimore Street.

Baker: Really.

Stone: Really. We didn’t have to go down there.

Baker: It was a drag to go down there.

Stone: We didn’t want to go down there, you know. It was so bad that some clubs even had sheets up in front of the band. The band was playing for strip dancers, but they couldn’t be seen because they put a sheet up there. They didn’t want them to see that the musicians were Black musicians. That’s Baltimore Street.

And so one thing our generation said was we weren’t going down on Baltimore Street. There were a lot who did, but basically we didn’t.

Baker: Only went down there to get a job if you needed the money.

Stone: Right. I remember Baker working there one time.

Baker: Yeah. I went down there.

Stone: I don’t know the club, but he had a trumpet player with him who’s from Cleveland, Ohio.

Baker: Hardman.
Stone: Bill Hardman. Yeah. And he went on to become a very famous, died in Paris, and was given a pauper’s grave.

Baker: But let me tell you something. One night when we were working on Baltimore Street, which is the night I shall never forget. Clifford Brown came in. Clifford Brown came down there to say hello to us. So we got him to get up on the bandstand, and he played "Body and Soul." And the people who were in the place didn’t pay our band no mind. You know, our band was just there to keep the drinks flowing.

Stone: Right.

Baker: You know what I mean. But Clifford Brown got there and played "Body and Soul" that night, all them non-music lovers stopped drinking and looked at that boy play that. And that was, that was maybe in ’52 or ’53, you know. We had a little band down there. But Clifford made them stop doing everything.

Stone: He was very commanding.

Baker: Oh boy.

Stone: A part of it, since we’re on this, is that Clifford too was very spiritual. I mean, he played with the kind of enthusiasm that goes with hand clapping and shouting. That kind of thing.

Baker: Oh yeah.

Stone: And he could just take an audience. He was actually years ahead of his age.

Baker: Oh yeah he was.

Stone: Musically.

Baker: Today. I heard something the other day by him, and it sounded like somebody recorded it yesterday. You know, playing ninety miles an hour. Clifford was a bad trumpet player. And a nice person.

Stone: Right. You know music couldn’t sustain that for this reason. What we are talking about in these people is virtuoso display. It wasn’t just a matter of playing fast, but it was fast with accuracy. That was the catch. The accuracy. You know, I could find you a fifteen year old that could play as fast as John Coltrane, but all the notes would be wrong.

Okay. So you say, well, now wait a minute. Here’s a young guy, you know, and he comes along and he’s playing all of this. And the accuracy was just too much. And so the next generation just gave up. Oh man, we ain’t gonna do that! That’s too much! [Laughter] So much so that I would say from the ‘50s it was almost like downhill from the technical side of it. The industry really did that to them because the interest was shifting to recording vocal groups, and nobody was interested in jazz but these little outlaw kind of companies.
They would walk in off the street sometimes, do a record session, and they took advantage of them because some of them had habits, and they knew they needed the money badly. So they would take them into the studio and record them and pay them on the spot. No royalties or nothing. That’s the disadvantage of —.

Baker: Oh they took advantage of them.

Stone: Yeah. Of all of them.

Q: But it’s ironic that the quality of the playing diminished at that point. Because it was just at that point when the opportunities for music education had just really flowered and opened up. And, I mean, by ’47 Peabody was admitting African-American students, and of course they always could go up to Juilliard.

Baker: Yeah. That’s one in a thousand.

Stone: That’s correct.

Stone: There were a few that went to the Eastman School under sponsorship.

Baker: Eastman. Yeah, up in Rochester.

Stone: Up in Rochester. Well, nothing remains. The only thing permanent is change. And what happened is, I hate to say it, but starting right now in the twenty-first century. The change rate is so fast the public can’t keep up with it. For instance, I taught a young man at Howard named Mark Batzen, and he recorded with one of the artists at Artscape. India Arie is her name. So the thing is, he’s a fabulous player, but it’s almost like he had to come down for the people in the industry to take an interest in him. He’s playing far below his capabilities. And this is one of the things that’s sort of sad, because I’ve sent a lot of musicians out of Baltimore who were international stars.

