



Funding for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master interview was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

CLARK TERRY **NEA Jazz Master (1991)**


Interviewee: Clark Terry (December 14, 1920 – February 21, 2015)
Interviewer: William Brower
Date: June 15 and 22, 1999
Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution
Description: Transcript, 150 pp.

Transcriber's note: Evidently there was no recording engineer available for the Clark Terry interview, and the interviewer, William Brower, handled the record process by himself. He had some technical problems. In the interview of June 15, 1999, one of the two channels is shorted out and emits nothing but a buzz, disrupting the entire session; this problem is exacerbated, affecting both channels, in the last two hours of this session. Brower acknowledges these problems at the beginning of the interview that took place one week later, on June 22, 1999. This later session has an excellent stereophonic sound.

Terry: Saw a fellow sitting there, standing on a rock. He was driving around the corner, in the middle of the block.

Is that close enough?

Brower: Okay. We're going to try this again. This is Bill Brower, talking with Mr. Clark Terry on June 15th for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project, and we were getting background on the Terry family, and I'm going to ask if you would, to repeat the things that you told me about your parents' background.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
 Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: My mother's name was Mary Scott. My father was Clark Terry, Sr. They had eight girls and three boys. One of the girls died before I was born, so I was raised with seven sisters and two brothers. My oldest sister Ada – Ada Mae, we called her. Next oldest in line was Marguerite Davis. She's Davis now, but she was Terry then. Ada Mae was Ada McField. She married Sy McField. The third one in line was Virgil Otto, my brother – my oldest brother. After him came Charles Edward, whom we called Ed, my next brother. After Ed was Lillian. She married a gentleman by the name of Jess Gilliam. After Lillian came me, and after me was Juanita, who became Juanita Hopkins. After Juanita was my twin sisters: Mary Louise and [?Maddie] Lucille. They both were married. I don't remember their husbands' names. Then the baby sister, the last one, was Odessa. She became a Saunders, and she lives in St. Louis now. My other two living members of the family, Juanita and Marguerite, live in Detroit. Odessa lives in St. Louis, Marguerite and Juanita in Detroit, and I'm here in New York.

Brower: You said that you just came back from St. Louis, and you received some special [?].

Terry: Yeah, on Saturday, the Mayor proclaimed June 14th or 13th, whichever it was, as Clark Terry Day in St. Louis, which was a far cry from the way it used to be when I went to school around there.

Brower: Can you take us back to give us some feeling for what it was, growing up in St. Louis at that time?

Terry: It was very difficult, because we were relegated to second-class citizenship. We got – we paid the same taxes, but we got underhand deals of everything. As a matter of fact, not too many years ago, they started a program called urban renewal in St. Louis, all the way from the river. St. Louis went from the Mississippi River westward. The east boundary was the Mississippi River, and across the Mississippi River was East St. Louis. So all of that used to be a ghetto area. They cleaned up all that area. As a matter of fact, when they put the arch down there, which is a historical figure now, they started tearing everything down and moving black people further out. And in turn, what they were actually doing – they had reached a point where, although the people weren't even aware of it, the blacks were so much in command as far as political sentiment was concerned, they could have ran the whole – the city, but nobody was aware at that time what was going on, and what they really were indulging in, instead of urban renewal, they were – black removal, kicking us further and further out and bringing – caucasians were coming back down to the river, starting all over again.

Brower: Did you grow up in a – does the part of St. Louis where you spent your youth, does it have a particular name?

Terry: Yeah, the area where I was born and raised up and went to school in the beginning was called Carondelet – C-a-r-o-n-d-e-l-e-t – Carondelet. That was 6200 South Broadway. Broadway was the street that bordered the Mississippi River all the way up and down. After you went from Broadway westward, there was another area way out on the other end, near Grand Avenue, which is the other side of the – that particular part of St. Louis, which is known as the West End, and we had two different factions. People in the West End, all of us downtowners, we called them hinkty. They were better off financially. They had the better jobs. They had better schooling and better education, so we were relegated to second-class citizenship. We're down there on the river. So there's always the rival of the Broadway people and the West End people.

Brower: How did you come to be interested in music?


Terry: Because my oldest sister, Ada, who was married to Sy McField, who was a tuba player in the – a band at that particular time, which was led by Dewey Jackson, a band called the Musical Ambassadors, and they played – what was very popular in those days was the boat, the riverboats. The riverboats would come up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, the Streckfus steamers, and they would [?] at all of the major areas along the Mississippi River and its tributaries and stay there for a while. They go make trips nightly up and down the water, because – you've got to remember, this was before air conditioning, t.v., and all that, so they had to figure out some ways to calm and cool the people down. So the boat rides – you went up the river on a night that was always cool, the breeze off the river. Dewey Jackson's band was one of the favorite bands for that particular type of . . .

Brower: A boat ride would cost you what? If you took your family, was it – is it like going to the movies or . . . ? [?] how people treated you.

Terry: Something like that. Yeah. You could dance and listen to the music. But it too was racial. They had black boat rides and white boat rides. Everything was a two-way in those days. Matter of fact, when I first went on the road down South, we played dances. On certain days it would be for the whites and the blacks would sit in the balcony and watch. Then certain other days it would be for blacks, while whites sat in the balcony and watched. In areas where they didn't have balconies, the facilities to segregate like that, they'd tie a rope across the middle of the bandstand. The whites would dance over there, and the blacks would dance over here. It was really – some of the things that existed in those days, Bill, are unbelievable. Unless you were there, you couldn't – you wouldn't possibly believe all the things that did happen.

Brower: Now, Dewey Jackson's band – what did Dewey Jackson play?

Terry: Dewey Jackson was a trumpet player himself. Loud trumpet player. And they used to say that he was the loudest player – cat that ever came down the Mississippi

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



River. They used to – sometimes the parents – the families would take their kids to the wharf and put them on the boat and then they would go back and party at home or something. The way that they would know that it was time to go pick up their kids – they could hear Dewey Jackson about ten miles up the river. [Terry makes a piercing wa-wa sound.] Loud. They say, “We’ve got to cut out. We’ve got to go pick up the kids.”

Brower: Was he playing jazz music?

Terry: Yeah, they were playing jazz. That’s how I got involved, going to listen to them. We got so really involved until we put a little band together where we made up – we didn’t have money for instruments, so we would make instruments. My brother made a drum out of a – in those days, we didn’t have refrigeration, so we had iceboxes. There was a pan that sat under – you slid it under the bottom of the ice box, and as the ice melted – went down the tube and down the back of the ice box into the ice pan.


Brower: It would catch the water.

Terry: Catch the water, yeah. The drippings from the ice. And after so many months or years or whatever, it became rusty, and it would leak, get tattered all around the outside. Some irony – my brother had the ingenuity to figure out that this made it sound like a snare drum, so he went around, snatching all of the chair rungs out of chairs, which made great drum sticks, so he had himself drum sticks and this little rusty ice pan – brrrrrrr – it made a nice roll, nice snare drum. And he would fix this – sit it so that it would be on a trap set – look like a trap set. We had old – in those days they had bushel baskets that were tall. They held a bushel, but they were long, and he turned one of those upside down and hang a brick on there, then hang this drum over the brick, and it would be just like a drum set.

So he played that, and we had an old buddy from the neighborhood named Charlie Jones, whom we called Bones. Bones used to play an old discarded beer – tin beer mug, and he would wrap an old vacuum hose around it, so it would simulate a bass tuba – around the neck, put it into this cup – this tin cup, and he go [Terry splutters with his lips, imitating a tuba]. It sounded like a bass.

Then one of the guys had an old jug with [Terry makes a cooing sound]. It sounded like a horn. And I played a comb – a pocket comb with tissue paper over it, and after a while I graduated to a kazoo. I could really make music on that kazoo. So we used to play out on the corners and gather up money like that. People would throw us little tips.

Brower: When you see kids – maybe you’ve seen them. Now they take these plastic buckets that they use at industrial sites and turn them over . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Make drums out of them.

Brower: . . . and make drums out of them. Does it remind you of . . .


Terry: Yeah, it sure does. As a matter of fact there was a kid here a couple of years ago. I think he now plays drums with Tony Bennett, this kid. Can't think of his name. He used to play in the subway down at 59th Street, would have all kinds of pots and buckets like that, and man, he could make music with those things. I think this is the same kid that finally graduated to a real drum set and is now being hired by Tony Bennett.

Brower: What is that – when you go back to what was – if it wasn't the Depression, just before the Depression, and then you look over 60, 70 years, and you observe the same kind of phenomena, maybe even different material, but still the impulse towards creativity, towards taking things in your environment and finding ways to make music – what does that tell you, if anything? What does it suggest to you?

Terry: It suggests to me – it tells me that – the same thing that we employ in jazz education today. You have to insist and instill – to instill into the minds of the youth getting involved, and getting the feeling, that they have to have a certain amount of stick-to-it-tive-ness in order to give vent to their feelings. In order to be able to create, you have to be true to yourself. You can't always jump on a bandwagon, something that somebody else is doing. This is what's wrong with the situation today. There are too many kids who sound the same.

There used to be a lot of room for creativity. I remember when I was a kid – just to show you the difference between then and now – we could take a broomstick and make 20 different things to play with it. Make a crutch. Make a spyglass. Make a rifle. Make oars. Make a – 20 different things. Now, you've got so many things with batteries today, you have to have a degree in trigonometry to put the toy together, and five minutes later the kids throw it away and they want something else anyhow. So this – today, "Dad, give me the keys to the Caddy. I want to drop Cathy off at school." We had to walk to school. So all these things – I never forget. I made a – we used to have what we used to call skate trucks. We'd take an old discarded roller skate and take it in half, put one end on the end of a 2-by-4 and one on the other end, and put a board up the middle, and that was our – that was a prize toy. And sometimes we used it for transportation to get from point A to point B. So I think in the earlier days, the kids had more – they had to. Necessity is the mother of invention, so they had to create ways and means of entertaining themselves and of doing things that had to be done through the medium of creativity.

Brower: But it seems like kids, at least within certain economic levels, still have that impulse towards creativity. That's what I'm suggesting by – maybe certain materials

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



that were available to you, but today we see children who don't have privilege or whatever or good economic circumstances, just picking up things in the environment and attempting to make music. So I see that in common, but I'm wondering – it would seem that after 3, 4, 5 decades that the – that something more would be available to these children to make music with than buckets. It's part of I guess what I see.

Terry: Yeah. I see what you mean. But somehow, this particular kid, or these kids who use these gadgets for creativity, they don't have access to the other things. We got a thing going here in Glen Cove where we're – we have a ghetto and underprivileged kids here in Glen Cove, so we're just starting – on the 2nd of July, they have – they're going to name a street in my honor here, and the people who are invited are asked to make a contribution to a little thing which we are starting to make it possible for any kid – which is usually the ghetto kids, the black kids and the Spanish kids – we're always relegated to secondary things, and we can't get to the schools that the better – the better schools. We're forced to learn, to study in situations that are adverse. So we have to do the best we can. This thing, what we're starting, is to make it possible for any kid who has the desire to get involved in giving vent to his feelings creatively, music, dance, art, thespian, or whatever, they – we will have some way to help them. And you'd be surprised – no, you wouldn't be surprised. I'm sure you know that any kid that is inspired by, motivated by somebody with a brighter image, if this person stoops a little bit to encourage this kid, it does wonders for this kid.


I'll never forget. I'm not a drummer, but I always used to carry around a pair of drum sticks in my case, and one time we were doing – we were dedicating the area where Thelonious Monk was raised, which is now called Thelonious Monk Sphere, over on the West Side.

Brower: Over by where Lincoln Center is?

Terry: Yeah, in that area, yeah. Now we were dedicating that area Thelonious Sphere Monk Circle – it's a cul de sac – and we were dedicating this thing to him, and we were playing. Mark Crawford was making the dedication. Willie Jones on drums. Humphrey, the piano player.

Brower: Oh, Walter Bishop? Walter Davis.

Terry: Walter Bishop. Walter Davis, yeah. So a whole bunch of us were playing, and this little kid was in the back of the bandstand, and he had a tree, a piece of a tree. Ding ding ding ding. He was keeping time. Just a piece of old raggedy tree branch. But he was really – you could tell he was really into it. At the first intermission – I kept watching this kid, and I took these two – these drum sticks out of my case, and I gave them to this kid. I said, "Try these, man. You watch the drummer, and do what he does." He – this kid, his eyes got big as biscuits, man. He could not believe. And I'm

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



sure – I don't – I wish it were possible that I could keep up with his career from that point, but I'll bet you this kid is into giving vent to his feelings now. But he otherwise wouldn't have had a chance. The kids back in those days didn't have the chance, so that's why you still see some kids who are creative, and I think it has to do with their inner spirits and with their support from the family, because a lot of those same kids go the other route, to the junk route, and they all end up following each other, becoming junkies and crack users and all that, and that goes also for the upper crust. They too are swayed by the people – their colleagues. So it's just a matter of the support that the kids – the family's very, very important. If there's no love and no support in the home life with the families, there's room for the kids to go either way.

Brower: Your first – you invented, or your first attempt – you talk about playing the comb and then the kazoo, but did you not make a kind of a trumpet on your own?


Terry: I sure did. I was so carried away with the trumpet, and of course in a big family, we're – it's a problem to feed and clothe kids. I wanted a horn, so I couldn't buy a horn. My dad wouldn't think of buying – couldn't think of buying me a horn, so I went to the dump – city dump – and found me an old discarded piece of garden hose. I bound it up – rolled it up so it looked like a trumpet and bound it in three areas with wire, old paper wire. They stuck up, and the ends of them looked like valves. I put a piece of old chewing gum or something on the end, make it look like valve tops, and I found an old kerosene funnel and stuck it on the end, and it looked like – actually, the image looked just like – if you drew it, it would look like a trumpet. On the other end I stuck a piece of lead pipe, unaware at the time that lead poisoning was on the rampage, but I didn't know that. That's all I had to blow on was my – was that lead pipe. And I had myself a horn that I could make, not music, but a lot of noise. But there was obviously – there's seemingly a method to my madness, because the neighbors got a little sick of that horrendous sound that I was creating with that horrible piece of instrument, and they chipped in. Chipped in, now, and collected \$13 or \$12.50 and bought a horn from a pawn shop and gave it to me. Now can you imagine how – what a vast hold poverty had on everything in those days. You could buy a horn out of a pawn shop for \$12.50. That gives you a good idea of the times. Well, you could get a nickel loaf of rye bread in those days. You can't get a slice for a nickel now.

Brower: Was this before high school?

Terry: Yeah, before high school.

Brower: When did you start to get formal training from someone who could show you notes and how to finger the instrument?

Terry: Not until I went to high school, because I didn't know anything about music, except what I would listen to and what my brother-in-law Sy occasionally, when he had

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



– he was very, very busy. He didn't have too much time to fool around with me, but he would take time when he could, and the tuba has the same fingering as a trumpet. I got to learn – had a chance to learn open, 1-3, 1-2, open, 1, open, 1-2, middle, and open. Do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do-do [Terry sings an ascending major scale.] – the scale. Same fingering. So at least I knew how to do that. Of course the tuba mouthpiece was ten times bigger than the trumpet. The trumpet comes more with a – more intricate buzz [Terry buzzes] right through the center of the embouchure, but a bass is [Terry splutters] way down there, and your lips vibrate more.

So at least I had a chance to kind of halfway have an idea of what brass and fingering was all about. But I never got a trumpet until I went to Vashon High School, and Clarence [?] Wilson, who was the teacher at the time – he allowed me to take home a valve trombone, because there were no trumpets available, so there again it was the same fingering, but a larger mouthpiece. So finally when they – when the first semester finished, there was a horn available, someone who graduated, and I was lucky enough to get onto that.

Brower: Going back to Dewey Jackson and that band, what was – was there any – can you remember any experiences or how you thought about these – the men that you were – I imagine that it was all man – all-male band.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: What kind of impact were they having on you seeing them, both in how they lived and music making that made you interested in [?]?

