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Tracy McCleary

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[Tracy McCleary is looking over photographs of the Royal Theatre taken during his tenure there. Dusty Fletcher, a dancer, appears in one of those photographs.]

McCleary: The first time I worked with Dusty Fletcher was in New York at the Old Harlem Opera House, just down the street from the Apollo Theatre. He was working with - I can't remember the name - but he's quite a performer. Strangely enough, because he didn't do any of it for years, a pretty fair song and dance man. He was quite a comedian. He used to work in blackface sometime. I really haven't had a chance to go through these. I'm not altogether mobile. All of these were taken on the stage at the Royal Theatre.

We had an all-girl band at the theatre. They'd never had a show before. I conducted from the wings because they billed the cast as an all-girl show and they didn't want any males on the stage at all. Some strange things happened that week. They set me up in the wings and tilted the band just ever so slightly so the girls could see me from the wings. Somebody came up with the idea of me putting on a dress but I said "Never!" I said "The only way I'm going to do this is if I can do it from the wings." Then, after about three or four days, they had it down pretty fair. It was quite an ordeal. They had a little platform for me to stand on so they could see me from the back of the band. A couple of times I practically fell off into the curtains behind me. That's about the only thing that held me up. You forget, you know, when your directing and trying to catch everybody's eye.

Man, this was one of the most fantastic acts in my life and I've played for a lot of acts in show business. [photo of violin duet: the man is playing and supporting a woman on his head. She is playing and doing a headstand] See, she is doing a headstand. She's playing with her hands and arms. This was a European act and fantastic. Why they fooled with this kind of stuff I'll never know - they could play! What excellent musicians! Maybe you couldn't make the kind of money they did.

I don't know if you ever heard of the Baltimore Orioles? There's Sonny Til and this is George. These are the Sweethearts of Rhythm, the all-girl band. I was kind of chunky back in those days. This was made in Baltimore in 1934. This was Erskine Hawkins when I left college with the 'Bama State Collegians.

Q: I read an article about your group — it was a college group and then you all decided to go professional? So you hijacked the band?

McCleary: Where did you get that from? Not many people know that. That's just what we did. At that time, the State of Alabama was in a lot of financial trouble. They had filed for bankruptcy at one time. We had a young college president down there, it was kind of a family thing. His grandfather had been President of the College and his father and then he ascended. He was the youngest college president in the United States. He hadn't finished his doctorate when his father died. One of the ways he kept the school going, he recruited musicians and had bands playing all around the country. We had three bands this size. The 'Bama State Collegians was one band, and the 'Bama State Revellers was the number two band and the 'Bama State Cavaliers was the number three band. It looked good.

I was at Talledega College just a few miles away on a scholarship and Talledega at that time was rated as one of the finest liberal arts schools in the country; it had a tremendous curriculum. I had started a little outfit there and they came up and recruited me to go to Alabama State. No money worries — it sounded beautiful! Room and board, and allowance.

The only trouble, you were never in school. Traveling all over the United States! My class would be having an exam and I'd be in California somewhere. We used to blanket the state of Florida. This was the 'Bama State Collegians and this is Erskine Hawkins who became the leader of the band. He died not long ago. They'd give us jumps like from Tampa, Florida, to Chicago. Twelve or thirteen hundred miles. We'd jump from Greenville Mississippi to Asbury Park, New Jersey. We just gave up. We had had some offers. We left Asbury Park, New Jersey and went into New York City.

Meanwhile, they had sent someone down - have you ever heard the name Benny Carter? They sent Benny Carter to Asbury Park to hear the band and bring us back to New York for an audition. They had been trying to do a show with a lot of military marches in it and they hadn't been very successful with it. They sent Benny down - he'd just returned from Europe - and he came to Asbury Park where we were playing and rode back in the bus with us to New York. We were supposed to audition. It was about five or six o'clock when we got back to New York. They had an audition set up and Benny was so impressed he dismissed the audition. He said "you guys don't have to audition." We did the show for them - I think it lasted three or four weeks.