For instance, Peabody has Gary Thomas down there.

Q: He was one of your students.

Stone: Was one of my students.

Baker: In high school.

Stone: In high school! He’s in charge of the jazz program. You see, so I look on that as a residue from all of these experiences Baker and I had along the Avenue and over time. And he knew not only musicians, but a lot of business people.

And Sticks Dorden likes to point out the fact that he has a photograph that you took out at Scarlett’s home. And he had a pool, and you were all out there in the water.
Baker: You got the photograph?

Stone: Sticks Dorden.

Baker: Oh yeah.

Stone: And what happened.

Baker: That was in the ‘50s.

Stone: Yeah. See, and so what happened is that we not only got an insight into music, but we also started to get an insight into the business. Maybe I shouldn’t tell it, but I’ll tell it.

Baker: That’s all right.

Stone: I got in a cab going home one night from the Avenue, and the taxi driver said, oh, what do you have in that case? I said a trombone. He said, oh, you’re in the music business. I said, yeah. He said, how many records you have out? I said none. He said, you’re not in the music business. [Laughter] But he was correct. He was absolutely correct. Just going around maybe one this week, two next week. That was not being in the music business.

See, that’s what Mr. Baker’s been talking about when he said he couldn’t make it on music. We were not in the business aspects of music.

Baker: No, we didn’t have the facilities here.

Stone: Right.

Q: Well, and there was no safety net for the musicians. I remember being really quite struck some time ago, and I wish I could remember the gentleman’s name, but there was a little obit in the Afro-American about this man. He had been a touring musician all of his life, and he’d come back to Baltimore and had to work as an elevator operator for years up until he died because he had no —

Stone: Skills.

Q: He had no resources after all those years on the road.

Baker: I’m trying to think who that might have been.

Q: I wish I could remember his name.

Stone: But, you know, that’s one of the things that I sort of fought the union with is that.

They should have had more than just a little retirement plan. Because I’m thinking about so many of them in bad health and with no health benefits. And take Melvin Spears — he’s up there
in assisted living. And, you know, that’s sad, and he played all over this city for a long time and Switzerland. And you say, well, my goodness, you know, this is sad that this guy has to be placed someplace like that.

Q: I saw him not too long ago. It must have been one of his last jobs playing at the Governor’s Mansion in Annapolis. He played like an angel.

Baker: He’s in assisted living. Because somebody came in the shop, and he sent me a message tell me he was going to get married. Not too long ago. A lady came in and told me. She couldn’t pronounce his name. I said Spears.

Stone: My motivation for having Mr. Baker here is that he can confirm the fact about me that’s not known. I did a repertory orchestra concert on Billie Eckstine in ’81, ’82, somewhere like that. And he was the only person from Baltimore who came to that concert that I can recall. I had a jazz repertory orchestra at Howard University before they had one at Smithsonian or in New York.

We’re a funny society, if you don’t do it in certain places, it’s a non event.

Baker: Yeah. I got it.

Stone: See, the fact that it happened in a university was a non event. There was no press coverage, no television. You follow me?

Baker: You just did a concert. But your parents, they were there.

Stone: I had also Slide Hampton, the trombonist, was there. He was in town for something else, and he came by. But the reason I like to mention that is that in spite of all of the fine experiences I had at Howard, after thinking back to leaving Eastman School of Music in ’75, and what was happening in ’95, the gap wasn’t closing. Nobody would listen to me. I just shut down psychologically in the ’96 I left. You know a whole generation of people fought for us to get into a lot of these places, but when we brought it back to our communities, there was no reception for it.

Q: How do you account for that?

Baker: Well, I could say one thing. Jazz has always been a minority product.

Stone: Right.

Baker: You never had nobody on your side. You know what I mean? When we first started, when I’d go out on a job, the owner would say to me, he said, well, why is the drummer hitting on that cymbal? You know what I mean? Or do you have to bring that big violin in? But that’s because it was never accepted from the beginning. And then when you get down to the main part of it, the big people could never control jazz. The jazz musician was always kind of unruly. He would tell them in a minute, see you later.
Stone: I’m glad you mentioned that. There’s an article that appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* where Wynton Marsalis is not recording because he wants a million dollars per session.