Terry: One gentleman in particular, Mr. Lattimore, was a trumpet player, and he owned a candy store, and every time they would have rehearsals, you'd come to rehearsals. By this time, my brother-in-law Sy would allow me to go around with him to the rehearsals, because he knew how much I loved being around the music. So, every time Mr. Lattimore would come to rehearsal – he was a big fat cat, and he had this candy store, and his two favorite candies happened to be my favorite two, which were caramels and Mary Janes. Mary Janes were kind of a taffee thing with a little peanut butter in the middle of it – flat, and wrapped in yellow paper. And whenever they'd take a break, he'd say to me, "Son, you can watch my horn for me," and he'd give me a caramel and a Mary Jane. Man, I thought this was the greatest cat in the world. This cat plays the trumpet, and he brings me caramels and Mary Janes from his store, and I love jazz, and he plays trumpet. That's the instrument for me.

Brower: Did you – when you got a chance and he wasn't around, did you fiddle around with the horn? Did you pick it up and blow on it?

Terry: Yeah. On one particular occasion, when they came back from an intermission, he caught me huffing. I was just magnetically drawn to the horn, because he was such a nice cat. I said, that's got to be my instrument. So he came back unexpectedly from a coffee break or whatever kind of break it was, and he walked in, I was [Terry makes a blowing sound] huffing and puffing away, and he said to me, "Son, you're going to be a trumpet player." And I always say I was stupid enough to believe him.


Brower: What kind of engagements were they playing? Picnics?

Terry: Yeah, they played – we had school picnics every summer, two or three different schools. They would play always the parades and the dance pavilion in the park, where everybody could dance, and at the same time, they were playing professional dances, like at the People's Finance building, which had a big dance hall at the top, and the Castle Ballroom, which was right around the corner from our house. By this time I had a chance to go over there and sit outside and listen to that jazz. So once a kid became interested in it, there were some places and some venues and areas where they could go and listen to it, even without money.

Brower: Trumpet players tell me that you have a very unique approach to tonguing.

Terry: Oh yeah. We have a system – maybe what they're talking about – we have a system in jazz. In legitimate playing, teachers will always tell you you have to tongue – single tongue, "ta ta ta," and double tongue, "ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka," and triple tongue, "tut-a-ka tut-a-ka tut-a-ka," but in jazz we have discovered that there is another approach, the same as we have discovered that a lot of the technical terms that are used in the Italian music dictionary, you can't use in jazz. For instance, you wouldn't say to a guy on the bandstand, let's play some largo blues. This is not the proper terminology for jazz. We have other things. We say lowdown, dirty, greasy, grimy, funky, whatever kind of terminology you want to use which describes the mood that you want to play the blues in. The same thing went with the type of articulation. We would talk about the legitimate. You have to say "to to, ta." In the middle, "to." In the lower register it's "ta." In the upper it's "ti." So, "ti to ta, ta to ti." So we figured out a way of getting involved, and they tell us you have to play just with the "ta ta, ta-ka ta-ka, tut-a-ka tut-a-ka," triple, single, double, and "to ti ta," but indulging in jazz, involving yourself in jazz, you know there are other ways and means of producing the same thing that they get for legitimacy. We found that you don't have to go out of this room through that door. You can go out through that window. You can go out that way. Push comes to shove, you go through the wall. You make an exit. So we discovered that by using the vowels "a-e-i-o-u" – we don't say "i." We say "aw," "a-e-aw-o-u," which encompasses the "ti" and the "to" and the "ta." It encompasses all that. We figured out . . .

Brower: Are you speaking of the editorial "we," meaning Clark Terry discovered this?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Yeah, I guess. Yeah. I figured if you use the vowels, a-e-i-o-u, and use the – I coined a term called the doodle system, whether you use a “d” or “t” sound attack: “dadle, deedle, dahdle, dohdle, doodle, dadle, deedle, dahdle, dohdle, doodle.” They encompass a-e-i-o-u. So with this kind of articulation, “dadle, deedle, dahdle, dohdle, doodle, dadle, deedle,” you can put accents in various and sundry places and just indulge in that, because that is the way almost everybody who plays jazz – that’s the way they play anyhow. They don’t say “ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka ta-ka.” It’s “doo deedadle doodadle dee deedledoo doodadledoo.” And that’s the way that scat-singing came about. If you took away the linear value from anything – if I say [Terry scat sings], take away the linear thing, I got [Terry pats the same rhythm with his hands], now what’s that? 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9. That’s 9 beats. If I didn’t put the hills and valleys and highs and lows to it, it would be [Terry pats an undifferentiated rhythm]. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9. But I put the accents – put the flavoring to it [Terry exaggerates the same rhythm]. You dig the difference?

Brower: Yeah, syncopation.

Terry: Syncopation, accents, yeah. So this is what we had to get the kids to understand. Just indulge in highs and lows, hills and valleys.

Brower: Now help me with this. Actually, I didn’t – actually I saw you at the IAJE [International Association of Jazz Educators annual conference] a couple of years ago in New York, with – was it Sue Terry, the violinist?


Terry: Lisa.

Brower: Lisa Terry

Terry: Yeah, my cousin. Yeah.

Brower: You were – I think you were explaining different phrasing then, but just last Sunday I was coming through the airport in Washington, and I had a premonition I was going to run into a jazz musician, but I thought it was going to be someone different. It turned out to be Jon Faddis, because he was in town playing in Washington, doing some stuff with Billy Taylor and other musicians. I thought I was going to run into David Murray or James Newton, who are on the other end of the spectrum, but – because I knew they were in town, and then I ran into Jon. So I said, this is fate. I need some help. I’m going to be interviewing Clark Terry. I need some questions from a trumpeter and – or from a trumpet player’s perspective, and he said, “Ask him about that tonguing.”

Then I have a young friend who actually goes to Howard, and he played with you when you were at Howard not long . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Shane?

Brower: No, this was Chad. He's a young white trumpet player. Rare to be at Howard. His name is Chad. He plays trumpet. And so he – we were talking. I asked him the same thing. And he brought up the same thing about the tonguing, and he said that it was more typical of trombone players to articulate or to tongue in that fashion. So where I am going with this: in any way, does the fact that you spend time on the valve trombone somehow influence how you approach the trumpet?


Terry: Not really. As a matter of fact, that's erroneous what he said, typical of trombones, except that they don't have valves, and the sound sometimes more accurately "gih-deh-gih-ded-gih-deh-git" than "did-dle did-dle did-dle dit," rather than [Terry vocalizes], because you have to really do shuffling to get that out with the slide, so that they do it mostly – they're more or less relegated to have to do it with their [Terry vocalizes].

Brower: But that's not [?].

Terry: No, no, that's not our [?] at all. As a matter of fact, you could do that on a tuba, on a – James Moody does it on the flute. There's a whole lot of other people on flute, trombone, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, and so forth. And in conjunction with that, we have another thing which we used to do. We call it circular breathing, where you can sustain the tone for an extra length of time, rather than stop and play two-bar phrases [Terry vocalizes two separate phrases], we can sometimes do a – play a whole chorus without taking a breath. This comes through the medium of what we refer to as circular breathing. It simply means that you take a quick inhalation of air through the nostrils, let it go back out and then back into the diaphragm. The diaphragm is always filled. And the way to do it is to think of the word u-n-g, ung, ung. While the tongue is there – we teach it, and almost invariably – to 40, 50 kids – the drummers and the piano players learn it quicker than the horn players, I guess because to them, it's nothing to think about. Ung and do it. When you tongue is in ung position, ung, just say the normal word ung lung hung dung mung lung ung ung. While the tongue is in ung position, it is possible to squeeze out air through the medium of the jaws and the throat [Terry makes a "raspberry"], like that. While doing that – the tongue is in ung position – you can take a quick inhalation of air through the nostrils [Terry demonstrates]. I'll count 1-2-3. On 3 I'll take a quick inhalation.

Brower: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 3 [while Terry continues to demonstrate circular breathing]

Terry: Just a quick, and it replenishes the air, and you can keep a continuous sound of air going as long as you can keep a pucker. So it's something too that is very widely used, and we've had to create a lot of terminology that we use in jazz that, as I

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



mentioned before, can't be used from the Italian dictionary, like shakes, fall-offs, rips, doits, and little things like that.

Brower: Those things are peculiar to jazz.

Terry: That's right. Yeah, that help to fit into the coloration of the sound and the interpretation of the jazz language.

Brower: Now let's get back to the high school and [?]. So you were at the high school when you were playing valve trombone. What kind of music were you doing there? What was the repertoire?

Terry: At this particular time, it was only marches, because I didn't want to get into anything too heavy with the valve trombone. I'm waiting on this trumpet, so I'm just biding the time, just mastering the scales [Terry sings three ascending major scales]. That's all I wanted to do, is get them scales down. By the time I get the horn, it would be a lot easier for me. So, actually, it was a blessing in disguise. It was sort of like the dudes in Mexico do. They – trumpet players – that's why you find so many of those fantastic – what is that term? *juarache*? [mariachi]. I can never think of that term for the Mexican trumpet. [Terry vocalizes a difficult melody.] They give them the mouthpieces first, and they master the tonguing on the mouthpiece [Terry blows into his mouthpiece]. They master that before they get the horn. Then when they get the horn, it's easy to associate the articulation and manipulation along with the tonguing [Terry blows into his mouthpiece]. It's a lot easier that way. So – I got ahead of myself there. We were talking about . . .

Brower: It's all – I go with the flow.

Terry: That's why I asked you if you had an appointment, because I could talk a thousand different things.


Brower: That's okay. That's all right. That's all right. We'll go where it leads us.

So you were waiting on the trumpet. When did you finally get a trumpet.

Terry: The next semester. When that semester was over, cat graduated and left the trumpet. That was my chance.

Brower: Then what happened?

Terry: At that point, he assigned a couple of advanced students to help me to produce the proper sound and the “ta to ti” and the fingering and the legitimate type of articulation. And, at the same time, in 1935, I told you we won the drum and bugle . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: . . . competition.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: I think that was on the other tape, so do that story.

Terry: In 1935, we – I was with an organization. At this point I'm living with my older sister, Ada and Sy, on 2913 Lawton, and the Tom Powell Drum and Bugle Corps convened on Vandervan and Finney, which is 3900 West and about 10 blocks the other way, so I had to walk 20 or so blocks to this rehearsal for the Tom Powell Drum and Bugle Corps, and I was assigned a bugle. So at least – I don't have valves at this point, but at least I've got all the manipulation, articulation, and the embouchure functions down perfect. [Terry vocalizes and up and down buzzing sound.] That's one of the things we assign the kids today, is to learn to use the embouchure at the point where you just imagine you don't even have valves. [Terry plays a buzzing melody with his lips alone.] And then when you put it together with the fingering, it's a lot easier.

So I had a chance to do a lot of that on a bugle. [Terry vocalizes *Reveille* and another melody.] - that kind of stuff, all of which I tried to figure out ways and means of encompassing that into jazz, and some of the systems that we use in teaching are built on some of those theories that we concocted back in those days, which worked good.

Brower: Meaning the systems that you do – when you conduct classes, are founded on [?]

Terry: Right. Yeah.

Brower: One of the questions that – and this is a digression again, but you raise the point – is, how have you been able to maintain your embouchure so late to your career, where other trumpet players noticeable fall off in their ability to keep that lip?

Terry: I think one of the things is to practice that one little thing. It seems a little simple. It's like salt and pepper. It's still the basic ingredient for seasoning. And I think if we get to the point where we can stay [Terry vocalizes a melody that leaps up and down] – be able to make intervals with the buzz, without the instrument – and this is the thing that we use to get people involved in being able to do a concert after having been off for a long time. I could stay off for a week, and in about two days I'll just buzz [Terry buzzes a melody] and so forth. I think that if a lot of us did that more, we'd have a lot less problems. It's all about buzzing. When that embouchure area – when the chops get lazy and just lay there and don't nothing – you can hardly open up to talk. You've got to keep them in a position for articulation manipulation.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: Okay. Now let's get back to this chronology, your history. They get – you get into trumpet in 1935. You're with the Powell drum and bugle corps. You win the statewide competition.

Terry: That was in '35, and of course by this time, I got a trumpet in high school now, so I'm getting involved in all sorts of little things. We started a little swing band and we called it Vashon Swingsters, which I remember the guys very well. The sax – the clarinet player was Benny Nelson. The guitar player was James Barr. The drummer was O. C. Reese. The piano player was the cat who had the highest i.q. of any student in the state of Missouri. His name was Walter Ray. He was a genius. He was like a dict – encyclopedia, telephone book, or whatever. He knew – he had just an amazing brain. And this was our band. Me and Benny Nelson, front line. Walter Ray, James Barr, and the bassist was Walter – Wally Dean. William Wallick Dean.

We – of course jazz was sort of relegated to toilets as far as this guy was concerned, the principal of Vashon High School. His name was Mr. Williams. We called him Fess Williams. Fess Williams hated jazz, and he wouldn't allow us to associate ourselves with – our music with Vashon High School, so we had to go in the alleys and people's backyards and basements to rehearse.

But the most popular person at that time, jazz-wise, small group was Fats Waller. Fats had a couple of stalwarts in his band, Gene Sedric, who was the saxophone player, and Johnny Bugs [Hamilton] was the most outstanding trumpet player of that day, and Walter Ray was a perfect mimic – he did a perfect copy of Fats Waller. He was a marvelous musician, could play like anybody.


So, our repertoire consisted mostly of Fats Waller tunes, which is ironic. Yesterday in Ravinia, this group I told you I went up there to play with – George Wein's group – we did a tribute to Fats Waller, and they had me come along, because I could sing *Your Feet's Too Big* and *Honeysuckle Rose*, two of Fats's compositions. So that kind of – I was thinking about that, back in those days when we were trying to get our little group going, back in St. Louis, back in the '30s, and couldn't get off the ground.

Brower: One of my favorite songs is *Jitterbug Waltz*. I just [?]

Terry: Yeah, I love that, and you know, we overlooked that the other day. [Terry scat sings the opening phrase of its melody]. We didn't even play it.

Brower: Every time I see a piano player noodling around, that's something I'll say: "Can you play some *Jitterbug Waltz* for me?" I've been – I'm surprised by people that don't know.

Terry: Oh yeah. It's not easy. That's why . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: It's a beautiful tune. I love that, love that composition.

You – St. Louis is known as a trumpet town . . .

Terry: Yeah, that's true.


Brower: . . . trumpet town, and I've got a whole list of trumpet players associated with St. Louis, and I wanted you to talk about some of them. Then I also – I've heard I guess at least four things that seem to make it important. One is it's being on the Mississippi and connected to New Orleans. Two seems to be that there was a great marching – a march tradition in New Orleans – I mean in St. Louis as well. Another seems to have been that there were a great many classical teachers of German extraction who were there. And another seems to be this whole tradition of great sort of jazz trumpet players that come out of St. Louis. And I wondering if you could talk about each of those [?] that they may have affected you.

Terry: I'd be happy to. The first one, which might seem to just coincidental, being on the water – I think that because St. Louis was on the Mississippi River – I don't – I'm not so sure. I don't think so, that the water itself had anything to do with making it more conducive to horns playing – articulation. I don't think that [?] to it. But the mere fact that St. Louis is on the Mississippi River, and these boats came up from New Orleans, the Streckfus steamers – St. Louis became a very, very integral part of jazz, because of the fact that a lot of the cats got off there and made – became ensconced there, made it their home and base of operations and modus operandi started, because they were there in that area, for whatever reason. And one of the reasons – some of the reasons that brought them into there – first of all, St. Louis was always known for beautiful, fine ladies. That's a pretty good incentive to make a cat look around. So, beautiful ladies. There was great food, good cooking. The places where they hung out had reasonably priced drinks. The rooms were reasonably priced. It just seems that St. Louis was a good place, a very over and all inviting place. So this was conducive to cats getting off there and making themselves homes up there.

And the other thing, the other aspect of it – all these trumpet players . . .

Brower: Let me just ask you that. We know that King Oliver came up on the boat. Louis Armstrong came up. Were their names and their images a part of what you were aware of as a young man?

Terry: No, because we had our own group. There's a cat who – the Lord Mayor of the whole situation was a cat named Charlie Creath, spelled c-r-e-a-t-h, but he pronounced it Charlie Creth. He called himself the King of Cornet. Charlie Creath, King of Cornet. Now he could play, man. He could swing. He could swing you into bad health, and all

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

the cats wanted to swing like Charlie Creath. This is why all of the trumpet players, if you trace all the way down the line, who hung around there, had anything to do with that, like the cat – some of the names escape me, but became – Joe Thomas, for instance. Sweets Edison. Harold Baker. Miles Davis. All of these cats had something that hinged back to Charlie Creath, who referred to himself, Charlie Creath, King of Cornet. They'd say he was an arrogant little s.o.b., and he could play – and he knew he could play.