Meanwhile, H. Counsel Trenham, President of the School, we'd play up one side of the country and back down the other side of the country, down through Virginia, North and South Carolina and through Georgia into Alabama again. We stayed in New York. We sent his bus driver and his bus home. That's how we happened to be in New York. It was a pretty rough time during that period: By sending the bus back and we even sent the uniforms back, some of the guys didn't have their own instruments and had problems with that. We were accused of misappropriating the instruments. By that time we'd gotten hooked up with (we didn't know it until later) gangsters who supplied instruments. In fact, you bought a new instrument whether you needed it or not. The price was horrendous. You didn't have money to pay for it so you paid in increments. I think I was paying for uniforms and instruments for a couple of years. They were hooked up with

Owney Madden at that time, Dutch Shultz, Legs Diamond... They were running the Cotton Club, the Ubangi Club, and the Paradise - they had Harlem locked up.

These places we worked in by virtue of the fact that they owned us. The gangsters owned us. But still, in spite of that, it was just so great to be there. It was beautiful. You could hear all kinds of music and see all kinds of shows. It was during the very heart of the depression so things didn't cost much. You could see a major production for a couple of bucks or so back in 1934 and 1935 right into 1936.

Q: How could you give all that up and come back here?

McCleary: Actually, it wasn't rosy now. Things were pretty rough and I was on my way back to Alabama to school when I stopped in Baltimore to collect a debt. I'd written some charts for a bandleader in Atlantic City called Banjo Bernie. He was a character. Big huge guy and strangely enough, an excellent musician. He played two or three instruments; piano and accordion. He owed me some money for writing some music and I stopped off here foolishly. I had a ticket to Alabama in my pocket. He said he'd pay me for the work I had done for him and give him the back money. He had a little band he wanted me to write a couple of charts for. Back in those days there weren't too many musicians writing because there weren't too many who had the educational background in music. Most of them had just learned to play and were just players. Fortunately enough, I had learned how to play and write back in Oklahoma City which was very rare back in those days.

I had a teacher named Mrs. Breaux who had studied in France. She was really something. She played all the instruments, piano, organ, harp. She was tremendous. She owned the theatre and conducted the orchestra and she used to give plays and musicals at the theatre. The theatre was her outlet. She studied in France and married a gentleman there named Inman Breaux. Her father was the head of Oklahoma City black school system. She was quite a person. I just hounded her to teach me to write until she did. It wasn't in the curriculum and she had to teach me after hours. That was the advantage I had. Most of the playing was done - we called it head playing - by ear. Very few of the jazz musicians at that time knew anything about writing.

I stopped by here on my way to Alabama and I've been hear sixty-odd years. Never did get to Alabama. The ticket was good for ninety days. When I got here, Bernie had the band and show at a place called the Plantation night club at Pennsylvania Avenue and Greenwillow Street. Greenwillow Street is famous in the black history of Baltimore for being the street where the ladies of the evening hung out and transacted their business. He had the band and show at the plantation. I was telling Scott that one of the biggest things I regret in connection with those days

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I'm skipping a lot of years now — I participated in a series on WBAL-TV on Pennsylvania Avenue. Cab Calloway was in it and Hiram Butler, the first black policeman in Baltimore. This particular Sunday I was sick and couldn't make it there. They weren't accepting telephone calls. I had it on and a lady called in who wanted to know if anybody on the panel remembered the Plantation Nightclub. Her father and uncle, two Italian brothers, ran the Plantation. She wanted to know if anybody knew about the Plantation. She was on a visit from somewhere out west. I

was so sure that Hiram Butler would know but nobody knew. I'm frantic! I'm in bed, trying to get on the telephone to the station to tell them, my lord, please give my telephone number and name...and I couldn't get through and because her father and her uncle were instrumental in my staying in Baltimore back in the early 1930s.

When I went to the Plantation to see Bernie, I got here in the afternoon and went into the Plantation. It was a big place, probably seat about 250 to 300 people. The two Italian gentlemen were there. I spoke to them and asked about Bernie. They said that he had the bank and show and that he should be in at any time. He usually came in the afternoon but didn't start work until 8 p.m. I asked if I could wait for him. To make a long story short, eight o'clock came and no Bernie. Nine o'clock came and no Bernie. They were charging admission and the place was about half full and they had no band. So I had my horn in a corduroy sack and they could see that I was a musician. Bernie had part of his troupe, he carried them all with his band and show, there was a huge room on the upstairs over the Plantation on the 2nd floor with cots. They went up there and all their stuff was gone. So it dawned on him that Bernie wasn't coming.