Baker: Wynton?

Stone: Yes.

Baker: When was this in there? I missed it.

Stone: Okay.

Baker: How long ago was this?

Stone: Last week.

Baker: Yeah, well, probably the one day I didn’t read the paper.

Stone: But now, the reason I take that around with me is that they make the point that it’s not just Wynton — the whole industry has just somehow decided that jazz goes on the back burner. They don’t want to be bothered.

Baker: No because they’ve got to compete too much. They can take another artist and bring him up and own him, and own the rights and everything.

Stone: Right.

Baker: But the truth is, the jazz musician spent time trying to learn it straight, and you don’t want to give it away. And he’s not gonna let anybody control him or tell him what to play and how to play. Although he has done it, you know, but he’s done enough of it. He wants to be independent.

Stone: Just to show you what I mean, Gary Thomas is recording in Europe.

Baker: He’s not recording around here.

Stone: Not in the States. And not only that, but the demand for jazz music is greater outside of the country.

Baker: Always been, especially as far as the Blacks are concerned.

Stone: Right.

Q: We were in Palermo [Italy] for New Year’s last year, and New Year’s eve you couldn’t walk more than a block without running into a jazz band.

Stone: No kidding.
Baker: Well, that’s Europe. And you could probably find none of them here with a gig. [Laughter] That’s jazz. It is pathetic. It’s always been a double market.

Stone: Not only that, but one of the things that’s really interesting is how jazz crosses cultural lines. The Japanese not only have [record] labels, but they would send their people from Japan all the way to the States to record somebody that they want. And when the jazz artist goes over there to work, you might go to work two or three cities, and you end up doing eight or ten. Because once they hear about success in someplace like Yokohama or Tokyo or what not, they line up.

Even all down the coast, I’m trying to think of the guy from here, guitar player, that just came back here and opened up a studio. He was over there in Indonesia or something like that with a jazz group. And I think it’s really terrible that too many Americans don’t know about jazz because it was an urban music. Let’s face it, and it reflected an urban culture. So people in Kansas, Louisiana, well not Louisiana, but far west and so forth, even say with all the activity that was in California, Oregon and Washington State and what not, they never had the jazz activity that they had in California. And what makes this significant is that our population disperses the people on the coasts.

Greater populations are on each coast, east and west, and the middle of the country almost no population. Now the thing that’s sad is a student in Kansas in high school can get better jazz training than one in Baltimore or Washington because they have summer camps for them. And they go to summer camp maybe for two weeks. [Laughter] We have nothing like that for our young people. They’re roaming the streets in the summer. They should have a place, I would call it, as a retreat.

In other words, take them out of their city environment, out in the country somewhere, up by Hagerstown somewhere, to a music camp for two weeks. They’re there where they would get instruction, and we would have something — how would you put it, artists in residence. So let us say Wynton Marsalis came there for a week just so they could have somebody to ask questions about music. Because you see there’s music and then there’s the business.

And what happened is that they suffer because they get nothing about the business, and so they run into music, and they get very short life because the success is dependent upon exploitation. And when the people feel that they’ve exploited them enough, then they lose interest and they just sort of fade from the scenery.

The reason that I mention that is that we had a group come in named Dru Hill, and they made some recordings on Motown, and made some money, and then all of a sudden they disappeared.

Baker: I don’t hear much about that band.

Stone: Gone man. Disappeared. And one guy that they had, he went out on his own.

Baker: The lead singer [Sisqo].
Stone: The Thong Song. He got a bad image. So he’s trying to revive his image and that kind of thing. It’s sad that music as such is not looked upon as a money-making enterprise. See, young people have changed. They are possessed for money. Success is equated with money.

You ask them how many records they sold. They don’t know. They don’t care. I made five million last year. That’s the point. It’s all money, all financial. And somehow they disconnect from their fields. They don’t look back and think about helping the people who helped them.

Q: Well, there are some exceptions. I mean, Dontae Winslow has stayed close to the community, and he’s still living on Park Avenue and very conscious of the young ones behind him, even though he’s very, very young himself. So there are some young ones there that are looking back at the younger ones in the community.