Brower: You saw him?

Terry: I never saw him. I never saw Charlie.


Brower: But his – his myth, or his memory was part of what you grew up knowing about.

Terry: Yeah, absolutely, on the part of everybody's concept of trumpet playing and knowledge about trumpet playing, all passed on down through the line.

Now one of the people who created another sort of a tradition, or thing associated with trumpet players, his name was Ham Davis, same like Miles Davis, but no relation. Ham was a great big dude, and as you mentioned earlier, St. Louis was very well known for parades, and they had parades at the drop of a hat. They had a parade. Every other day or so there was a sort of parade. The Elks parade, the Shriners parade, the Orphans Home Day parade, whatever. Any day of the month, you'd have three or four parades – any period of the year, whatever part of the month. There was always some parades going on.

So Ham Davis was one who was always sought after, because he was the most dependable, he had the greatest embouchure, he had the most – greatest chops, and he – they would hire him, because Ham, you never had to worry about the lead. Ham would play all the lead parts an octave higher. In other words [Terry sings a melody], Ham would [Terry sings it an octave higher], way up there, you know. Sometimes two octaves above. And he marched gracefully through the potholes, into all sorts of potholes and **shit**, irregularities as far as marching was concerned. They didn't have a gridiron for you to march on. So he never missed a note. He was notorious for that. People used to watch and see a pothole. Oh, he's going to miss this. He'd just glide right through it, never missed a note.

So this is something that a couple of trumpet players tried to make reputations on. Reunald Jones, for instance, with the Basie band, used to sit there all night and play with one hand. Well Ham Davis did that before he was born, just about. And his son did the same thing, Reunald's son.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center


But that, plus there was a trumpet player by the name of Sleepy Tomlin, who was one of the first trumpet players that Jimmie Lunceford's band hired. He was a beautiful player, but he was in – he indulged in one of the things that was very prevalent around St. Louis at that time. All the older trumpet players for the most part would put the young trumpet players down. And he used to – he had the type of expression – it was like this, Bill. You didn't know whether he was laughing or grimacing. "Heh heh heh," he'd say. "Hi Bill, heh heh heh heh. How you doing?" [? ?] you are so [? ?] whatever, you know. And he used to always say to me. "Heh heh heh. You've got that fuzz on your tone. [? ?] all right." And this is something that would gall a young person, especially a kid who had no money to learn, to study. You get your comeuppance or your learning from the old-timers that you ask questions of, and you're at their mercy. And they tell a thing, that a young kid would come up and ask them, oh yeah, like personally. I asked an old dude one time, "How does one improve one's tone in the lower register, sir." He said, "Oh yeah, son." Said, "I'm glad you asked me that. You got a mirror at home?" "Yes sir." I'm naive, man. "You sit in front of that mirror. Make sure that your feet are flat on." He said, "Sit all the way back in that chair." He's saying some things I know are accurate, because I read a few books on how to sit flat and keep – "Keep your arms up, yep." "Yes sir." He said, "Now look into that mirror, and while you're blowing, make sure that you grit your teeth as hard as you can. Grit them, and wiggle your left ear. Not the right ear, but the left ear. Grit your teeth." That's impossible to do that, you know. But I'm so naive and I'm concerned about – I reached the point where I could do it. People say, "Did you see that kid wiggling his ears – left ear?" because I worked on. It was going to school. Whatever you work hard enough for, you can do it. So this is – then he'd go home, get on the phone, and say, "Got rid of another one of the young whipper-snappers today," and they would laugh about it, probably have a drink about it, because we were considered as a threat to their security and their livelihood, so . . .

Brower: You mentioned something in passing, that you had read some books. So I take it that independently of whatever training you were getting, you were pursuing whatever kind of literature you could find.

Terry: Absolutely.

Brower: Tell me about some of the things that you came upon.

Terry: The same thing I told you about the "to to to" and the buzzing of the embouchure. They would show pictures with – then some of the stuff was erroneous anyhow, because they used to have this thing on a ring. A lot of the teachers would – the kids who were studying would tell me, oh they put this . . . and they would tell me also, tie a string – tie the horn on a string and walk up to it like you're kissing a girl, and make a little – they called this non-pressure. There's no such thing as non-pressure. The minute you touch it, there's pressure, to whatever degree. And in order to buzz, there's

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



got to be more pressure, and you can't make a sound without a buzz. You can't just walk up to a horn and say [Terry exhales]. That's like a saxophone. You can't do that. You've got to [Terry buzzes], but if you just touch it [Terry buzzes in a looser fashion], there's pressure, right?

Brower: I'm wondering if there were particular texts or books that you acquired as you were growing at home.

Terry: No, because those things I found to be strictly geared for a legitimate type of playing, and I always felt like I never did want to get involved with that. As a matter of fact, there used to be – there was a fallacy that was spread around purposefully about caucasians. Don't learn to read. It's like everything else. They wanted to keep the blacks ignorant and subservient. So it got to be a part of the black community as far as trumpet playing is concerned. Don't read. A cat come to town, say, "Man, did you hear old Bill [?] play?" "Yeah, man. Does he read?" "Yeah, but not enough to hurt his playing." So that was the fallacy that we had to live down, and I began to become aware of that at an early age. Say, why is it that they don't want us to learn to read music. You can't – it's like softball. You can't get on – at the plate to hit – you can be the greatest home run hitter in the world, but if you can't put a glove on that ball somewhere, you ain't going to get to play unless you're a designated hitter.


So we had to learn all the things. We had to overcome all the fallacies about the things that they had told us not to do, just like they did with the black people in general. Keep them ignorant and keep them subservient.

Brower: Let's go back to some of the trumpet players in St. Louis that were in your environment, that were influencing you, showing the way, shaping your future.

Terry: There were a lot of us kids in school at the same time. Jules Shannon was one. He was the one who used to get all of the – he used to make me so sad. Every time they'd have a solo for somebody from the high school to play it, one of the big things, they'd get Jules Shannon, and I never was asked to do one of these things. So it kind of hurt me for years.

A few years back I saw Jules, and of course he never pursued trumpet playing as a career, and we talked about that. He said, "You're doing what I thought I would end up doing, and I'm doing what I suppose you thought you would end up doing": being just a local cat, staying in town.

But most of the guys that I paid a lot of attention to and listened to on records and on crystal sets and so forth and what not, were guys like the Erskine Hawkins band. What's his name. Dud Bas . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: Bascomb.

Terry: Bascomb, yeah. Dud Bascomb and Shorty Baker, Levi Madison. We had some good players.

Brower: I want to ask you about Shorty Baker. Did you know him in St. Louis?

Terry: Shorty was from St. Louis.

Brower: Yeah. Did you know him? Were you aware of him in St. Louis?

Terry: He was a much more highly respected professional player, because Shorty would be about – close to 10 years older than me. So naturally there was a big gap, particularly at that age, even if it was 8 years, like the distance between Miles and me. Miles credits me as being one of his influences, one of his motivators that inspired him, but there was only about 7 or 8 years difference in our ages. But I was – at 21, he's still a teenager. And I was 21. He's still a teenager, and he sort of respected me. I was already a professional, but his teacher, Buchanan, would always tell me, "Man, you got to come on to school. You got to hear this little Dewey Davis. This Dewey Davis, he's bad, man."


Brower: Now this was Elwood Buchanan?

Terry: That's right, yeah. Elwood and I were old beer-drinking buddies together. So finally he got me to come over. See, Miles is from East St. Louis. So I went over to East St. Louis, at Lincoln High School, and I went over there and heard this – and met this little skinny cat. He was about as big as this mike stand, skinny enough to ride a rooster, and if he marks – if he'd have stood sideways, they'd have marked him absent, he was so thin. And he was very shy. He couldn't look at you. He'd look down when he was talking to you. But his father was a very successful dentist in East St. Louis, Dr. Davis, and this put him a position where he didn't have to take any crap from anybody. So when he came on the scene and became a successful player and financially didn't have to worry about anything, he was kind of difficult to get along with, and you couldn't blame him because he – people – when he had that Ferrari, the cops would try to take it from him, make like he stole it or something, and they'd beat him and all that kind of crap, so you can't blame him for having been . . .

Brower: But that came out of his background.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: He came from money. He knew about money, and he didn't [? ?].

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History si.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: That's right, and this came out in his personality. He'd do it on stage. He might [Terry sniffs] blow his nose or scratch his privates or anything. He didn't give a damn about people, because people had been unkind to him, and possibly to his dad, who rose above the heap. He became a very successful dentist.

Brower: Levi Madison. Tell me about him.

Terry: Levi Madison was a cat that we all loved so much, because he was the guy that we all felt, and still feel like, had the greatest trumpet sound of anybody in the world. But he's a little bit poco loco, a little crazy. We used to sometimes check out lunches and go over to his apartment and stand outside. He's on the ground floor, and he would practice. But the funny part about it – it might be funny or sad – he would play about 10 minutes. Then he'd laugh about 20 minutes. He plays [Terry sings] with a big, beautiful vibrato, and then he would take his horn down and laugh [Terry laughs]. So we'd have to endure the laughter for 20 minutes 'til we get another 4 or 5 minutes of music [Terry sings]. He played so beautifully, with a big, fat sound.

All those cats in those days, because of – this was another aspect of what we mentioned in the beginning, about trumpet players. Joe Gustave was the first trumpet player of the St. Louis Symphony. He – all the people that he taught, he insisted on them using Heim – H-e-i-m – mouthpieces, which are very, very curlicue and wafer-thin, almost thin as a coin. They were bowl-shape and curved on the outside, a beautiful design, but they were hard to come by.


Miles used to love these mouthpieces. Duke used to play with them. Levi played with them. Shorty Baker played with them. A lot of cats played with them.

Brower: Duke, meaning Buchanan.

Terry: Buchanan, yeah, yeah. Every time – Miles always said to me, “Man, you find me some Heims.” Every time I'd find a couple of Heims, I'd take them to Miles. At those - at that time, I was hunting for Heims for him, and I used to – I figured out a way of fixing the valve springs so they would respond quicker and be very light. Most springs [?], loose springs were cumbersome and very difficult. Miles liked light springs, “brrrr,” so he could do that. I had a way of fixing them. He'd bring all of his horns to me, threw them together. “Hey, man, fix my valves. You got any Heims for me?”

Brower: How did you come about your technique for altering the valves to make them [? ?]?

Terry: I was always one who never had many toys to play with, so I liked to tinker with whatever it was that I had. I just tinkered a while with these things, and I figured it out. It must be just like I figured out circular breathing. I saw this old gentleman on a

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



carnival playing clarinet. He took a clarinet apart, holding a long note, all the way down to the reed, and he'd take off the ligature and turn the reed around, whistle on the reed, all this while dancing. So I figured out – I said, how could he do that? The only explanation I had heard before that was putting a straw in a glass of water, and as long as the bubbles would come, the air was continuous. But there had to be some other reason to make the air able to continue to come. So I just figured that out. And in the process of fooling around with the instrument, I figured out how to make the fingering a little easier. I also figured out a shorter shank on the back bore of the trumpet. Just fooled around. It made the response quicker, and the articulation was better. I had all the cats in St. Louis doing that.

Brower: Did – have trumpet makers or instrument makers taken any of your ideas . . .

Terry: Yeah, yeah.

Brower: . . . and modified those things?

Terry: Yeah. Giardinelli has a mouthpiece that sells today, called the C. T. model. Giardinelli – G-i-a-r-d-i-n-e-l-l-i. Of course he sold his business and his name to somebody. I don't even know if they're – if he's affiliated with them or not. I don't think he is, because he sold it all, just like Billy May in California sold his Lunceford-style band, all his repertoire, and his name to somebody. He can't even use his own name. Those cats get uptight, want some bread, they'll sell their mamas, I guess.

Brower: Tell me something about Elwood Buchanan.

Terry: You know what? The only thing I ever knew about Buch was that he and I were pretty good beer drinkers. He was a good trumpet teacher and a good – he had a heck of a reputation over in East St. Louis as a good educator.


Brower: What kind of beer did you drink?

Terry: In those days – you wouldn't believe this. I don't know whether we can even say this or not. I don't know. It's a weird beer. It was called – what the hell was it called? It was G-r-e-i-s-i-d-i-e-k. Greisidiek. Greisidiek.

Brower: It's a German beer?

Terry: German beer, yeah. Of course Budweiser was there. But people had other ways of expressing the name, which you can imagine.

Brower: We'll leave that alone.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



We talked about some of the – one of the reasons I asked about Buchanan was, in one of the texts on Miles [Davis], it indicates that he directed Miles to listen to Shorty Baker and Bobby Hackett, and it was felt that it was his influence that got Miles to approach the – to play without vibrato, with a pure tone.

Terry: I want to tell you how that came about. Miles used to – I don't know whether this is known – Miles used to love Harry James. Everything Miles played, he'd have a [Terry sings a melody with a broad vibrato] – he'd have a vibrato to it. Buch had a ruler with a piece of tape around it. He'd slap him [Terry slaps] and then say, "Stop shaking that note. You're going to shake enough when you get old." So he made Buch – between the use of that Heim mouthpiece and Buch slapping his knuckles about shaking them notes and playing like Harry James, I'm sure that this had something to do with that pure talent for straight sound that he developed. Buch just was against him using a vibrato. He wanted a straight tone.

Brower: The other name that creeps into – and this may be in the manner of correcting some things in the jazz literature that have crept into discussions of trumpet players from St. Louis – is the influence of Bix Beiderbecke. What's your thought on that?

Terry: I have mixed emotions about Bix. Naturally, he was a great, great cornet player, but as the history goes on, and the more I stay involved in the perpetuation of the craft of jazz and catch up and read up and read the [?] about jazz history and trumpet playing, people are – I have actually read some things where people say that Bix Beiderbecke influenced Louis Armstrong. This seems to be a general trend for history, and I know that's not true. I just feel that it's up to me to not allow fallacies of this sort to penetrate the world.

Brower: It's not a – I don't think in any by saying that, you're putting down Beiderbecke.


Terry: No, not at all.

Brower: The only objection is people misinterpreting . . .

Terry: The history of the parallel indulgence of the players in jazz, on that instrument, in a sense. Is that what you were about to say?

Brower: Yeah. I wanted to listen to your thoughts. I have my [? ?].

Terry: I loved what Beiderbecke played. Same as Hackett. I love Hackett. Hackett was – I knew very well, a very dear friend of mine, a beautiful player. As a matter of fact, the way I got into George Hudson's band in St. Louis was that Glenn Miller had a hit record called [Terry sings]. What's the name of that? [*A String of Pearls*]. And Hackett

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

had a solo on it [Terry sings the solo]. What's the name of that? [Terry sings the theme again.] Remember that?

Brower: Yeah, I know it.

Terry: *In the Mood?* Not *In the Mood*. I can't call the name of it. But anyhow, I knew Hackett very well. The way I got in that band, George Hudson went to – I went to a section rehearsal, and they played that tune. Of course this solo was on my part, and it was written. I had already learned it. They thought that I had sight-read it. But I had – I was a good reader, but I hadn't sight-read that. I played it like Hackett wanted it played, because that's the way he played it. That opened the door for me for George Hudson's band.

Brower: Let's talk about George Hudson for a second. Was he an influence?

Terry: Was he an influence? Not really. Not so – only in the sense that he liked my playing and he trusted me. I would always make – at that time I was with the band, I stylized the band, I rehearsed the band, I played all the lead trumpet, and I played all the solos. I was a pretty important part of the band, and he would give me the freedom to do that. As a matter of fact, we would suggest things. I would say, "Hey, George, when we get to letter C, those first three notes, let's shake them and then fall off of the third note and play the last note all the way up to 1." He said, "Let's see. Let's try it." We'd try it, and it would work. He'd say, "Yeah, I'm glad I thought of that." So we used to call George "I'm glad I thought of that."


George was a sort of a straight, lyrical player. He would play [Terry sings] with a nice little vibrato, but he was never a real jazz soloist of any sort.