He asked me if I could help them out in any way. I said, "look, I'm by myself. I don't know anybody - I'm just passing through." I'd been in and out of Baltimore on different times, but I'd never stayed here and didn't know anybody. Well, they said "if we can get together some fellows will you try and do something?" Otherwise, they were charging admission and people were going to start to get impatient, start banging... To make a long story short, they got some guys together and I went back Oh, how horrible! But strangely enough, they liked it. They liked it! And strangely enough, they asked me to stay. I said no, "I'm on my way to Alabama, I'm in school - in college." They said, "well, will you stay for a few days and get the band going?" They offered me money and I didn't have any but a dollar or something to get out of town. I stayed in Baltimore that long. I stayed at the Plantation for about a year and a half.

Greenwillow Street was sitting right in the middle of the red light district and the place was starting to get to me. It was one of those places where just about everything was going on.

From Greenwillow or Biddle, actually, Pennsylvania really began at Biddle. Biddle Street is now Martin Luther King Blvd. and from Biddle to about Dolphin was more or less the right light district. But there were a couple of churches in there too - one on Hoffman and a big church - I don't know whether it's still there or not, between Lanvale and Dolphin.

Anyway, the place kind of got to me. There was a nightclub owner on Pennsylvania Avenue - one of the few blacks who owned property on Pennsylvania Avenue. Like most of the areas where blacks lived in the cities, just about all of the business are owned by whites and it was the same thing all over, especially in the South. But it was like another city. Pennsylvania from Biddle all the way to North Avenue was filled with business just door to door. Blacks were not welcome to shop downtown. You couldn't try on anything down there. You couldn't sit at the lunch counters to eat — things of that kind. Strangely enough, having been reared and brought up in the South, here on the public conveyances, street cars and all, you could sit anywhere which was strange to me. But of course after being in New York that time I'd kind of gotten out of that.

I moved up the Avenue to work for Ike Dixon to lead his band and rehearse his band and show. There were a few black entrepreneurs on the Avenue.

Q: He must have been quite a presence on the Avenue. His name comes up in articles repeatedly.

McCleary: He really was. He was involved in a lot of things. Ike Junior is still living and has an insurance business at Pennsylvania and North Avenue. He had two sons and a daughter. I don't know what happened to the rest of them. Ike Junior has an insurance - particularly automobile insurance. He's two doors from Pennsylvania Avenue on North Avenue. WBAL many many years ago had set up a show and they hadn't told me that Ike Jr. was going to be there and they didn't tell him that I was going to be there and they confronted us. It was amazing. Neither of us knew the other was going to be there and it was the first time we'd seen each other in years. Anyway, that's how I got into the business of leading bands.

Q: Where did you meet Rivers Chambers?

McCleary: I met Rivers Chambers — Rivers Chambers had the band at the Royal Theatre when I came to Baltimore. In fact, I passed through Baltimore two or three times before I came to live. The first time I came to Baltimore I stayed at the YMCA on Druid Hill Avenue. I just read in the newspaper that they closed it for renovations. They are going to do the whole thing. Because at that time traveling around places that had YMCAs - there were few black hotels. Some of the large cities, Atlanta, Birmingham, had, well, I wouldn't call that thing in Birmingham a hotel. At least it was a place to stay. For the most part you'd stay with private families. The black ball players for instance, lived in private homes.

Q: Didn't some of the people who came through the Royal stay in private homes?

McCleary: Oh yes. There was one black hotel, the Penn Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. Compared to the places you usually stayed, it was nice. Other than that, if they happened to be filled there was no place to stay but private homes. There was a hotel on Madison Avenue - the York Hotel - on Madison and Dolphin later on. If they were filled you were just out of luck. There was just no place to stay.

Q: Touring must have been horrendous.

McCleary: It was. That's why for the most part you'd play and ride, play and ride, and sleep on the bus. You'd try to find some place to wash up or change your clothes. That's what it boiled down to. It was like a registry - a lot of private homes.

Q: You got involved in the union pretty early on — you were an official in the union.

McCleary: For many years I was a board member at the union. I was vice president for a while and then I was one of the business officers. Because at that time, such as it was, the unions were pretty strong. Of course they had the cooperation of the owners because the union at that time would police the musicians and a lot of them needed policing. So it was a benefit to them. The union took an active part.

Q: I got involved in tracking down the union records. Apparently a lot of them were lost in a fire before the union moved. I was interested in the union dispute with the old colored symphony orchestra when W. Llewellyn Wilson was conducting. I wanted to get a better understanding of what the union's position was. I also wanted to find out what contributed to A. Jack Thomas' break with the union.