Baker: Well, where’s Dontae studying at now?

Q: Well, he’s finished up his master’s degree at Peabody, and he’s recording and doing a lot of playing, but very concerned about staying attached to the community.

Baker: He was the one that was at that concert where we were. Yeah.

Stone: Now, like you say they are the exceptions. The ones who have been, let’s put it right down here, they are doing a great job themselves, but this is what I was talking about: I had a little saxophone player named Antonio Parker. And there’s a little saxophonist in the School of the Arts named Antonio Hart. And he’s not recording.

Baker: Antonio Hart?

Stone: Hart. Now Antonio Hart was working in Washington. This guy came to Howard and sat in my class, and he went through all of the drills and improvisations and the pieces that my students were doing. Now here’s a guy who finished Berklee [School of Music], and I was fascinated that he found a challenge in my class. Now what happened is that Antonio Hart is very successful in New York. He took Jimmy Heath’s job up at Queens College. Who from Baltimore has gone to Queens College?

See what I’m saying?

Baker: Yeah.

Stone: He’s sort of like disconnected from Baltimore, and that’s what happens to too many. And there’s an impression out there that Baltimore is a place you leave. You don’t stay here. You know, Gary Bartz came back here for a while. He gave up and went to New Jersey.

Baker: Took off.

Stone: Took off. And so Baltimore has become symbolic of a place to leave, not to stay, and that’s really because the ones who are successful don’t connect with their past experiences and
that is somehow disturbing. Well, I’ve been extremely lucky because almost everybody who was traveling on the road while I was at Howard would come there. They’d come in to see me, and I had a fellow upstairs, and I would send them upstairs because I thought maybe my classes were not as advanced enough to take their interest. They’d come back down from Houston, some from out of Chicago and Michigan. They’re out on the road. They had passed a rule [at Howard University] that you don’t have to go through channels, getting permission from a dean. So they’d walk on in there and they would let you in. So that’s what happened.

I would say that I have been extremely fortunate. I have never, ever applied for a job.

Q: Well, I was just about to ask. We’ve got a little a gap here. We’ve got you coming to Baltimore to go to Morgan, and meeting Mr. Baker. And then we have you at Howard. Now there must have been a couple of steps between.

Baker: Oh yeah. He went to Douglass High School first of all.

Stone: Let me explain: After I graduated from Morgan, I went out to Cleveland. I graduated in ’52, went to Cleveland in ’53. A gentleman back here named Robert Smith didn’t like teaching elementary school. He wanted to teach the high school kids. And they had a teacher over at Dunbar who was an alcoholic, and had a problem. So he got drunk, and they fired him. He [Smith] wanted to go there, and the supervisor said look, I don’t solve any problems by moving you to Dunbar. I have five elementary schools with no teacher, and everybody else is not experienced enough to handle five elementary schools. He said but if you find me somebody, I’ll let you go to Dunbar.

This guy got in his car, drove all the way to Cleveland, and found me. I said look, I’m not interested. He said, would I just come and take an interview. So I got in the car and came back thinking I was coming to take an interview. He took me in and introduced me to Dr. Corwin Taylor. He said to me, can you play the "Star Spangled Banner" on the piano? Can you play "Lift Every Voice and Sing"? So I played it and he said, now let me show you where the schools are.

So I said, listen man, I said, I didn’t bring any clothes or nothing because I thought I was taking an interview and going back to Cleveland. So the next week I started in those five elementary schools. And that was the time that I got to move in your mother’s house. [Laughter]

Mr. Baker’s mother — traveling musicians who couldn’t find accommodations would come to Mr. Baker’s mother’s house. And the word was out. Say, well look man, when you get down there, go see Henry Baker ‘cause he’ll get you a place to stay. So, drummer Charlie Purcells stayed there.

Baker: Oh everybody.

Stone: Richard Davis, the bass player.