Brower: What was your repertoire at that time?

Terry: We played a lot of stocks – popular tunes – and we had a lot of Stan Kenton music that he had given to George, and we had a lot of old Basie music that Basie had given to George. So it was a good band with a good repertoire.

Brower: That's an interesting, jumping from Basie to Stan Kenton. That's a pretty big leap.

Terry: Yeah, but we had that kind of an audience in the venues that we played. The Club Plantation was basically caucasian. Occasionally we'd play a dance for brothers, and of course we had the [?] repertoire. It was good – it was great for us, because we were exposed to every faction from here to here and all between, because the stock music had dealt with all of the current popular tunes of the day.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: Who were some of the personnel in the band when you were there?

Terry: In George Hudson's band? On trumpet, we had a guy named Paul Campbell. We had Ed[win] Batchman, who is the cat that I got my lessons by proxy from, because he studied with Gustave. He would come back – he was from a pretty well-to-do family. His father was a truant officer, Mr. Batchman – so he would come back. He said, "Man, you should see what old Gustave taught me today." I said, "What did he teach you?" Said, "He told me how to do [Terry sings a rapid tonguing exercise]" "Aw, man, he didn't teach you how to do . . ." "Did too," he said. "How'd he – how'd he show you?" So he showed me. "Aw, man, don't tell me. Do it again. You ain't doing it right." "Yes it is. Look at this." And so I get all my lessons by proxy from Ed.

So Ed was in the trumpet section. Paul Campbell. A trumpet player named Stoner, Cyrus Stoner, [Sr.], and occasionally Basil Stoner, who's now a preacher in St. Louis. The trombone section was Fernando [Hernandez], a Mexican trombone player who married the sister of the top chorus girl in St. Louis. I can't think of either one of them's name right now. But there was Fernando. There was John Orange, who called himself Bones, played lead. And there was Rasputin [Fred Block], who was one of the – he was also a dancer for the Block brothers. So, Rasputin, John Orange, and Fernando.

The saxophones were Benny – wait a minute. I'll start with another name. Guichard was one of the members. Alfred Guichard. William Rollins was the baritone player. Butch [Cliff] Batchman, who was Ed Batchman's brother, played just like Willie Smith – he was the lead player.

Brower: That means the first alto?

Terry: Yeah. He was the lead player. Kimbal Dial, whom we called "Cabbage," was the tenor player, and Willie Parker, "Weasel," was the other tenor player.


The rhythm section was "Monkey," Robert Parker, on piano, Singleton Palmer – "[?Caudry]," we called him – on bass. The drummer was "[?Sign]," Earl Martin. Jimmy Cowans was our vocalist, part-time, and Jimmy Britten was the other vocalist. We never had a girl. So that's the whole personnel.

Brower: How would you rank the band with the bands that you played with?

Terry: How would I rank them?

Brower: Yeah.

Terry: I tell you. It was one of the best bands I have ever played with. You know how the band got its reputation? We played the Club Plantation, and all the acts from Nat

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



“King” Cole to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, the Nicholas Brothers – all acts came to the Club Plantation, because it was a very, very popular place. They brought their music, and we would play their music better than anybody ever played it, because most people who play show music, they just fluff over it. You know, “Next. Get out of here.” But we would take the music home and have section rehearsals on the music and come back, and they would hear the music played like they’d never heard it played before. They would go on all over the country, “Man, you got to go out to St. Louis and have that George Hudson band play your music. You’ll never ever hear it played like that.” So that’s how the band got their reputation. It was a great band.

In the segment that follows, Brower’s comments and questions are only partially audible. A summary appears in brackets.

Brower: [A story in Miles Davis’s biography concerns an incident when Billy Eckstine’s group came to St. Louis and was to play at the white Club Plantation, where Hudson worked, and instead played at the black Club Riviera.]

Terry: It could possibly be. I never heard that before. I’m born and raised in St. Louis, but I never heard it. Not to say that it couldn’t be true, but . . . possibly it’s true.

Brower: [Were the gangsters in control of club life?]


Terry: That who was in charge of clubs?

Brower: Gangsters. Were they . . . ?

Terry: Oh yeah. The Scarpelli brothers and all those gangs across – the Purple Gang and so forth. Yeah, the gangsters were pretty much calling the shots there. There’s one story about Jo Jones. One of the people came out from Kansas City, because they needed a drummer to play the show in the Plantation. They went to Papa Jo Jones, and said, “We need a drummer in St. Louis. Go there tomorrow.” They gave a ticket to Jo and said, “Look, buddy, just don’t worry about it. Just be there.” So he came back the next day, and Jo was still in Kansas City. Jo, what he was trying to tell him before, was that his drums were in hock, and he couldn’t go. So they said, “Aren’t you supposed to be in St. Louis.” He said, “Yeah, but I . . .” Bap bap bap bap bap. They slapped him around, said, “Be there tomorrow or else.” And he was there.

Brower: [What were the kinds of places to play?]

Terry: The most sought-after gig at that time was a job on the boat, on the steamers, the Streckfus Steamers, which came up from New Orleans and worked out of St. Louis, back and forth. George Hudson and Eddie Randle and two or three other bands, St. Louis Crackerjacks and so forth – that’s the band that Levi Madison played with – that

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center


was the number – the job that everybody sought. Then the other – the nightclubs were the Club Plantation, which of course catered only to caucasians, and then there was the Riviera, which was a black club. Then there were dance halls, like the Castle Ballroom and the finance building, St. Louis Finance. Aside from that, everything else is just little gigs, little mediocre gigs which paid not a heck of a lot of money. There was a club called The Barrel, which Jimmy Forrest stayed in there a lot. I played in there. Then there was The Hawaiians, which was a local watering hole where everybody that came to town, they would always end up there, with sessions and so forth. Then there was an after-hours joint called Birdlong's [?Bert Long's], which in the wee hours of the morning everybody would pop into Birdlong's and hang and drink 'til daybreak. So it was a sort of a small sphere of things that were happening, venues where any kind of music was being played.

Brower: [What was your favorite place where musicians congregated?]

Terry: For after-hours, just for drinking, Birdlong's. Everybody went to Birdlong's. Then there was a place called The Elks, which was a long – must be a hundred flight of stairs up to the top. This is where Eddie Randle's band played. That's the band that Miles played with, and the band that Miles played in when I first heard him play professionally, the first time, after I went over – Duke took me over to his school – Buchanan – to meet Miles.

Shortly after that, Miles came down to Carbondale, Illinois, where I was playing with a band called Benny Reid. He had one leg. We used to call him Dot and Dash, tracking a dot. Benny – we were working in a little club down there. We played the outdoor function for the Illinois interscholastic competition, athletics. They brought their team and their Maypole dancers and their band, and Miles was in that band. Miles came up to me and said, "Can you show me" something about something. I said, "Get out of here. I don't want to talk about no trumpet." You see all these pretty little girls bouncing around. They're looking good. I want to look at these little girls. He said, "Okay." We've laughed about this many, many times. The next time I saw him, when I went up to this Elks Club where the musicians would hang out, and I heard this trumpet I had never heard before. I ran up the stairs, and I'm looking there at this little skinny cat sitting there playing. I said, "Man, that's good." He said, "Yeah, I'm the dude you fluffed off down in Carbondale." We often talk about that.

It was the place where Roy Eldridge and Benny Carter and everybody that's come to town, they always end up over there, either there or the Hawaiian. That was about it. There's a little local area called – I can't even think of it – in the neighborhood where I used to live. My sister used to tend bar in there. But it was another little joint where they used to go, and cats would hang out and blow. But there – it was kind of limited as far as places to play.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: [What was the situation with the union?]

Terry: The union was – they were more society than anything else. I stayed around there. I played scab gigs. I couldn't get in the union. They wouldn't give me a union gig. I couldn't get a union card. So I used to go down to Olive Street. They had three or four little joints down there where they paid less money, but if you didn't have a union card, and you had to work, you had to work somewhere.

Brower: [Do you recall the names?]

Terry: The names of them? I don't really remember any of the names of them. There's one place on Olive Street, right across from the Tune Town Ballroom – I remembered it up until right now. A lot of us used to play there. I remember one time we had a group working there which was Betty Roché, who sang with Duke [Ellington], Wendell Marshall, who played with Duke, Charlie Fox, and Jimmy Forrest, who played with Duke. We were all working in this little joint together. In fact I had a picture of that somewhere. Somebody absconded with it. What was the name of that place? Well, I can't remember them all.

Brower: Tell me something about Eddie Randle.

Terry: Eddie Randle was a . . .

Brower: Was he another trumpet player?

Terry: He was a trumpet player. He had a nice band. He had a band called the – Eddie Randle and his Blue Devils. Sykes Smith and Ernie Wilkins used to write for that band. That's where Ernie first started writing, was for Eddie Randle. Miles played in that band.


Eddie was also an undertaker. He and George were pretty close to the same age. George must have been about – they both passed away last year.

Brower: [question about Randle, inaudible]

Terry: I don't think it was as good a band. It was a smaller band, to begin with, a smaller band. But George had a reputation for having a real, genuine, big-time big band. Eddie Randle was a popular band around the area, smaller. They did a lot of – they had a lot of social clubs. So they did a lot of functions at various venues around town

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Like a social club. Like the Elks or the sisters of the Elks.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: [? ? . . . more like cabarets]

Terry: Yeah, that, and dances, just private dances, at the People's Finance Building or the Castle Ballroom, or sometimes they'd have a dance at the Riviera, a private – it was a big enough club.

Brower: [A question about the popularity of the floor shows]

Terry: Very, very popular. Very popular, at the Club Plantation. That was part of their thing, in this venue. As a matter of fact, they had a little guy who worked around St. Louis, Officer Wright was his name, and his nickname was Floor Show. He used to get all the calls for the shows. The Block Brothers – remember this trombone player I told you, Rasputin? His name was Fred Block. He was one of the Block Brothers that had a dance team. They had a very active role in entertainment around there.

The Club Plantation, they had a little piano player that pulled out a little spinet, out into the middle of the floor while – after the dancing and the shows were going on, just to keep the people entertained. They'd go from table to table, and he'd play and a lady by the name of Mary Calendar, who sang. Just the two of them. One of her things was to – she – they would put money on the corners of the table, and she would pick up the money strange-like, with a part of her anatomy. One particular day, somebody . . .

Brower: Not with her hands. Not with her feet.

Terry: Not with her feet. Not with her hands.

Brower: Something that could grab something that was a part of her anatomy.


Terry: Absolutely. Right. Somebody heated one of the dollars. She picked it up, and of course she went into conniptions, and they screamed. The gangsters wasted him. Take him out the back way and exited him through our entrance.

Brower: Which was through the back.

Terry: Through the back. Down a long flight of iron stairs. I'm sure he never walked again, after they got through with him.

Brower: Was [? ?] where there was black entertainment for whites only?

Terry: Black entertainment and white clientele, all the time, all the time, until Nat "King" Cole's brother had an act called the Three Loose Nuts. He worked there. He did an act where he put a toilet seat around his head and . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Not Freddie Cole?

Terry: No, not Freddie.

Brower: An older brother.

Terry: No, this is Eddie. Eddie Cole. There's Freddie, Eddie, and Nat, Nathaniel.

Brower: He did what now?

Terry: He put this toilet seat around his head. He put his head through the toilet seat. The lid would be in the back, and it had this long, operatic robe, like a – he would come up and sing [Terry imitates an opera singer], like opera. His opening line was to come out with this thing around his neck. He said, "Smells like somebody's been using this damn thing today." On one particular occasion, we put limburger cheese all over it.

Brower: Whose idea was that?

Terry: That was my idea. But Sweets had worse ideas than that, man, when we were at the Plantation. Sweets used to . . .

Brower: Sweets who?


Terry: Harry "Sweets" Edison, yeah. He worked up at the Plantation Club with Jeter-Pillars, which was the band that preceded us at the . . .

Brower: Did George Hudson come out of Jeter-Pillars?

Terry: George Hudson worked with Jeter Pillars's band at one time, yeah. James Jeter was a lead alto [saxophone] player, and Hayes Pillars was a tenor [saxophone] player. His brother Charles Pillars played baritone [saxophone]. That was a nice band they had too.

Brower: Tell me some of the things that Sweets did if they were [? ?]

Terry: Oh, man. Sweets would come to work early. We had – they had a number that they would put the felts inside the derby. [?] felt a little bit, but everybody has, as a part of their equipment, an old hat that had been chopped off the brim, cut off, and put holes in it. You hang it over the bell of your horn. It makes a rather mellifluous sound. To make it even more mellifluous, they put it inside the derby. You play [Terry sings] real soft. You could play with intensity and still soften it.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Then there was one tune we had, where we say, “oo oo doo dah loo WAH!,” pick up the derby and sling it. Sweets came to work early one time and used the derbies for refuse and then put the hats back. I needn’t tell you what a mess that made when they got to the WAH! Man, that was funny. Sweets used to do some strange things, weird things.

Brower: Did you play on the boats yourself?

Terry: I never played – Charlie Fox and I are the only two musicians our age who never played on a riverboat.

Brower: Did you know Fate Marable?


Terry: Um-hmm. I played with Fate. I played with Fate. Fate came to town. His name used to be Fate Marble – M-a-r-b-l-e, but he put another A behind the R, made himself Marable, but he was Fate Marble when he first came to St. Louis. His thing was that he never was able to settle down until he primed himself with a couple of slugs of whiskey. It used to be so strange. He lived close to a bar, but instead of having a jug by his bed to wake up, he’d get up and hurriedly, before he brushed his teeth, put on – sometimes in his pajamas, run around the bar and get a drink, and then he would start his day.

He – I worked with Fate in a little joint down in the area where the ballpark is now. This is before – years ago. In those years they had what they called Sportsman’s Park, where the Cardinals played. I was a member of the knothole gang. That was way along Grand Avenue. But they moved down by the river to – I don’t know what they call that thing. Sportsman’s Park, I guess. I don’t know. I don’t know what they call it now, but it’s the Cardinal’s ballpark down by the river.

This club that we worked in was down there. Fate had a habit of – he was a masochist-type cat [*sic*: sadistic]. He would start things in the wrong key, keys that he knew that you were going to mess up in, and he always carried a big ring of keys on a ring. If you messed up, he’d go and shake those keys. If you messed up too much, he’d throw the whole bunch of keys on your stand. In other words, pick the right key.

Brower: He had a similar thing, that I read about, when he would – when somebody was going to be put out of his band.

Terry: Oh yeah. He would have the band come early. He’d whisper to everybody, “Be here at 9 o’clock. Be here at 8 o’clock instead of 9.” So, the cat that he wanted to get rid of, he wouldn’t tell him. Nobody would tell him. Nobody would mention anything to anybody, because nobody knew who it was. So they’d all come to work an hour early. The boat is sitting there on the wharf, and all of a sudden, the cat whose turn it was, he comes casually to the boat, gets out of his car or out of a cab or whatever, and walks up on the gangplank. As soon as he hits the gangplank, the band starts playing, “They’ll be

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

a change in the weather. There's a change in . . ." *There'll be some changes made*. He hears that. "Wait a minute. What? That's the band!" So he, "Oh my God. I must have got the wrong time." So he runs up to the bandstand and hurriedly runs to his chair, only to discover that, in his chair, was a fire axe. All the way around the ship in those days, any public place, whatever the venue was, there would be axes every so many feet, in case of a fire and you are entrapped, you could take these axes and fight your way out of an entrapment. We always feel – I can't think of any other source for where it might have come from – we always figure that that's where the terminology came from, cat got the axe. He got the axe.

Brower: Even though you didn't play on the boat, this was such a part of the lore about him that was commonly known.

Terry: Yeah. Um-hmm. Absolutely.

Brower: What kind of a musician was he?


Terry: Fate was a good musician, good piano player. [?] New Orleans style [? ?].

Brower: [asks about Willie Austin]

Terry: Willie Austin. Willie Austin was a trombone player. He was a very eccentric cat. He had – you won't believe this, Bill – he had fingernails that were an inch long. Long fingernails. We called him Turk, because he was one of the first cats to wear long sideburns and a beard. He looked like he could have been a Turkish cat, so his nickname was Turk. His lady friend and his fiancé was a lady named Mary Johnson. She played pretty good piano, sort of like Mary Lou Williams.