McCleary: I knew A. Jack Thomas also and in fact, Llewellyn was instrumental in getting some work for me. A. Jack Thomas and I didn't get along. He was a kind of crusty old guy. We didn't get along. I knew [Freddie] Huber also. He was in charge of municipal music. He doled out city money for concerts as if it were his own. I was on the committee that met with [Tommy] D'Alessandro Senior, who was Mayor - on one of his terms - I guess he was mayor for ninety years. We were able to by-pass Huber and strike a deal with the Mayor. We were setting on his doorstep at six o'clock in the morning.

Q: As near as I can determine, Huber was just downright awful. Huber got credit for an awful lot of things he didn't deserve.

McCleary: He was not a nice man — not a nice guy at all.

There was no cooperation at all between the two unions back there. They were fighting each other instead of together. Huger was furious when he found out we had had a session with the mayor behind his back. Oh, man! We really suffered for it was several years after that things began to change to any extent. Huber was really fit to be tied because we had the temerity to go behind his back and have a session with the mayor about concerts.

[Discussion of Huber's unwillingness to have black musicians play at the Lyric Theater]

The first time I played in Baltimore we had to play at an auditorium on North Avenue - Polytechnic - had a big auditorium. That's where I my group appeared in Baltimore.

Q: I saw in one of the articles that you played in Carlin's Park?

McCleary: Scott and I had quite a laugh over that. We were talking about the evolution about the band, Tracy's Kentuckians. That is where I had to increase the size of the band first. At the Plantation I had six people and then at the Comedy Club the band was not my outfit -it was known as Ike Dixon's band under the direction of Tracy McCleary. It was something like Ike Dixon's Comedy Club New 1936 Orchestra and then in those fine lines underneath, directed by Tracy McCleary.

Looking back now, that was probably the worst thing that happened to me. That's practically where my development as a player ended. Directing and writing arrangements for the band's shows — without practice you don't develop. Probably I remained stagnant for about twenty years.

Another thing I'd done in high school...by the way, if I didn't mention it, Mrs. Breaux played all the instruments. She used to march with us playing trumpet. It created quite a furor. We played

marches that were being played by big bands all over the world. That's how she was. She didn't have amateur stuff or easy stuff for us to play. She had been there for years and taught a lot of the people who assisted her. One of her main assistants was a guy named Walter Page. Walter Page was a bass player for Count Basie for years and years. He had his own orchestra. He is the one who taught me how to play saxophone. Mrs. Breaux taught me how to play French horn. From French horn I went to E flat alto horn, which is the American version of the French horn. The French horn is a more difficult instrument to play. I don't know who came up with the E flat alto. Same size as the French horn, but played like a trumpet with the right hand. The French horn is played with the left hand. Practically the same sound. Walter Page was into jazz music field. His home was in Oklahoma City. When he was in town he helped Mrs. Breaux with the school band. They were great friends and he was an excellent musician. He played bass, trumpet, saxophone, and piano. Count Basie (Bill Basie then - the Count came along later) worked for him, playing piano for the Oklahoma Blue Devils. Basie left the Blue Devils to work for [Bennie] Moten in Kansas City. It is essentially the Moten Band that Basie took over and became Count Basie and his orchestra after Moten died.

Walter Page was an excellent musician. He played bass violin, tuba, bass horn and baritone sax with the Blue Devils. He was a big guy, maybe 6'2" and weighed about 250 pounds or something. Lived, breathed, ate and slept music. He was essentially the one who taught me how to write jazz. I'd learned the rudiments from Mrs. Breaux but the jazz licks and things of this kind came from him. Whenever he was home (he lived about a block and a half from me) I was camping on his door. I used to sit on his porch because his wife wouldn't let me in. She'd say "he just got in and he's in the bed!" He used to help with the school band and Mrs. Breaux used to march with us.

I don't know what happened to the band business at that time. Everybody was traveling, not making money, just existing. We started doing other things. One source of income was traveling around the oil fields playing for the oil workers. They'd bring people from all around the country to work in the oil fields during the oil explosion in Texas and Oklahoma back in the late 1920s 'til 1929 to 1930.

Q: Did you every do any of those..

McCleary: In Oklahoma and Texas in the oil fields, they'd always have these little joints around. They'd have to bring oil workers in from all over the country and they'd have these little joints around to entertain them. They worked practically night and day, almost. It was pretty dirty, greasy - oil on everything. They'd discovered oil at Oklahoma City. In fact, if I remember correctly, the whole city was on a fabulous oil deposit and they had to stop them inside the city limits from drilling. One source of income was to play for the oil workers.