Baker: Lester [Young] stayed up there.
Stone: Oh yeah. All up there. Now I’m seeing these guys every day, but I’m teaching, so I stayed ten years in elementary schools in Baltimore City. Then all of a sudden a gentleman from Morgan went up to Delaware State to become president, and his department head quit over the summer. So he came down to Morgan and asked Dr. Strider to recommend somebody.

Q: Is that how you got the tire tracks on your lawn?

Stone: Yup. [laughter] So he said, well look, come and consult. He said, okay, what would you want for a day to come up, assess my situation, and tell me what I need to do. So I went up and talked about the instrument package and the uniforms, etc. He said, well, would you come up here if I paid you ten thousand dollars more than you’re making in Baltimore City and give you all of this? I said when do I start? [Laughter] So I went on up there.

Baker: When do I start?

Stone: And stayed ten years. Okay.

Baker: Damn. You stayed up there that long?

Stone: Yeah. After that, I got a fellowship to work on my dissertation, and that was in 1970 when I was starting to work on that. Tom DeLaine at Douglass High School had a hernia and had to be operated on. They said, well, just substitute. You know, you can come in in the morning and stay until eleven o’clock, and then you can go on down to Catholic U and do your work. So that was the agreement.

And then I produced groups that year, and the principal was so satisfied that when Tom DeLaine decided to come back to work, the principal said, well, DeLaine can’t come back in unless I have them both. So they said, well, okay, you can have both. So that’s how I got up to Douglass, and I stayed there ten years.

I was down in Washington backstage talking to some guys, and Art Dawkins came up and said, man, you know I’m glad to meet you ‘cause I heard you went up to the Eastman School to arrangers’ workshops there. Yeah. He said well look, how would you like to make a little extra money. I said what do you mean? He said teach arranging at Howard.

Oh that was made to order! Go down two days a week. Class starts at four o’clock and be there for two hours. And so I started part-time there, and I was as happy as I could be. Then all of a sudden the Dean told me I should think about coming full time, and he runs me through a tenure committee, and I had tenure and no contract. So I dickered with them over the money. In August I went down to talk about the money, and they put me on a computerized — the scale was computerized. So they moved me up to the next level, and so I ended up making more money than I had been asking for. And I stayed there thirteen years and called it a day. Quit, retired.

But I’ve had grand experiences because I’ve had students from elementary through the university. And I had the opportunity to tour Japan with the jazz ensemble. And that was some experience because I didn’t know this, but a young man was in the audience at Eastman when I
was up there at the arranger’s workshop. And what happened was that they had a dance group from Rochester program, and they came in with their music. It was a tape, and on the tape it was a church service, and an organist, and it had a place where he just played the pedals. You know, showing off with all the hand clapping and the other stuff to go with it. That guy ran it past all of his arrangers. And then he told me that I was going to do it.

Okay. So I did my arrangement, and when it came to the part with the pedals, I didn’t do anything. Just let that cut through, and they’re all standing around saying why didn’t I think of that? The Eastman School was a great experience for me because I had the opportunity to meet two people who were at the top of the ladder: Rayburn Wright, who was a conductor and the head of the program up there at Eastman — he was a genius. He had a photographic memory. And Matty Album was tops in recording. So I have the opportunity to experience both of these people at one time.

And so I basically, they fired me up to the extent that I went back and took film scoring from them. I met a lot of people there who are very influential overseas in other countries. A lot of the students there came from other countries because the governments got behind them and supported them. It’s very expensive, you know. That’s why on my resume I say post-doctoral training. I did it up there.

I’ve always been a workaholic.

Baker: Well, you ain’t now [Laughter] Do nothing now!

Stone: I take a nap. Stop smiling. That’s my wife. [Laughter] She’s always trying to get me up and out. But I didn’t feel right, just to go to school and teach like most people. I had to do something for myself musically after that day was done. So I’ve been extremely fortunate in my career

Q: Well, you played with an awful lot of good people.

Baker: Oh yeah.

Stone: And their friendship.


Stone: Now that I look at, I was looking at a video on BET of Frank Foster with the Basie Band accompanying this singer, a blind singer, jazz singer from out on the west coast. Anyway, I’m looking and I say, oh yeah, Melvin Wanzo.