When I first went on the road, I was in high school and I was about to graduate and they – this brings two stories I got to tell you. I got a little girl pregnant, so Fess Williams kicked me out of school. So I didn't get to graduate. Help me to remember to go back to that story. So, they kick me out of school. In the interim, I've garnered nine honorary doctorates. You'll see some of them around there in the room. About two or three years ago, a gentleman came through for one of my concerts in St. Louis and said that "I'm Dr. John" – I forget his last name. He said, "We did some research, and we noticed that the class of 1938, you were supposed to have graduated. You didn't. You had to leave school. We discovered that you, had you graduated, would have been salutatorian of your class, so inasmuch as you didn't get your diploma and you won – you've garnered all these honorary doctorates, we thought we'd make this official and hook up the two. We're going to give you a high school diploma." So I graduated from high school when I was 75 years old.

Brower: It's not the [? ?].

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Probably.

I interrupted that story.

Brower: We were talking about the Will Austin band.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: You were talking about his piano player.

Terry: Oh yeah, Mary Johnson.


When I got kicked out of school, my brother-in-law got me hooked up with Willie Austin, to go on the road. We had made a connection to work with Ida Cox, the old blues singer, with a show called Ida Cox and her Darktown Scandals. We would travel all down through the South, over the hills of West Virginia. She had a ragged bus that we used to put [?] sacks around our feet and chink up the windows with newspaper. No air conditioning, no heat, no nothing, no comfort at all. Every time we'd get to one of them hills, we'd all have to, "All right. Everybody out." We'd get out and push. We had a little midget on the show, named Prince Spencer. Prince was so tiny, [? ?] said, "Hey you! What's the matter with you?" "Miss Cox, I'm so little." "Come around here. We got a little bitty place for you to push." She made him get out.

Brower: What is it that he was doing in the show?

Terry: He was a dancer and a singer. We had a peg-legged cat that danced and sang

Brower: Were these what you would call medicine shows, carnivals?

Terry: It was at the same time as the medicine shows were happening, but we were on a carnival. Ida Cox was just a road show, but after Ida Cox, we went on a carnival which was known as Reuben and Cherry, the one that I was on. That's where Willie and Mary had the band. Willie had the band, Mary played the piano, and I was one of the trumpets, along with a little cat named Shorty Mack. I'd never heard of him before or ever heard of him after. We went through this whole scene, and at the end – this is – when the carnivals went into winter quarters, they all went south. So we went south with Reuben and Cherry. Of course they're home and they're living off the fat of the land with the money that they had made on the tour. But here we are with nothing. So Willie Austin took a job with what we called a gilly show, a truck show. This cat had a monkey show and a ride, a box ride, this illusionment where you go this way and the ride goes At the end of that tour, we're stranded in Meridian, Mississippi, and we had to get back to St. Louis. So Willie Austin, Mary Johnson – Willie had coerced this

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

guy into taking us back. So Willie and Mary rode up in the cab with the driver, and Jimmy Hitson, who was a dancer, Lucy London, who was the girl dancer, his girlfriend, Shorty Mack, the trumpet player, and me – the four of us rode in the back of the truck with seven monkeys. After the end of that 750-mile trip, we all knew each other by first names.

Brower: You and the monkeys.

Terry: Me and the rest of – the three of those people, and the monkeys, a truckload of monkeys.

Brower: Do you have – was it 6 months, 9 months, or 3 months that you were involved in the carnivals?

Terry: No, it's the season. The season [? ?] like it was the whole year around, just about.

Brower: Did you do it for a couple of years?

Terry: Sometimes two. I did – I stayed on the carnival circuit for two or three years.


Brower: How does that – did anything of your experiences in the carnival circuit transfer into your career in jazz?

Terry: Yeah, I think one thing: consistency, being accustomed to hard work and not – I see some cats that play – can't play an hour. They start grumbling and griping and can't make it through, but this is the type of thing that carnies – we used to call them carnies – carnies were accustomed to it, working hard every day with a carnie. [?] was a carnie. He was accustomed. You go out on the bally, on the front stand. You play your bally. Draw a crowd of people, "da dat dah da da da da," and the dancers do a few steps. The people come along. "Now we're going to start the show." We'd go in. Behind the bally stand was a place we'd go hide. They'd usher the people on in and get them in there. If there wasn't enough people, we'd go back out, "da dat dah da da da da." The barker would sell more tickets and get more people in there 'til we got a full tent. Then we'd go and do a show.

We took turns to go to eat. We had a little pup tent out in the back. We had our own chef.

Brower: [question about minstrelsy and minstrels]

Terry: No, no. This had nothing to do – minstrels were like Silas Green from New Orleans, all those things. This was strictly carnival. Carnival was . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Like rides and games?

Terry: Rides, yeah. Games. Right. Trinkets and gadgets, yeah.

Brower: How did that differ from a medicine show?

Terry: A medicine show was just a little truck show that went from one area to the other. The cat selling something that you could drink or something that you could put in. . .

Brower: A tonic [? ?].

Terry: Yeah, a tonic.

Brower: So that the medicine show experience is like the one that [? ?] the monkeys. That was more like a medicine show.

Terry: No, that was a small – it was sort of like a medicine show, but it was a gilly show, we called it. A small truck carnival, where they – see, our show was a [?] show. This was a truck show. They had – it was a smaller thing. It was operated in – they operated in smaller towns and a smaller number of things on the carnival, fewer rides and fewer things, but they – for the most part they had what they referred to in those days as a jig show, which they were derogatorily referring to us in.

Our shows would always – on the big shows, the back – the end of the midway – the midway – the carnival was set up, you walk in, go along this avenue and then around the end and you come back out the other avenue. That was the routine. In between were all sorts of shops and games and things to try out. On the outside was the same thing, all the way down, around. Our show was always the last one in the back.


Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Not – we were doing the same type of show that you would see in a lot of clubs today: the comedian, the shake dancer, the chorus girls, the production numbers, and the band played. An emcee and all that. The same . . .

Brower: It was sort of like a floor show [? ?].

Terry: Yeah, exactly, same thing.

Brower: [inaudible]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: I think so. I think so, because if you didn't have a way of associating something humorous with what you were doing every day, in spite of all of the derogatory things that would happen to you, the negative things, the pitfalls and stumbling stones, you'd go crazy. So we used to go about doing things to make life easier and make it lighter. For instance, even as far up as when we were with big bands, like Basie and Ellington, we used to play a game. We'd see a cat in Sheboygan and then we – by this time, we were playing Pocatello, Idaho – we'd see a cat that looks like him, or we're in New Orleans, say "Who is that? Who is that?" And everybody's saying, "Pocatello, Idaho." We used to do like that.

Then, a thing that I developed personally to chase the monotony, was I learned how to play left-handed. Instead of playing everything the regular way, I'd practice left-handed. I'd practice upside down and all sorts of things to break the monotony, just to get involved in something lighter and keep a bit of humor going. I kept a – a bit of humor will carry through a whole lot of hardships.

Brower: You mentioned that early on you got the idea [? ?] by watching clarinet players [? ?].

Terry: That's right.

Brower: There were – I know that early on – or at least I read that early on that some of these shows – be they carnivals, tent shows, some kind of minstrel show – that oftentimes instruments were used to imitate animal sounds . . .

Terry: That's true.

Brower: . . . to do all kinds of things that we think of as being not music


Terry: Exactly. Exactly.

Brower: I'm wondering if some of those techniques – instrumental techniques . . .

Terry: Still prevail?

Brower: . . . worked themselves into the repertoire of jazz?

Terry: They prevail today, right today. For instance, in New Orleans, when most of the pawn shops were loaded with instruments that had been ostracized by the classical players, so to speak, the legitimate players, the guys came by [? ?] their shiny cornets, trombones, and clarinets. For some strange reason the brass players, without some enlightened way of showing them how to use the area that is referred to as the embouchure and the proper ways of forming it, they'd play all sorts – they put the horn

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center


over their head, their ears, any way they can get it, and as a result created a lot of very bad tones. Someone along the way had the ingenuity to figure out that their sound was not going to be accepted by sitting next to a guy who's playing legitimately, playing with a good sound. In order to compensate for that, to make their sound more acceptable, they learned to hum while producing the sound. In other words, they'd make the note. They'd buzz [Terry buzzes] and simultaneously they would hum [Terry hums in a grunting manner]. Put them together and you get [Terry demonstrates] – you get what we refer to as a buzz, which is very widely used today on all instruments. Roy Eldridge was notorious for the buzz. Ben Webster. Vic Dickenson on trombone. Ben on saxophone. Roy on trumpet. On all the instruments, people could buzz with their [? ?] and produce the sound on their instruments and the regular embouchure. This is very widely used today. It's still carried over from those ignorant days, when they didn't know any better, but they made good out of what they did know. It's a very integral part in the interpretation of the jazz language today.

Brower: [partially inaudible question about relationship between comedy, comedy teams, timing, and how to grasp an audience]

Terry: It had to do with your delivery, when and where to do your most important things in your act, when to hold back, and how to disperse them evenly so that you wouldn't do everything you did right now and be standing out there looking stupid. It taught you a way of spreading out your talents, which of course brought more appreciation for the people you were performing for and to you, because you could sustain it. A lot of things we learned from comedy: timing, as far as when not to do things - it's not a good time – when not to play certain tunes for certain audiences. Then there's certain audiences that are geared for lighter things. They want some fun. So you play these things, and you're in. But if you – for instance, take *Mumbles*, the tune that I've been associated with. I know when to and when not to do *Mumbles*. If I do that in one of those hoity-toity atmospheres, somebody might say, "What in the world is he doing, George? What is he saying?" But in the right crowd, it's just fun.

Brower: How'd you come up with it?

Terry: I came up with *Mumbles* through the medium of my home town, St. Louis. Every place like – first, the name of the place I couldn't think of earlier, where I told you my sister worked at, was the Lincoln Inn. They had a piano player in there. There were several places in town like that, where they'd hire a piano player, and he plays on a triply laminated piano, which was triply-laminated to withstand the weight of several steins of beer, which was part of the piano player's salary. If you bought him a jug of beer – and beer was a nickel a dipper in those days – if you bought him a beer, he had to play for you and sing. Most of the times, whatever it was the person wanted to sing about, he starts singing, it was highly unintelligible and unimportant anyhow, but it would create an atmosphere where the people would start finger-popping, as Ellington

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

would say, “Hello children,” and foot-patting. The sawdust in most of the joints on the floor was jumping off the floor two or three inches. This created a system of fun and frivolity and merriment that superceded whatever was being sung about. So that’s how *Mumbles* was done. I, on a date that we did with Oscar Peterson’s trio, we had finished the music, and I decided I wanted to do this, just play alone and check the reactions of the people. I started doing it, and Oscar – I asked Oscar and Ray Brown and Thigpen if they’d do it. They said sure. So they put me in a booth, the singer’s booth, and I said – I looked at Oscar, laying on the floor, cracking up. He said, “Hold it. Hold it. We got to put this in the album.” I said, “Man, that ain’t got nothing to do with your [?]” “Yeah, that’s going in the music – in the album.” I said, “I got a slow version I want to do too.” He said, “We’ll put that in there too.” So that’s how *Mumbles* and – what is the other one? I can’t think of the slow version, the name of the slow version, but it was the same thing.


Brower: So this, in a way this was sort of a thing you were goofing with.

Terry: Yeah, sure, yeah. I [?] cats kidding me all the time. I say, “Man, you practice all your life. Nothing happens. You just do something stupid and doors open for you.

Brower: Are there any particular comedy teams that you really liked? Do you remember?

Terry: Oh yeah. If there’s something that seems to be synonymous with jazz, it’s good comedy. Steppin’ Fetchit, way back as far as he was. The lazy guy. Then there’s Mantan Moreland and his partner, what he used to do – the act about, “I’m going to have you over for dinner.” He says, “What do you cook?” “I’m going to cook.” “I don’t eat that. Why don’t you have?” “I don’t know how to cook that.” They would go back and forth. Meanwhile they’re discussing – leaning on a Model T Ford and each tire blows out individually. At the end, the whole thing caves in, and the one says, “That’s how come I like to talk to you, because we understand one another.” Neither one of them said anything that made any sense.

Then there was Buck and Bubbles, which was really a funny act. Don Bubbles was one of the best dancers in the world, and Buck was – played a little piano. He’s the guy that, in their act, he would play [Terry sings *I Got Rhythm*]. They used to play that up at the Rhythm Club a lot. A guy would come in. Everyone said, “Hey, play a little song for me.” Set up a drink. This guy was Gershwin. He wrote *I Got Rhythm*, which was this little piano player’s tune that he played for Bubbles to dance to. He’s still making money on *I Got Rhythm*. Buck created that. [Terry sings *I Got Rhythm*.] He’d go, “I got rhythm. You got rhythm,” on which, of course, there’s a hundred at least different tunes written to the chord changes, “Rhythm changes.” You can’t copyright a B-flat chord. It belongs to the world. I can’t go around and say, “Hmmm. That’s my note. I’m going to sue you.”

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1400  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: That's what Gershwin did.

Terry: Yeah. He just took it. A more clever word for stealing, I guess. He borrowed it and didn't return it.

Brower: [inaudible]


Terry: Many years ago on Congo Square, which is now where the Louis Armstrong statue is – it's the first place I heard Wynton Marsalis play the Brandenburg Concerto with the New Orleans Symphony. That used to be the area where the cats sat around, chewed the fat, had sessions, and created different tunes that became standard repertoire for dixieland people. They used to – I understand they used to have coconut trees. The guys would drink their refreshments, lemonade or beer or whatever it was, out of the coconut shell, so that it would stay cooler. One day somebody went in the house and – somebody's house – and went to the bathroom, discovered that the toilet plunger was interesting looking. He said that, "Hey, that's about the size of my coconut." So he brought it out. He washed it off, of course, and brought it out to the gathering. Said, "Look what I got." He started, "wa wa wa," squeezing it and making notes with it, and it worked.

In conjunction with that – of course everybody went and got a toilet plunger. There have been some things that have been discovered about the use of it since then. We, as trumpet players, we discovered once you take out the plug in the middle, the intonation is perfect. Trombone players like to cut off the little back part of the stem going in, because it's easier for them to hold it. They have to hold the bell while they're manipulating. So there have been some theories one way or the other of how to do it.

But in conjunction with the manipulations of the plunger, we've found that all sorts of things that people who didn't have the greatest sounds in the world, created, go well – go hand in hand with the plunger. For instance, there's a legitimate portion of playing called flutter tongue, "rrrrrrr." We found that the manipulation of the plunger with a flutter tongue, "rrrrrrr" – this is one of the things you might remember from the Ellington band, *Caravan*. [Terry flutter tongues the melody of *Caravan*.] That's with the tip of the tongue, "rrrrrrr."

Then there's an area but what is just pure, like Bubber Miley and the other trumpet from the Ellington band, just used plungers just to spell out tones and make beautiful ballads [Terry sings a wa-wa melody], almost speaking-like.

Then there was another one that they used the guttural sound – not the guttural sound, but "grrrrrr," like the dog, "grrrrrr" [Terry growls a melody]. It's coupled with the manipulation of the plunger became another thing.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Then there's the buzz that we talked about earlier, where they use it to solidify the sound, make it more acceptable rather. So there's [Terry vocalizes the different effects]. They've got these three areas, and they manipulate that with the plunger.

We also found that, after a while, everybody who picked up the plunger, they would always want to say, "qua qua qua qua," But we learned – me and a couple of other people who promote manipulations of the plunger use – we use the old English lesson, "how now brown cow," that bringing the plunger backwards, toward the bell of the horn, creates a more effective use that "quat quak," going away. So they write it now with pluses and "o"s. Plus means here. "O" means open. A plus and an "o" means "qua." So they've sort of legitimately used all of these approaches and make then look like they belong in the Italian dictionary, but they come from the old timers.

Brower: You've implied that there's a particular use – you use them in a particular humorous way. I want you to talk about that.

Terry: We do it in a way that sometimes actually sounds like a voice, and we use it sometimes – we'll say – for instance, I'll use a little thing. I'll say, "I left my horn in Bill's car the other night. When I got ready to play them, and there was nothing that would come out but profanity." You could figure out ways and means of saying all sorts of ugly or profane, but you say, "It can't be profanity, because horns can't talk. It's just your imagination."