Q: They must have been a wild audience.

McCleary: Oh, Lord. The liquor and the women. I was telling Scott, the guys would be dirty, greasy oil men one night and a few weeks later they'd be a millionaire. Wells would come in. Actually, much later, the country enacted laws against drilling — they'd bring a well in and just

run it, 20 to 30,000 barrels. It escapes me — the name of the law that put a cap on running the wells until they ran them dry. The gushers would come in.

We'd work in the joints for just tips. Sometimes we'd make fabulous money for that day and age. I was telling Scott that someone gave us \$1,000 one night. He had promised us that if we played him some song - I can't even remember the name of the song -He was dirty and greasy. Well, everybody was greasy back in those days. We didn't get paid any money. We worked for tips. We had a kitty set up in front of the band. He was drunk or half drunk and kept bothering us all night to play this song that we didn't even know. So finally, we told him that if he would sing it or hum it, we would play it for him. We did. Why did we do that? Just to get rid of him. We must have played it a dozen times for him that night. Finally, they wound up putting him out of the joint. He was drunk by that time. He called us all kind of names. You learn to endure that kind of stuff and accept it because it was part of the job, one of the facts of life. True to his word, not two weeks later he came in and we didn't even recognize him. He had a shirt, tie and suit and a bunch of girls on his arm and he tied ten one hundred dollar bills on our kitty. He kept his word. He gave us a thousand dollars. A couple of the girls tried to take them off and he knocked them down. In fact, this was back in the late '20s and here's a white guy knocking down white women for taking money from a black man. This was unheard of him. He clobbered them and told them that he'd promised "these boys" - it didn't matter how old you were you were still "boys" - but it's better than being "nigger" because that was the usual term. But he certainly did.

Q: You must have done thousands of arrangements.

McCleary: Hundreds maybe. I wouldn't really say that I did any arrangements until I got to the Royal Theatre. Most of the stuff I was writing back then were just choruses giving the guys something to play. I would say that in the Royal Theatre period I finally had the luxury of writing something that would be played. Otherwise, there wasn't any use in writing it if it wasn't going to be played.

Q: Did you hang on to all of those arrangements?

McCleary: No, I certainly did not. I wrote a lot of songs back then and a lot of them I had copyrighted and they disappeared over the years. I just didn't attach much importance to them. I get so disgusted sometimes in writing. There is no point in writing if you can't hear it played. I'd just rip it up. In later years musicians got better. Schools were more plentiful and people were coming into the business being able to play and read.

Q: When did that change start being felt?

McCleary: I would say maybe in the late '30s. I had one of the best groups that I ever had in the late '30s. That was a fourteen piece outfit and I think I had at least four other guys in the outfit besides me that were writing and arranging. We used to try to outdo each other. That was a time when we were producing some pretty good music. From '39 on we got into the war situation. Jobs were opening up for people in war industries.

Q: Did you lose a lot of your musicians to the military?

McCleary: It was pretty rough. I was fortunate in that I had musicians from Fort Meade and Aberdeen. They had bands at both places. In fact, one time when I thought I was going into the service I had made arrangements with the warrant officer who was in charge of the band at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds had been a trumpet player with me. I had made arrangements that if I had to go into the service to go up there. Meanwhile, I was using musicians from Fort Meade. It was easy driving distance and there were trains.

On the other hand, I had some physical problems and they rejected me at Fort Meade. My draft board put me to work in the defense industry so I had to go to work. If I could have just moved around, there was a shortage of musicians. I tried not to go, but then they had some guys with gold badges camping on my doorstep and they wanted me to go to work.

Q: I talked to Charlie "Buster" Brown's widow and she was talking about the fact that all his life her husband made his living as a musicians and that the only time he worked was during WWII in the defense industry.

McCleary: I don't even know if it was legal or not, but they said I had to do it. If I could have moved around, because there was a shortage of musicians all over the country and I had just a short time of it when I made what was to me fabulous money. So here it was, the only time in my life that I can make this kind of money and how I've got to go to work! So I spent almost four years in the defense industry, during which time I couldn't move around very much and couldn't do much gigging because it was a revolving shift. Day shift, afternoon shift, midnight shift, you know. I was working for the most part at Bendix Radio on Joppa Road in Towson. I was there.