Stone: We used to hang out with him right up there by your place.

Baker: Yeah. Yeah. He used to work with the Basie band. And Curtis Fuller.
Stone: Fuller was sitting up in there. And I’m saying, these are not acquaintances. These are buddies! And it’s really interesting. When you’re doing these things you don’t think about them.

Baker: Nah.

Stone: And it’s only looking back, and my mother used to say hindsight’s 20-20. You can see it much better looking back than when you’re going through it.

Q: Well, if both of you had advice for young musicians, what would you tell them?

Stone: They have moved into a visual age. We talk about people coming out for music. They don’t come out for music. We have two things that are influencing our culture: Alvin Toffler who wrote about throwaway culture — you know, you go to McDonald’s, you buy a meal, throw everything away. But we aim to throw away people. We moved to a level where we have throw away people. You can be riding the highway, nobody hear will from you after the night. Just like you’re gone forever. So you have to take into consideration that you are in a throwaway culture and that success today does not guarantee success tomorrow. Change is inevitable.

The next thing I would say to them is that there’s music as an art, and there’s music as a business. And you should not confuse the two. A lot of people confuse the art of music with the business of music, and they’re not focused enough on one, and they try to be successful at both. And it usually doesn’t work out.

So I would advise them not only that, but to stay on top of innovation because innovations are great, but they brought along a new coded language. You follow me? So if you’re not computer literate, people will talk. Now wait a minute, the guy’s in Hollywood doing movies. They’re doing it with a keyboard on a computer! You know what I mean? So if they don’t get on top of the innovations as they come, they’ll just be left behind. And not only that, but your audience — you can’t think of your audience as some people sitting in front of you listening. The world will be listening. And that’s what the twenty-first century is going to be all about.

I’m looking at — say a guy from Motown. I don’t see anybody else in the recording business coming up to the level of Motown. what has happened is that Motown has not moved to the visual age, because the people who are selling are the people who are doing videos. The reason it hurts me is that all this starts with a guy that they don’t like. It all started with James Brown.

James Brown — the master. He’s a genius. He could synthesize music, dance and words. And you know at his band rehearsal he’d say, saxophone play, [Mr. Stone hums]. He’d say all right brass you come in like this [Mr. Stone hums some notes]. And they’re looking at each other — what is this? And all of a sudden he says, "I feel good " [Mr. Stone hums some notes]. He’s dancing, singing and has the music all together.

Now it took a real great mind to do that and we haven’t been able to turn back since. So this is why now you can’t walk out there like Sarah Vaughn or Ella Fitzgerald and sing. You’ve got to say, well, what’s my background going to be? Got to have background singers.
Q: Do the choreography.

Stone: Right. Not only that, but the concept has changed. For instance, Barry Harris was standing up there with me at Howard. One of the students came by and said, I haven’t seen you here before. He said, no, I’m just here today for a program. He said, oh yeah. He said, well, what instrument do you play? Barry Harris says I’m a pianist. He said, oh you mean you play keyboard. [Laughter] They can’t see his head on tape, but what happens is a keyboard player plays with both hands parallel. Today it’s one above the other. You follow me?

And a bass is no longer upright, but it’s across. See? And if you don’t play bass, guitar and keyboard, you’re a horn player. They don’t even know the difference between a saxophone and a trumpet. Why? Because they’re going to a rap session and all the man has to do is hit a trumpet button, and play it on a keyboard. And they say, yeah, got a trumpet section.

Baker: And you go it.

Stone: So the virtual reality is what America is tuned in on more so than the reality. And that’s why they can create things now in a sound studio that you can’t do live, and the craving of the America public is for the virtual and not the real. And it’s hard to get a lot of young people to understand that they have made that transition from the virtual to the real.

Q: They’re inventing new instruments to play on.

Baker: Right.

Q: And, you know, the technology is changing so fast, and the possibilities.

Baker: And it takes so long to learn the other way.

Stone: Right. [Laughter]

Baker: So long.