Brower: Give me an example.

Terry: I'll do a nice word.


Brower: A nice one.

Terry: I'll say – just say "black." You could say "black" [Terry vocalizes], and it sounds like you're saying – you start the plunger with the plus and then get [Terry vocalizes] and then you actually on [? ?] [Terry vocalizes]. Then "Maryland farmer" would follow [Terry vocalizes].

Brower: Oh, Maryland farmer. [? ?]. Really I'm from Ohio. You got [? ?].

Let's [?] the notion of laughing and talking through the instrument. How do you relate that to your approach to scat singing? It's sort of like a – sort of a seamless continuum.

Terry: Yeah, it's a sequel. As a matter of fact, Louis Armstrong told me one time – I went to see – Dizzy and I used to live close to Pops, in Corona [New York]. There was a whole bunch of us lived in the same area: Dizzy, me, Charlie Shavers, Jimmy

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Rushing, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Helen Humes, 'Bama. There was at least 15 . . .

Brower: Who was 'Bama?

Terry: Carl . . .

Brower: Warwick?

Terry: Yeah, that's Warwick, yeah. We all lived within a radius of a mile and a half or two from each other. Pops lived on 107th Street. His house was a shrine house, beautiful. He bought the lot next to it and made a park adjacent to his place. He never had a chance to really use it, because he was so, "[? ?] get me some joints. Go over there and get high and enjoy it." Yeah, but he never did really get to use it.

Diz and I would call each other up, say, "Let's go over and bug Pops." "Okay." We'd meet on the corner and go walk down. I lived on Northern Boulevard and 111th Street. Diz lived on Northern Boulevard and 106th Street. Pops was 107th Street. So we'd meet on Northern Boulevard, 107th, go over, ring the bell. Pops, "Who is it?" Lu goes to the door. "Pops, it looks like Clark and Dizzy." "Let them in. Let them in. My man." We'd come in. "Sit down. Let me tell you about the history of jazz." He was the history of jazz.

One of the last . . .


Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Huh?

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Oh yeah. He was the history of jazz. If you ever listened to him talk. We sat one time, just listening to him talk, in Seattle, Washington, after he got through with a gig at about midnight. It was 8 o'clock in the morning before we left there. We were all just sitting on the floor with our mouths wide open. He could tell – he could say so many things about jazz, man. It was just unbelievable.

He said to me – this one day I went by myself to – knowing that I was a good friend of his – to Quinnipiac College, a college in Connecticut. We were doing – wanted to do a festival in his honor that year, and Howard University wanted to bestow an honorary doctorate on him the same year. So I'm on a double mission. I rang the bell. "Who's there? My man, come on in." I said, "Pops, aside from coming to get my battery charged" – that's what Birks and I used to tell him, we'd come to get our batteries

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

charged – I said, “Aside from coming to get my battery charged, I’m here on a mission. Quinnipiac College wants to do a festival in your honor, and Howard University wants to bestow an honorary doctorate upon you.” He said, “The hell with them. Where were they 40 years ago when I needed them?” I got a big kick out of that.

Brower: Was it Harvard or Howard?

Terry: Howard.

Brower: Howard.

Terry: Howard, down in Washington, D.C., yeah. He said to me, he says, “You know, dad.” He says, “You’re my man. I’ve been following you a long time.” He said, “I got to tell you one thing.” I said, “What’s that, Pops?” It’s like that B. F. Hutton, when B. F. Hutton stops everybody’s speech. Everybody stops. I say, “What’s that, Pops?” He said, “You got to sing more.” I said, “Yeah?” He said, “Oh yeah.” He said, “I like your trumpet playing. People like your trumpet playing,” he said, “but people also like singing, and besides, it’s good for your chops.” In other words, you get a chance to let the blood come back and rest and diversify.


Brower: [? ?] because you really have all those three components in your performance. There’s the straight playing. There’s the singing. There’s the humor. It’s almost like – if somebody’s watching you sometimes, it’s almost like seeing somebody do stand-up. The reason I was [?] about [?] is that is such a strong part of your whole presentation, that I wondered if – where that came from. Did it come from Louis Armstrong as a model for [? ?]?

Terry: I think so. I think so. I think it all comes from Pops – Louis Armstrong – as a model. When you really love that man, get to know him, you’ll get to love him, and you love him and you watch him and you observe more and learn more from that man than – I think Bing Crosby and all of them learned a lot from Louis Armstrong. He was just a wonderful man, just a master with this [? ?] who revolutionized the whole scene of entertainment.

Brower: [inquires about held notes and starting a set]

Terry: Oh yeah, circular breathing. That’s the thing I was mentioning to you before, where you take the inhalation of air through the mouth and circle it down there [Terry demonstrates, buzzing continuously]. You could go through 32 measures. Sometimes we start a tune out, just hit a note . . .

Brower: Bill Crow talks about that. [inaudible]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Oh yeah. I'll hit a note and the guys – people will think that – “Oh, what's he doing.” [? ?] concert, rushing back. They just casually come back to the bandstand. I'm holding a note. The bass player comes up. The drummer – he'll take his seat, and he's fixing his cymbals. Brookmeyer would come up and finger his horn a little bit. The piano player will come and sit down, and all the while, they know that I can hold this note. Then when I see that they're all settled [Terry sings the start of a melody]. It makes a nice little humorous presentation [?]. I've found that just from watching Pops and listening to Pops and observing what he did, all these things make for better entertainment and for better listening too.

Brower: You had another intermission [?] which sort of strikes me as being maybe the equivalent of walking the bar with a saxophone or playing the piano backwards or playing the piano with the foot or this notion of playing two instruments simultaneously, or instruments upside down.

Terry: Right. All of this came about as a medium of maintaining your sanity. It gets a bit rough out there, year after year, playing the same music over and over, getting the music out and so forth.

Brower: So some of this is for your own – to keep your own interest.

Terry: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah. Then also, I'll never forget one time – Duke had a tendency to – whenever somebody would do something a little bit mischievous or come a little bit late, he would chastise him musically. One Sunday afternoon in the Blue Note in Chicago, I had been to a brunch. I had a couple of cocktails or something, and lunch, so I was a little bit late. The band was just starting when I walked in. I walked on the bandstand and Duke started playing. *Perdido* was the only thing I had played with the band that we used to play [Terry sings the melody]. This particular day, he said, “Now I'd like to present to you . . .” and when somebody was tardy, he wouldn't refer to him as tardy. He'd call him “the late,” “the late Clark Terry.” I said, “Okay.” So he kicked off *Perdido* like this [Terry taps out an extremely fast tempo] and I went down and played it left-handed. And it got – the audience just went crazy, and Duke was so mad.

Brower: The idea was to trip you up.

Terry: Yeah, but I saved it for a time like that. I knew that this was going to happen.

Brower: So you knew you could do this.

Terry: Yeah, I knew it.

Brower: You had it to perfected.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1413 or archives@si.edu Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: I had it to perfected, but I didn't swing it until I knew the right time.

Brower: Timing.

Terry: Timing, yeah.

Brower: It's all in the timing.

[question about Great Lakes Naval Training Station]

Terry: There was a recruiting officer that came to – that went to the major cities. The one that came through St. Louis for some strange reason got a hold to Len Bowden, and Len would give him the chore of soliciting interesting people who might want to go into the Navy, because at this point – up until this point, anybody you saw black in the United States Navy had a little “C” on his insignia, which means chef, cook, or bottle washer. There was no such thing as a black person rated in the Navy. Now they're opening up the Navy for ratings: yeoman, clergyman, boatswain, musician. When we went in, we were promised a third-class petty officer, which meant a stripe up here with a lyre on it, and a lyre down here on your sleeve.


With this in mind, Bowden talked to a lot of us about joining the Navy. At that – just at the same time, the Army was categorizing everybody, A, 4F, 2B, 2-1, or whatever. Each one of them meant that your turn was coming up soon, unless you were at 4F and you'd be left there. My turn was coming up soon. I said I really don't want to go to the Army. So I took him up on the volunteer – volunteered to go in the Navy, as did Ernie Wilkins, as did Ernie's brother, Jimmy Wilkins, Russell Boone.

Brower: The trombone player?

Terry: No, Boone was – he ended being the – what we call the drum major, but he played tuba. Kimball Dial – Kimball – David Kimball was a bass player that played tuba. I'm trying to think of all the people who came out of St. Louis. Russell Boone, Jimmy Wilkins, Ernie Wilkins, Paul Campbell – [?] Paul Campbell, Roy [?], a trombone player. There were about 22 of us. We all went up to Great Lakes. Since Len Bowden was the first guy that this recruiting officer had spoken to, he was the first one to compile a complete list of personnel that could form a band.

We went to Great Lakes Naval Training Station and became the ship's company band. Our duty from that point on was to all the other recruits who came in, form bands and train them and send them out to various naval bases around the USA.

Brower: So you were basically [?] the black naval [?].

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Right, absolutely, exactly. It was really a fun thing, because in those days we slept in hammocks, not in bunks. All through the night you could hear “boom,” “bap,” “bam,” cats falling out of their hammocks all night long.

Brower: Tell me about Camp Small.

Terry: Camp Robert Small was the only camp in all of Great Lakes that was geared to – that was dedicated to black sailors. After a while they opened up Moffett and Lawrence and a couple of others, but from the beginning, Barracks 1812, Camp Robert Small, that was the band barracks, and all the other troops that came in were right there at Camp Robert Small. We were relegated to that particular area. One time we had a little dude that ran the vocal department, named Hathcock – H-a-t-h-c-o-ck – Hathcock. Hathcock – the President – I think the President at this time was Roosevelt. I think it might have been Roosevelt. Anyhow, Roosevelt came to visit the camp, and this dude made all the troops in 1812 put on their work – dungarees and work shirts and bandanas on their heads, and give everybody a rake. We all had to stand around the gate and sing, “ah-oooo, ah-oooo,” like the plantation people. Aw man, that was such a drag.

Brower: Who was Lieutenant [?].

Terry: That was – I was just about to tell you. He was another drag. He was a lieutenant on the main side, and he was going to make himself a big man, because he was a world-famous banjo player. So, he figured he’s got the brothers up there at Camp 1812, he’s going to recapitulate the – what do you call that? Plantation singing, yeah. Minstrel. So he was going to have us all with big bow ties and gloves – white gloves and [?] and all that crap, but we reneged on that. They almost got us for – what do you call it?

Brower: For mutiny?


Terry: Yeah, for mutiny. They sure did.

Brower: Tell me some of the other musicians that were there.

Terry: At Great Lakes?

Brower: And who do you think – how important was Great Lakes in terms of producing or helping to produce [? ?]?

Terry: I think it was very, very important, because there were some of the musicians who were totally unheard of before. Nobody ever knew them in the capacity of a public or an organization – government thing, that you could get that many black people

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



together and do something productive. We had a radio broadcast every week. We had a marching band. We used to go to Chicago and do all things, initiate parades [? ?], like the [? ?] Parade and all that, all of – the Harlem – I mean Uptown – or the South Side of Chicago. We did all the big dignitary things in the hotels downtown. So I think it was a great thing for people who never realize that we had people of talent that could get together and do things on a major basis like we were doing in – at Great Lakes. Len Bowden was lucky enough to be on the head of that.

Brower: I understand that Willie Smith was there.

Terry: Willie Smith was the lead alto player. We got him out of boot camp and brought him over there. When we got him over there and they found out who they had – they didn't know what – he was just another dude that was in the Navy. When we got him over there, they found out he played with Jimmie Lunceford, Harry James, Charlie Spivak, [? ?]. They offered him a degree, an officer's degree, with a jacket and a cap, an ensign, offered him a degree. Willie told them, he said, "No, I'm going to stay over here with my brothers." He was fair enough to be more caucasian than anybody up there.

Brower: If he had chosen.

Terry: If he had chosen to go, there'd have been no problem. But he was – he looked like a real caucasian. He was. You could see, but he knew there was a drop in there that made him one of us, and he said he honored it.

Brower: What other musicians [? ?]?

Terry: Ross McConnell, from Benny Carter's band. There was Hobart Dodson. There was . . .

Brower: [inaudible]


Terry: Yeah. There was Gerald Wilson. There was Paul Campbell, who used to play with Lester Young. There were so many cats in there . . .

Brower: [question about Al Grey]

Terry: Al Grey was there. Also Louis – Louie – Lou Donaldson, the saxophone player. Lou Donaldson was there.

Brower: Osie Johnson?

Terry: Osie Johnson, yeah, absolutely. Man, those cats are all over the place.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian si.edu
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Who were the Batchman brothers?

Terry: Batchman, Ed Batchman. He's the guy, the trumpet player I told you I got my lessons by proxy from, a trumpet player.

Brower: Oh, from St. Louis.

Terry: In St. Louis. Those two were in that recruited bunch too, Ed Batchman, and Cliff Batchman was the alto player that played like Willie Smith. As a matter of fact, in that band at Great Lakes, he and Willie Smith sat side by side. He – the band there at Great Lakes was he, Willie Smith, and Charles Pillars, who was Hayes Pillars brother, the Jeter-Pillars band, Charles Pillars. Pee Wee Claybrook was the other tenor player.

Brower: He's out on the West Coast.

Terry: Yeah. He passed away about a year ago.

Brower: You did a recording with him.

Terry: Yeah, we did. He was in that band too. That was a great saxophone section.

Brower: What was the rhythm section?

Terry: The rhythm section was Woody White on drums. He was a tailor. He ended up being one of the cats that runs Johnson Publications. What's his name? Johnson, that runs *Ebony*, *Jet*, and all that. Woody White ended up being his tailor. He was a beautiful tailor. The pianist was another from St. Louis, named Julius Wright. Julius Wright. He played around St. Louis with all the bands. The drummer was Woody White, Julius Wright, and the bass player was David Kimball that I mentioned some time ago. These – all these people were also in that recruited – first recruited band.

Brower: So then that band was the band that trained all of the different bands that [? ?]

Terry: Right.

Brower: So you were basically the residents . . .

Terry: Right.

Brower: . . . and others would come through.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Right. They referred to us as ship's company band. The whole base was referred to as the ship. We had to refer to the walls as bulkheads and the floors as decks and [? ?].

Brower: What was a typical day for you?

Terry: A typical day was to get up in the morning, raise the flag, and, at one point, just jam all day long. We had section people coming in from everywhere, and until they got things organized, had more people coming in and forming more bands, then we had to work with teaching people the routines, how to lash the hammocks, how to sleep in the hammocks.

Brower: Were you able to get into Chicago?

Terry: Every weekend. Every weekend. We would either go to Chicago or Milwaukee. That's when the people in Chicago, they just gave the town – they just gave themselves to us. They see sailors coming in with musical – with ratings and lyres. Every sailor that came into town, people would – they would invite us to their home. We had a U.S.O. sailor's [?] on 39th and Wabash, the same place we told you Joe Louis used to train when he first got started, but they had beds all over the place. The place was a lot of beds with a shower. We could wash and we could go and spend the night, come in anytime, go out anytime, but there were so many people who were so beautiful to us servicemen that we hardly ever had to go to the U.S.O.

Brower: [inaudible] Who do you remember [? ?]

Terry: I remember Bennie Green, the trombone player. Bennie was in the Army, stationed close by, and I was in the Navy of course. We used to meet. We used to hit the sauce pretty good. The people say, "Uh oh. Here come that drunken sailor and drunken soldier." But they would always open the doors for us.

But during the time we were – almost all of the good musicians in Chicago were in the service – Sax Mallard and Tony Frambeau, all them kind of people, Ross McConnell. They were all in the service. Most of them were in the Navy. They came in at different times, and a lot of them were in the Army.

Brower: [question about what people were listening to]

Terry: They were – jazz was very . . .

Brower: Were they swing-oriented? Bebop oriented?

Terry: They were swing-oriented, because bebop at that time was kind of young. But they had – for instance, the Club DeLisa. They had a band there by the name of Red Saunders. A few musicians that were left out, like Nick – I can't think of Nick's last – a trumpet player [Cooper]. Excellent trumpet player. He worked in that band. Sonny Cohn worked in that band. Washington – Leon Washington. They were playing beautiful swing tunes. They had a show. They did great shows. They had a girl named Vi something that was a human contortionist. She could just twist her body into any kind of shape, put her head all the way backwards between her legs and all that. They had chorus girls, great chorus girls, a whole chorus of them. They had comedians and blues singers – Joe Williams and Dr. Jo-Jo Adams. There was great, great shows, just like there was on the carnivals, on the carnivals like we used to have.