I had one fabulous summer, making a lot of money. Stupid enough to spend it all because I thought it was going to go on as long as the war goes on. I had bands in two places and was gigging on the side. But no, we 4Fs had to go to work in the defense industry.

Q: You went on the circuit a while. After you came to the Royal, you stayed there.

McCleary: I was out of the Royal for about ten years from 1939 to 1949 and part of that time, for about almost four years I would say, 3 1/2 to 4 years, I worked in the defense plant and the other time, of course, just gigging. In looking back, perhaps if it had tried to use my connections or gotten a lawyer, I could have proven that I was good for morale. Some of my good customers had complained about why their loved ones were in military service and why I wasn't. They said I had to go to work and I acquiesced but then a couple of guys with gold badges would camp on my door step, so I said "I'm in the defense plant now."

I was telling Scott about this music student, a young man who was graduating from Morgan [State University] and he was taking some courses down here at the Peabody and he had come to me for assistance in some writing he was doing. Meanwhile, he asked me for a chart I had written for a band to play to use in his presentation. It was done here at the Peabody and he asked me to come down. I told him, well, "your peers down there are going to be pretty critical. I'll come, but don't tell anyone I'll be there until after it's over with. If it winds up being a clinker, I'll just slide out." It happened in the main building over here. I told him "look, I'm going to sit in the back and if it clicks I'll slide right out of the back door. Don't say anything. The composer or the

arranger ought to be here." I was telling Scott I went to sit in the last row, not realizing they had a door back there and people started coming in and about half of them spoke to me by name. My lord! Here I was supposed to be hiding. People kept saying "saw your show the other day" or "last year I saw you at..." I thought, holy cow! Anyway, he played the arrangement and it went over very well. There happened to be a lady there from some archives in Washington and she invited me to submit a copy for the archives.

Q: Well, at least somebody has a copy of your arrangements.

McCleary: No! I didn't send it! I never considered that this stuff was worth anything [the clippings and photographs documenting his career] so I never catalogued it. I should start on it. I'm not going to have too much time to work on it.

[Photo of uniformed man standing with rifle on a podium] This guy had one of the most fabulous acts I'd ever seen. His act was too dangerous. All of this was electrified. His stand was electrified and he has wires under his coat and his rifle was electrified. He was constantly getting injured. Those were the kinds of things we used to do at the Royal Theatre years ago before the Rock and Roll era. [Photograph of Fletcher Henderson.]

Q: You hired these people didn't you?

McCleary: I didn't hire them but I had a word in their being hired. Frankly, very few business people back then - most of the businessmen who ran the theatres didn't know anything about music. They weren't musicians and more or less depended on someone else. Even in the big booking houses there were very few - it seemed like business and music just didn't go together. I had nothing whatever to do with discussing terms or contracts, but so far as passing approval on performers, I had quite a lot to do with that. They more or less depended on me. They trusted me to give them an honest appraisal and in fact they would send me to places to see acts and come back and report on them. That's one reason I was between Baltimore and New York quite a bit.

When I came here from New York I felt like I'd gone from the balcony to the cellar. You have to be in New York for a couple of years. It was just a tremendous difference. New York - Oh, my god! I thought I'd never sleep. I just thought New York was heaven. They accepted my opinion and my evaluation. Except for the stars, now. Nobody is going to ask you to go to see Ella Fitzgerald, Nat "King" Cole or Billie Holiday. Hell, we were lucky to get them. I used to go to Detroit to hear some of the Motown performers.

Q: Did they record very many of the programs at the Royal?

McCleary: No

Q: Do you have recordings of any of your music?

McCleary: No. I have a few tapes of the band playing, but other than that, no. Back in those days, the recording industry and the performers were practically at loggerheads. You couldn't even have a tape recorder on stage.

Q: When were those recordings of the band made?

McCleary: I would have to say in the late '50s or early '60s something like that. During that period the theatre had become a part-time job. After the war we never got back to doing regular stage shows. For the most part it became a part-time thing, so much so that during that period I was working for the Federal Government as well as being with the band at the Royal Theatre. Then it finally disappeared altogether.

Q: Those tapes must be very fragile. Tape has a life of only about ten or fifteen years.

McCleary: Some of them are so bad now. After talking to Scott, I looked up some of these things and played them. They don't sound anything like they did.

END OF INTERVIEW