Stone: Now I have a twenty month old grandson who can go to the computer that is plugged into the TV. Turn it on. He said, look pigs! pigs!! pigs!!! He went to the State Fair. Okay. Twenty months old. It reflects technological change. Now what are you going to do when he’s fifteen? [Laughter]

Q: I just can’t imagine. It’s changed so much.

Baker: Yeah, and it’s constantly changing. You know what I mean?

Stone: Not only that, but more and more music is seen as an adjunct to something — a movie or a documentary or a commercial or so forth. And what happens is a lot of the older artists are being put behind commercials, but the public doesn’t even know who it is.
For instance, [Jeep] Cherokee. They had a commercial. Coltrane’s playing. The public heard of Coltrane? They don’t know Coltrane. And this is one of the things that’s sad. I feel that music education failed the students, and we’re in a mode now where all artists are cut financially. The bottom line is to make money, and what they will do is cater to the greatest group, which is usually the youth. Because of this, you’re going to find that we’re going to have to get our young people to think beyond being just musicians.

And schools sort of psych them out. For instance, when they go to a place, say like Peabody, that’s performance oriented. Well if you go and stay there four years and you get credentials, and you come out and some guy who left high school with you has got six albums in the rack. Yeah. [Laughter] You know what I’m saying. Six albums in the rack. And you spent four years to get certified as a performer. Then, when you go out there, you meet this guy with the six albums and say, hey man, could you use me? He said, man, you don’t play the right stuff. He’s into what the guy on the street is listening to.

Baker: Different ballgame.

Stone: People have to rethink. And part of that is, I hate to say it, a reflection of the way we train people. For instance, the CEO. You know, they used to have superintendents of schools. Now they are CEOs. And what this says is that as a CEO, I don’t have to know anything about education. I am here to supervise the people who do know. But the point is, if you don’t surround yourself with really good people, you don’t do anything. Look at the White House! Look at our President! He’s surrounded himself with what he thought was the best. I mean, what is the problem? Not those people. The President. Because he’s not experienced in politics or in the military or any of that. He doesn’t know what’s going on. And so Colin Powell will set up something, and he comes along and blows that up, and it goes sour.

The same way with the business of corporate theft. They didn’t really try to solve it, just get the guys off the hook. This is going to cause us to re-think the whole educational program and what are we preparing these people to do. Are we preparing them to function in something that is obsolete or are we going to move ahead in our thinking to try to get them into the information age? Because that’s what it will be.

But you see, Mr. Baker thought he was going ahead of his time. Now Mr. Baker up there has a shop — Braiding is in! [Laughter]

Baker: It’s like anything else. You develop a certain amount of knowhow, and just like you had the knowhow in the musical field, you get it in another field.

Stone: Right.

Baker: And your mind tells you to hire that band. Your mind will tell you how you want that other thing you’re into. You see things before other people see them.

Stone: Right.
Baker: Now sometimes you see something wrong. But you can make a hasty adjustment.

Stone: Right.

Baker: Because it’s dollars and cents. It’s like when I put an ad on the radio and I don’t get no response, the next day, I change that ad. Or change that radio station. Something’s wrong. And that’s the way you have to go. And everything is done in a hurry.

I never dreamed I’d be in the hair business.

Stone: Right. This bag that you see him carrying is what I call my brag bag. This was given to me by two students I taught at Douglass High School who went down to Atlanta to a meeting of 100 Black Men of America. And they said let’s do something for Doc. So they brought me back this leather case, and in this case are, I keep the things that I consider very important for me and for my family.

I’ll start with this, and I’ll read it. It reads: City of Baltimore Citizen Citation to Reppard Stone, Ph.D. Marvin O’Malley, Mayor of the City of Baltimore, do hereby confer upon you this citation in recognition of your being a living legend not to be forgotten. Best wishes. That was signed on February the 20th by Martin O’Malley who is our current mayor.

Last year I received this plaque from the Musicians Union.

Baker: 44-543.

Stone: "2001. The Musicians Association of Metropolitan Baltimore Local 44 and 543 AFM is proud to honor Reppard Stone in recognition of lifetime achievement in the music profession." And the reason this is important is that this is outside of education. It did not say education. It said in the music profession. That is rather dear. And this is the next thing I’d like to brag about: This is a jazz educators’ journal, and this particular issue it has a lady on the cover.