Then of course there were spots where there were sessions going on. Jazz was just getting popular in those days. They had a little cat around there named Jesse Miller who was the top trumpet player in town, and they had a little cat named Little Diz, who played like Dizzy. So we used to have a lot of good sessions.

Brower: So those modern ideas – so-called modern ideas were beginning to creep in . . .

Terry: Right, absolutely.

Brower: . . . but the predominant thing was swing, so-called swing.

Terry: Right, absolutely.

Brower: You came out in '45?

Terry: Out of the Navy, yeah.

Brower: And that's when you went back to St. Louis.


Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Then that's when you hooked up with the Hudson band and [? ?].

Terry: Yeah, right.

Brower: When did you first start getting into the more modern ideas?

Terry: I suppose when I first started listening to it, when it first became on the scene. I never was one to really jump up and copy things, but I would love the way it sounded. I was always browbeaten by some of the people who would talk to me. They said,

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

“Believe in what you’re doing. Just study and stick to what you’re doing, but master your instrument.” So I’d work on – diligently at maintaining whatever ability I had to do whatever the heck it was, but I’m glad that I wasn’t the type to just jump and get on the bandwagon and end up sounding like a poor man’s Dizzy Gillespie or something. At least I tried to stick with what it was that I was capable of doing.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: That’s when I got that girl pregnant. I had to get out of town. That’s when my brother-in-law got me hooked up with Willie Austin and Mary Johnson.

Brower: That’s still kind of a St. Louis thing.

Terry: No. We went on the road. We went all over the place, on the carnival, because when we left – the last date we played was in Pennsylvania and we went south for the winter quarter. That’s when they dumped us. That’s when we had to get on to . . .

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Yeah, absolutely.

Brower: How did they tell you that? How do they break that to you?

Terry: They assume that when you take a job like that, you know they go a certain season, and when that certain – the end of that season comes, they go home.

Brower: That’s it.

Terry: They’ll take you there, and then you’re on your own then. You should have known it when you came – like that old story about the – Lanin, Lester Lanin. They had a – they used to do what they called continuous. They played “doop-a-doop, doop-a-doop,” the businessman’s bounce. They played about two hours, and one cat said, “Mr. Lanin, I have to go to the bathroom.” He said, “You knew this was a continuous six months ago when you booked it.”

Brower: He should know better.

Terry: That’s right.

Brower: I guess the question I’m asking then is, after that tour, you go back to St. Louis, but then you go national, [? ?]. How does that happen?

Terry: I don't really know any particular way that I got involved in the national or an international scene, except that after I'd come out of the Navy, George – Gerald Wilson was living in California . . .

Brower: Whom you had met at Great Lakes.

Terry: . . . at Great Lakes, yeah. That's my buddy at Great Lakes. He said, "If you ever come to California, I'm at 5612 Ascot. You're perfectly welcome to come and stay at my house." Shortly after that – I think it was a short time. I don't know what happened in the interim. But it wasn't a long time – I got a call from Charlie Barnet to come out and join his band.

Brower: This was in '46, '47?

Terry: '46, I think, because in '47 I was with Charlie Barnet's band when we made the only album that he ever made at Town Hall, Town Hall Concert. So, I went out to California to join Charlie Barnet. He asked, "How you want to come? Train? Plane? What?" I said, "I think I'll take a train," because I never had a long train ride like that. I took the train, and I wasn't too fond of flying anyhow. I took the train. Gerald Wilson meet me at the airport [*sic*: station], took me to his home. We refreshed. Then we drove out to Hermosa Beach. That's where Barnet's band was playing. Gerald said, "I'll take you out there." We went out there, and when we arrived, they were in the middle of a coast-to-coast broadcast. We worked our way up to the bandstand. It was a packed place. Gerald says, "Charlie, this is your new trumpet player." He says, "Oh" – right on the air – "our new trumpet player's just arrived." He says, "Come on up." So I walked up there, scared stiff. He says, "Take your horn out." So I took my horn out. He says, "We will now present to you, ladies and gentlemen, our new – newly acquired trumpeter. As a matter of fact, we're just acquiring him at this very moment," and he kicked off a tune and says, "Okay, you got it." Luckily, it was a tune that I knew the changes to, but man, what a spot to be put on, coast-to-coast broadcast.

Brower: What was the tune?

Terry: Something to the changes to *I Got Rhythm*. I don't know what it was.

Brower: Tell me about your relationship with Gerald.

Terry: With Gerald? Gerald's always been a real close buddy of mine. I've known Gerald since he started – after – I guess he was still with the Lunceford band when I first met him. Of course we got in the Navy in '42. That's a long time ago right there. '50-'60-'70-'80-'90, whew. That's getting to be close to 60 years already. Gerald's wife and my wife at the time – my wife passed in '79, I think it was – my wife and Gerald's

wife Etta were good friends. Etta was a member of the Dandridge Sisters, Dorothy Dandridge, the dancer.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Huh? Yeah, the actress and dancer. We became like families. I had my wife come out to California for the first time, and we stayed at Gerald and Etta's. I had a band to meet her at the airport. That was fun. So I've know Gerald for quite a long time. As a matter of fact, just very recently, we had an occasion to play the Berne festival in Berne, Switzerland. Gerald came over and performed Lunceford tunes with Jon Faddis's Carnegie Hall band. Gerald and Snooky Young are the only two living members of the old Jimmie Lunceford days.


[interruption of unknown length; the recording resumes in mid-sentence]

. . . place to live for those who were travelers, close to the airport, right at LaGuardia, right on the Grand Central Parkway, Long Island Expressway, so ideally, whichever way you wanted to travel, it was convenient.

[1 minute of distorted recording without voices]

Brower: [introduces himself again, but the distortion is worse than before. His opening statement is barely audible and the subsequent question, evidently on Charlie Barnet's band, is inaudible.]

Terry: We did – the only that I know of that the band ever did, we did at Town Hall. I think that was in '47. We did *Charleston Alley* and *Gal from Joe's* and tunes of that sort. I don't recall any other particular things that we did. We were on the road for a bunch of the time. Neal Hefti wrote for the band, and we had – at one point, Doc Severinsen was in the band. No particularly unusual things happened, except – oh, I know one thing that did happen, in the form of relations with bigotry. We were leaving Washington, D.C. [? ?]. The band was staying downtown. I can't think of the name of the hotel, but I was staying with Bunny Briggs and Wilson, the valet. Bunny Briggs was a dancer and singer. Wilson was his valet. Nottingham – James Nottingham – James Nottingham and me, we were trumpeters. We all stayed over at 7th and T area. The band stayed downtown. So we went downtown to meet the band on the day that we were to leave at the time – enough to give a little slack before we got on the bus. We arrived there, and the guys were all in the drugstore of this hotel where they were living. So we went in. We both ordered a slice of pie or something. They had two black waitresses. We noticed that she just kept serving other guys and never served us, so finally I said, "Hey, lady, we're at this booth here too, and when they get ready to leave, we have to be ready to leave too. A lot of them have come in since us. You've taken care of them." So finally this other one spoke up. She said, "We're not allowed to serve

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

colored people in here.” I said, “You’re not allowed to serve colored people in here?” “No, we’re not.” When the band heard them say that – Doc Severinsen was in the band – they all got angry. They took all of the pies and stuff out of the tray and threw them behind the counter up against the mirror, the back wall mirror. They told them, said, “Okay. Just give our bill to Bilbo.”

Brower: Who’s that?

Terry: Huh?

Brower: Bilbo. [inaudible]

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Senator [?]

Terry: Senator Bilbo, yeah. So we jumped up and got on the bus and split.

Brower: How was Barnet as a leader? [? ?] generous?

Terry: Barnet was a sweetheart, the greatest leader in the world. Every holiday or so – at one point, a holiday, he was giving the guys like Buicks and Chevrolets, Cadillacs, and stuff like that. But by the time I got with the band, he was giving a fifth of whiskey to every person.

Brower: How did you feel about [? ?]?

Terry: I thought it was a great band, fantastic band. He was – Charlie was sometimes referred to as the caucasian Duke Ellington, and in many ways he was. He could have been compared to Ellington. He was a great musician, a fun-loving guy, a real down-to-earth for-real person.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: I’m trying to think now. I’m getting a little bogged down right now.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: I’m trying to think where I was. Yeah, I was in New York with – it might have been the Barnet band or either George Hudson’s band, and I made an audition with Basie’s band at Nola Studio. They passed out some music with some very difficult parts to it, some lead trumpet parts that Sweets – Harry Edison – and Ed Lewis and – I don’t remember who else was in the band – Emmett Berry. So they said, “Hey, let this kid

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

play the lead on this.” It was a very difficult high part on a tune called *Hey Rube*. So I got the part, and that’s okay. Then they said I was really [? ?]. It was a tune which they had recorded a short period before that. Snooky Young had played the lead on it. Snooky was playing first on it. The part had a lot of high notes and one particular G [Terry sings the part]. It went way up high. It’s a double octave there. I never had made an A in my life. They got into the tune, come to that part [Terry sings it], and I made an attempt to do it, and it came out. I could not believe it. I made the A, and that’s how I got the gig.

Brower: You joined the Basie band in which musicians called it the Old Testament.

Terry: Yeah, Old Testament.

Brower: Tell me something about the spirit.

Terry: The spirit of the band was great, because Basie – it all stems from Basie. He himself was a real down-to-earth cat. He was one of the boys, one of the gang. He always like to hang out with the cats. The spirit of everybody therein was more or less like Basie’s. He was a real groovy cat. Whatever the band wanted to do, he was always there for it. Any kind of fun thing, he was always for that. He was a great personality.

Ed Lewis, Sweets, and Emmett Berry, as I mentioned before, was the trumpet section. The bones were Big George Matthews, Ted Donnelly, and Bill Johnson. Right now the fourth trombone player escapes me. The saxophones were Earl Warren, Jack Washington, Bernie Peacock, and – I’m not so sure if the Weasel was with us at that point, Willie Parker. Yeah

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Um-um.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: No, he never went to Great Lakes. He stayed around town while we all went to Great Lakes. He just passed away this past year.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: They were both very, very special friends of mine. Joe Williams was with the Gerald Wilson band when they came through St. Louis to play at the Club Plantation – not the Club Plantation. At the Riviera, Jordan Chambers’s Riviera. Every morning, after we’d get off from work – it was our band – George Hudson’s band. Ella Fitzgerald was on the bill, so she was at the Plantation. Gerald Wilson’s band was at the Riviera, and Joe Williams was singing with them. So, after the gig is over, we’d all get together and go out to the park and play softball the wee hours in the day. One time I was catching, and Gerald Wilson and Joe Williams’s band, they were batting. So Joe was batting. He swung at a ball and pulled his shoulder all out of the socket. He collapsed right there. He was a great big cat then. I was a little bitty old dude. I picked him up and started running with him. Everybody says, “Where are you going with him?” “I’m going to somebody’s car to take him to the doctor.” They said, “He’s so heavy.” I said, “He ain’t heavy. He’s my brother.” Every time I’d see Joe, I would say – we’d say that to each other. “He ain’t heavy. He’s my brother.”

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: No, it was after Club DeLisa.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: [inaudible]. He’s always been a real close buddy. He’s a Sagittarian, same as I am. In fact his birthday is a day or two before mine. The other – who’s the other person?


Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Who?

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: Oh, Ernie and I – Ernie [Wilkins] – I played Ernie’s first arrangement when he was – he and his brother went to Sumner High School. I went to Vashon High School, a rival school, but we – the brothers Ernie and Jimmy and myself – we were good – such good friends that it didn’t matter. I used to walk way out in the neighborhood to – in their area of town – to rehearse with them. It was just so much fun. They had a bunch of beautiful charts that Ernie was writing even back then, way back then. The guy – his brother – he and his brother one day came by the lot where we used to practice with the Tom Powell Rhythm and Bugle Corps Band. He came up to the gate where we rehearse and asked me to introduce him. He wanted to introduce himself and all that. So we met and became real tight friends. We went in the Navy together.

[inaudible]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: We could stop.

Terry: Yeah, let's stop for a minute.

[Substantial portions of the final 61 minutes of the interview of June 15, 1999, are inaudible.]

Terry: [relates a story of Barnet having his two stars, Terry and Jimmy Nottingham, wear gray uniforms, with the rest of the band dressed in blue uniforms.] The people in D.C., they rebelled. They said, "Why do they not have on the same kind of uniforms as the rest of the band? Are they not a part of it?" Charlie had to take those uniforms and dye them, dye them blue.

Brower: [inaudible]

Terry: No, the reason he did that – he wanted people to know that we were two outstanding [inaudible]. They took it the opposite way.


[Inaudible story about Barnet and Basie at the Royal Roost, including Ed Shaughnessy on drums, Bennie Green on trombone.]

We also worked together on the bill with Basie's small group and Charlie's small group. It might have been during that period when I was possibly subbing for somebody, maybe Conte Candoli.

[Inaudible reference to something involving Tommy Dorsey's band with Charlie Shavers, and Jan Savitt's band.]

[Partially audible story of his recording with Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson in 1947.] When I was in St. Louis, Eddie Vinson came through town with his cousin Volley Bastine on trumpet, a tenor player by the name of Lee Pope, I think Best – a drummer named Best. I don't remember who the pianist was. But Volley and I were good buddies. Volley said, "Hey, man, we're recording today. Why don't you come on to the studio? Bring your horn. Eddie really wants you to play." So I did just that. [inaudible]. The record we made that day is called *Railroad Porter Blues* [? ?] [Terry sings]. We recorded that.

Now years and years later, I was with Norman Granz. [? ?]. I did a record date, and he asked me [? ?]. "Shall I get Vinson on it?" "Sure, I'd like Eddie." So he got Eddie Vinson, and ironically – some 30 or 40 years, maybe later, whatever – we did the same tune. On the first date, Eddie sang it and I accompanied him. On my date, I sang it and Eddie accompanied me.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

[inaudible comments from Terry on Jimmy Rushing, Joe Turner, Joe Williams, Doc Cheatham]

[intermittently audible phrases reveal Terry telling stories that Brower asks him to repeat the following week (see below): on the formation of Basie's small group; on his bringing Ernie Wilkins into Basie's big band; on his joining Ellington; on Basie's sense of tempo; on Ellington's practice of writing for particular individuals, and Ellington's composition *Juniflip on the Flugelhorn*, written for Terry; on Ellington prompting Terry to play in the style of Buddy Bolden; on the difficulty of a newcomer breaking into Ellington's band, and Quentin Jackson helping the newcomer Terry identify tunes.]

[among largely inaudible comments on Lester Young:] . . . used to love [? ?], particularly the way he made his augmenteds coming out of the bridge [Terry sings].

Brower and Terry resume, with high quality stereo sound, on June 22, 1999.


Brower: This is June the 22nd, 1999. Bill Brower talking with . . .

Terry: Clark Terry

Brower: . . . Clark Terry in Glen Cove, New York, for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program. I just want to revisit a few areas that we went into in some depth on my last visit, and just for the purpose of being expedient, I'm just going to click through them.

In your days in St. Louis, one thing we didn't talk about was whether or not you had any influence from the church in terms of early musical experiences and getting an orientation to music.

Terry: Oh yeah. As far as – my faith – I was a Baptist. Of course we – all of those Baptist hymns and songs associated with that faith were – a lot of them were rhythmic, and so that was instilled in me at a very early age. But the thing that really, I think, got into my soul back in the beginning was the fact that we lived close to a Sanctified church, half a block away. All of us kids were too young to go into the church. So we'd all go sit on the curb outside near the church and listen to the rhythms. We got constantly boom-chick-a boom-chick-a boom-chick-a boom and bass drums and tambourine and foot tapping and hand clapping, and the screams and the yells and so forth that were very comparable – very much comparable to the slave cries from the fields. So this rhythmic thing was instilled at a very, very early age.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: People often talk about – it’s often said that black people have natural rhythm. Are you suggesting that the rhythmic affinity that many African-Americans show is the result of a learned response gained very early by exposure to these type of religious . . . ?