Baker: Mary Lou.

Stone: Mary Lou Williams. Now, that is important to me. But in here they have a listing of all of the research papers that were done and delivered at conventions and published in journals. So I brought along one research journal just so you could see how the different authors put this into the journal. I want to give you a list of those papers so you could see, or that maybe those journals could appear at the Peabody library.

Chords by Acoustics. And the last one I did, in Volume 21, in 2001 is The Enigma of Duke Ellington, An Examination. He’s still a puzzle to us.

Baker: Oh yes.

Stone: And I thought that I’d recite that so it would be on record.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, I would like to thank both of you for taking so much time out of your schedules to do this. It’s been an honor for us to be able to have you speak and I thank you very, very much.

You know, I have Roy McCoy’s interview photo album, which he gave to the Archives. And this is one of the photographs that is partly unidentified, and can you recognize any of those faces?
[Baker and Stone examine photographs.]

Baker: Jake is a drummer, right? Glenn is a saxophone player. These are all the old 543 members.

Stone: This is —The intellectuals and professionals and so forth of Baltimore organized a club called the Sphinx Club. Charlie Tilman had it up on Pennsylvania Avenue.


Stone: And they have put together a volume on the Sphinx Club because the club burned down about two years ago. I thought maybe you should take a copy.

Q: Oh thank you very much.

Stone: And in your time, especially when it comes to certain photographs, note who these people are. For instance, here’s Harry Cole as a senator.

Bake: Yeah, he was the first black senator.

Stone: Right.

Baker: First Black Senator from Baltimore. He was a Republican.

Stone: And you will see there are the movers and shakers in the black community were in there. Eventually the club went public. At first it was private, but anybody could walk in toward the end.

Q: You mentioned Stanley Johnson.

Stone: Trumpet player.

Q: Is he still living.
Baker: To the best of our knowledge.

Q: He apparently is not in the current union listing.

Stone: Oh no. He hasn’t been in the union in a long time. He lives out there past Randallstown. I don’t know. Did he have a stroke?

Baker: Yeah. He had a stroke. Last time I saw him he seemed to be getting along pretty good. I’ve seen his wife a couple of times, and she says he’s getting along pretty good.

Stone: Now last time I saw him was at Tango’s funeral [Roy McCoy].

Baker: That’s a long time ago.

Stone: That’s a long time ago.

Baker: At the funeral, Tango’s funeral.

Q: That was like a reunion. Simply amazing.

Stone: Yeah. He was the top of the line around here.

Baker: He was.

Stone: Cannonball Adderley told me how he used to get on him when he was down in the Army band, down at Fort Knox. He said, man, you back there sounding like Miles Davis. They wanted him to play real high, you know, like his brother Nat played. But he hung in there and he got out of there.

We had, in that group, our generation, we had a drummer named Donald Lee. He was quite a drummer. He was on the top of a lot of the things.

Baker: He was a good little drummer.

Stone: The later innovations, you know.

Q: There was someone named Flink Johnson.

Stone: He was at the Avenue Bar, and he had a lot of these younger musicians working for him. Interesting guy. Cause we’d be standing on the corner down there by Baker’s place, he’d come down and say, "hey Jim, I’m a man today." He was a homosexual.

Baker: Flink was something else brother.

Stone: Flink was something else. He’d come down, hey Jim, I’m a man today. And we would crack up. We’d laugh tears.
Q: And Claudie Hubbard is still around.

Stone: Yeah. He’s still around.

Q: And still in the union book. And let’s see.

Baker: I don’t know, but I think this is a picture of me. [Laughter and cross talk as they look at a photograph] I think this is me. Oh boy, I remember we had a meeting. I don’t know. That might not be me though. I don’t remember taking. But that is me. Yeah. [Laughter] Yeah, that’s me.

Stone: See. No one would have known.

Baker: I remember this picture. It was a meeting. I had the clothing store at the time. But I just don’t remember Harry Cole being in it. But I know that’s me, because I got on a striped tie.

END OF INTERVIEW