Terry: Absolutely, absolutely. You wouldn’t find too many people with rhythms instilled in them who were trained as Catholics at a very early age, because there’s nothing very rhythmic about that. I think that one of the things that the Jewish faith has in their favor, as far as getting involved in jazz so, is the hymn-type things. What do you call the . . . ?

Brower: The cantors?

Terry: Cantors, yeah. [Terry imitates a cantor singing.] That kind of stuff. A lot of that is very closely akin to giving vent to your feelings like the slaves did in the early days, and scale-wise, it’s related to blues scales and so forth. So I think that – it’s a known fact that you can’t possibly say for sure that everybody, because he’s black, feels a natural inclination to clap on [beats] two and four, because I’ve played places with black kids, and I see a lot of them clapping on one and three. 3 – 1 – 3. It looks so odd to me, and these are the kids – many times the black bourgeois who have been exposed to only the upper echelon of life, and they have not yet reached down to or been in position to feel the impulse of – the pulse of true rhythm, which is two and four. That was the first instrument [Terry claps], clapping on two and four. 1 – 2 – 3 [Terry sings a fragment of a spiritual melody while clapping on two and four.]


Brower: Another – we talked about Vashon High School and how you got oriented there. One person that we didn’t talk about was a name that came up in some of the literature, named Leonard Small.

Terry: Leonard Small was a trumpet player who comes from Tennessee, I think, but he was – he’s in Tennessee now. He was – he went to Vashon High School, and our instructor of the music department there, Clarence Heiden Wilson, was a very busy man. He had a lot of kids hanging on him, trying to get a hold of instruments and learn how to play and get involved in the orchestra and the band and the marching band, etc. So he would very often pawn us beginners off to somebody else who was a bit more experienced. So he pawned me off to Leonard Small. “Here. Go to – take him Oscar. Take him over there and teach him how to finger the scale.”

Brower: As a youth, what other interests did you have besides music?

Terry: I was always into sports. I was a pretty good hurdler, and I was a broad jumper and a dash man.

Brower: So you competed in . . . ?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Somewhere I read something about your – some interest in boxing . . .

Terry: Oh yeah.

Brower: and a gentleman named Kid Carter.

Terry: Kid Carter was the gentleman in the neighborhood who used to gather up all of us kids and teach us the manly art of self defense. He taught it to us the hard way. He'd walked up to you and punch you in the belly. Bam. "Get that – suck that belly in. Tighten up them muscles." He gave us all a very good understanding about the art of self defense. He was a great guy. He was a former champion in St. Louis. I don't remember what weight, whether it was lightweight, middle, featherweight, or welter, whatever. But he was a very good boxer. Good cat. In my book, [?]'s got a whole chapter on that.

Brower: Did you compete?


Terry: Oh yeah. I was pretty good. Archie Moore once said – the man said, "If you stayed involved in boxing, you would have been the champion." That's what Archie said. I was pretty good at it.

Brower: How did you get to know Archie Moore?

Terry: Archie Moore used to date my sister in St. Louis, and he was on the scene quite a bit. He and my brother – he called my brother "Charlie." My brother says, "Charles." He says, "Yeah, old Charlie." My sister's name was Lil. Charlie and Lil. He always talked about Charlie and Lil, because they – I think – I'm not sure, but I think that they were schoolmates together.

Brower: Did you continue your relationship with Archie Moore as you . . . ?

Terry: Oh yeah. All through – all the way down the line. One of my compositions I dedicated to him when he had knocked out his 127th victim in the ring. I wrote a little tune for him called 127: *Blues 127*, in honor of his 127th knockout. We stayed in touch constantly. Before he retired – he never had a chance to really come back after – his last bout was with [Giulio] Rinaldi – no, with [Rocky] Marciano. He was way over the hill at that point anyhow, but he wasn't too active after he beat Rinaldi. I've got the gloves, here at the house, that he beat Rinaldi with. Rinaldi had him down and almost out. On the count of eight he came around and he saw Rita, his daughter, standing there with some red pajamas on, and she said to him, "Daddy, get up. It's time to go to work." He

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



said he got up and looked at this cat and cleaned him right away. He was a fantastic guy.

He always liked jazz, always loved jazz. He was the one who told me, years ago – he said, “Clark, you got to learn how to blow your own horn.” He instigated Muhammad Ali into speaking up for himself, when he was Cassius Clay. So he used to say to me – he said, “Clark, you got to blow your own horn. Ain’t nobody going to blow it for you.” I’m not speaking of the instrument, but I mean you have to publicize your own indulgence. So we started a little publishing company, many years ago, me and Archie. He started it and put down the name. We had pictures made and logos on the stationery. He was – he always liked the bass. He could never really play it, but he liked the bass, and we had this – I’ve got some of the stationery around here somewhere. It’s kind of funny looking back at it.

Brower: Were you acquainted with other boxers? I know Sugar Ray Robinson was supposed to be a big jazz fan.

Terry: Yeah, he was a real big jazz fan, but I never really knew him too well. Miles – he and Miles were good friends, so we used to boast about Miles was going to be trained by Sugar Ray, and Archie was going to train me, and we were going to box at the Gardens one day on one of the bills. Miles was a good boxer too, but I was a little bit too big for Miles back then. I was punching pretty good in them days. I probably would have tore him in half with one of my right hooks.


Brower: Somebody who strikes me as – this is really a digression – but in meeting Benny Carter – Benny Carter has fists like sledgehammers.

Terry: Benny Carter?

Brower: Benny Carter, the saxophone player. He’s strong.

Terry: Oh yeah. Benny came up – he was born in New York. He was raised in Hell’s Kitchen, and he didn’t take any crap from anybody at anytime. I’ll tell you a story about Benny. When they played – his band played the Club Plantation, which was run by the notorious gangdom people in those days, he played the club, and he had a singer with him named – she had a hit record, “I’m walking by the river, because I’m meeting someone there.” I cannot – I’ll think of the name of it.

Anyhow, somebody insulted this lady, the singer, and J. J. Johnson, who was with the band, in Benny’s band at the time, took it up – took up for her, and one of the guys pistol-whipped J. J., and Benny Carter came up and grabbed this cat and pulled his pistol out and said, “Now pistol-whip me.” Of course that was the end of the engagement, but he backed this cat off in the corner.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025  Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: The thing about him is he – every experience I’ve had with him, he’s the ultimate gentleman.

Terry: He’s the most gentlemanly gentleman you’ll ever meet in your life. He’s a marvelous person. We call him “the King,” because he’s the boss at doing everything, playing trumpet, playing alto, playing trombone, piano, arranging, composing, and movie scores and all. He’s a very talented man.

Brower: First time around we talked about Sy McField.

Terry: Sy McField was my older sister’s husband.


Brower: And one group that came to – really interested me: Dollar Bill and his Small Change.

Terry: Dollar Bill. Hah-hah. That was a little – a small band that I worked with in St. Louis when we were all at the stage where we were just getting involved and were able to gig because we knew the tunes, and we were seeking the experience of the old pros. So he was one of the old pros. I guess it was customary for the older guys to get a younger player in the band. First of all, they didn’t have to pay him much money, and he’d get to be associated with a fresher – newer approach, and the naiveté of a kid in jazz. So Dollar Bill was an old piano player. His slogan was, “I’m Dollar Bill from Compton Hill.” Compton Hill was one of the local areas, one of the ghettos. He said, “I’m Dollar Bill from Compton Hill. I never worked, and I never will.” He smoked and chewed on long cigars all the time.

Brower: What were your – coming up, what were your listening habits? What were you – what music excited you that was being played or you’d had access to, and how did you listen to it? By radio? By record player?

Terry: We had – at the very beginning, one of the kids had a crystal set. We used to just listen to this thing religiously, because we knew the times that the big bands like Coon and Sanders, and – I can’t even think of some. Bands that nobody ever heard of, but they were more or less territorial bands or popular bands that played pop tunes. Of course, pop tunes were the thing in those days. There was an awful lot of jazz being played on the radio until a little bit later on, and they played some [Duke] Ellington and some [Jimmie] Lunceford, things like that, and later – and much later [Count] Basie. Then Erskine Hawkins was pretty popular at the time. So that was our entrée to getting a chance – to listening to jazz at the very beginning.

Sometimes we’d take the radio – the little crystal set and get – put it inside of one of our parents mixing bowls and make it like a – so it kind of amplified the sound.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: We talked about a lot of – we talked about a number of St. Louis trumpet players, and I have a long list. I just want to go through them, and if you have a recollection or any thought about any of these people, maybe you could offer it. Bross Woods.

Terry: Bross Woods was a very, very simple type of player. Played very, very melodic and very lightly. Nothing powerful. He didn't play real high, didn't play real loud. Just played sort of in the groove. He was a very jovial person. Real nice cat. Everyone loved Bross. Bross Woods. I don't even remember what his first real name was, but he was a Woods, and we all – everybody called him Bross Woods.

Brower: Was he your senior? A contemporary?

Terry: Oh yeah, much older than me. I was probably the youngest one on the scene in those days, among the trumpet players.

Brower: Baby James.

Terry: Baby James. Baby James was a little bit before my time. I – he's just like a hearsay player. I didn't – I never really knew Baby James, but . . .

Brower: Louis Metcalf.

Terry: Louis Metcalf was an old-timer who was a follower of Louis Armstrong. He went to Canada and became ensconced in the Canadian scene up there and was on the scene for a long, long time

Brower: Ed Allen.

Terry: Who?


Brower: Ed Allen.

Terry: Ed . . .

Brower: . . . Allen. Okay

Terry: I don't remember that name. Ed Allen. Maybe I misquoted a name or you misunderstood.

Brower: Crack Stanley.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: Crack Stanley was an old, old trumpet player, much older than me. His nickname was acquired because he was a real crack shot at hitting high notes. Bing bing. So he acquired the name of Crack Stanley. I used to think it meant because he cracked notes, but I was told that he really popped them notes.

Brower: Used to nail them.

Terry: Yes, nail them on the head.

Brower: Bobby Merrill.

Terry: Bobby Merrill was a – he was about ten years older than me. He was a marvelous trumpet player with a great big sound, and I'll never forget him, because he was unusually kind to me. He used to – he was a working musician, and I was a scuffling kid, and he used to give me a couple of bucks every now and then, buy me a sandwich or something. He was just a nice person. He was a good singer. I'll never forget the – one of the tunes that was very popular at that time was a Count Basie record of *I struck a match in the dark*. It's one on which Earle Warren sang, but it had a solo in an introduction [Terry vocalizes]. Bobby used to play that solo better than the guy – whoever played it on the record. This is his claim to fame. Everybody loved to hear Bobby play that, *struck a match in the dark*.

Brower: Mouse Randolph.

Terry: Mouse Randolph was a player that was a little before my time. He ended up playing in Earl Hines – one of Earl Hines's very first bands. They tell me he was a very reputable soloist, a very great section player and lead player.

Brower: How about Louis Caldwell?

Terry: Louis Caldwell was – I think he was the gentleman that had the candy story.

Brower: Okay. so we've already covered him. He was in the band . . .

Terry: The Dewey Jackson.

Brower: The Dewey Jackson band.

Terry: Dewey's Musical Ambassadors.

Brower: So this is the gentleman that had the little candies that you liked and so forth.

Terry: Yeah. Mary Janes and caramels. Yeah.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Okay. Having run through this list – and you named a bunch of other people when we talked before, like Jules Shannon and then Ham Davis.

Terry: Yeah, Jules Shannon. He was a student – classmate of mine.

Brower: More of a peer than a predecessor.

Terry: Yeah, right. Absolutely. He was the one that used to get all the calls to do the representation of the students in performances, the concerts in various places, and I was always [?] about getting a call, because Jules always got them.

Brower: Is there would you call “that St. Louis thing” that trumpet players have?

Terry: I think so, because most historians and people who keep up with the traditions of jazz from certain areas always refer to St. Louis trumpet players as a group of people who had a certain tradition, a certain sound, a certain background, because – and I think – I’ve been told that it all stems from a gentleman that we referred to earlier. That’s Charlie Creath, who spelled it like Creath, c-r-e-a-t-h, but like breath also, b-r-e-a-t-h. He referred to himself as Charlie Creath, the King of Cornet. I understand he was a very dapper, fastidious, and kind of a rambunctious, cocky type of cat, but I understand also that his playing could back up his attitude.

Brower: The sound – you also talked about the gentleman Gustave and the Hime mouthpiece and the number of trumpet players that use that mouthpiece. Is that part of what you’re considering in the St. Louis sound as well?

Terry: That’s a part of the tradition as well, because Gustave did teach a lot of young players, and a lot of them swore by those Hime mouthpieces. I never heard of them existing anywhere else in the world, except in the St. Louis area, and Gustave liked very much to have his students using them. Although Buchanan – I don’t know if Buchanan used one or not. But I know I couldn’t. They were a little too thin for me. My chops are a bit too big for them. But Miles loved them.

Brower: What is your preference for mouthpieces?

Terry: My . . .

Brower: Your personal preference.

Terry: One which I’m using right now, which I – it was always customary for trumpet players to have a sack full of mouthpieces, and they’d always go around with files and

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



gadgets, smoothing them down and cutting them down, or making the holes bigger, or making the high points at various places.

One of the important things about a mouthpiece is the dimensions of – if you take two sides – take your two palms – your two hands and put them together like this, pull them apart. Wherever the highest point – whether it be on the out – this is the out, this is the rim, out, this is the rim, this is the rim – whether the high point be on the outside or in the middle or at the beginning of the opening, it's very important, because this is what your embouchure gets accustomed to. If you're accustomed to playing on something with the high point out here, then you start playing on something with the high point outside, it is going to create a big problem for you.

So everybody's lips are structured differently. Some are more suitable for a flat rim, or a high point in the middle, high point on the outside, or a deeper cup. But we did find that at one point almost every instrumentalist who played a cup mouthpiece, the V shape, without the bowl, proved to be more advantageous, because it's the theory on which the french horn is built. You never saw a french horn with a cup mouthpiece. It was always straight down, like a funnel.

These are things that trumpet players always – we always had a bunch of mouthpieces, and we'd fool around until we get something the way we thought it should be. We all managed to work up on something that we thought, this is the one, this is the one. I finally worked up on something that I got together, and now Giardinelli makes it, but he sold his name and his company. But everybody refers to the mouthpiece which I use now as the C. T. model.


Brower: What is unique about it, or what did you arrive at? What were you . . .

Terry: I arrived at the point that I knew where the high point was beneficial to me, and I also discovered that a flatter rim was more conducive to longevity and endurance than a curved rim. It just seemed like simple physics. If you put a flat piece up to your mouth, it feels more comfortable than sticking two pointed pieces into your lips. So, on that principle alone, I kept working on something that I thought – that felt more comfortable, and it did give me more range. It gave me more endurance. It gave me more stamina, and I was able to play in all areas on the instrument, upper and lower.

Brower: We talked about George Hudson a reasonable fair amount, but there's one story I read about that raises a larger issue. Do you remember when the band hit the Apollo Theater, took that trip?

Terry: Oh yeah. I sure do.

Brower: Tell me that story.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian  [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Illinois Jacquet at this particular time was the hottest thing going in jazz. He had a small group. He had people like J. J. Johnson, Leo Parker, Joe Newman, and his – Jacquet's brother . . .

Brower: Russell?


Terry: Russell Jacquet, and Mohawk, the bass player. I can't think of his name. We used to call him Mohawk. And Shadow Wilson on drums. He had just a fantastic band. Sir Charles Thompson I think was on piano. He was such a big name, 'til he was playing all the top places that there were to play.

There was one outfit – one working gimmick which they called T.O.B.A. – Theatrical Booking Act, Association, or something [Theater Owners' Booking Association]. But we used to have a nickname for it: Tough on Black Actors. In doing so, the Apollo Theater was one of the favorite theaters – the Apollo in New York, the Royal in Baltimore, the Howard in D.C., and the Earle, I think, in Philadelphia. So, to play that circuit, that's like five or six weeks of work, with the little gaps in between.

Jacquet was so big, he needed an opening act to bring – to start the show, to set it up for him to be the finale. He chose the George Hudson band, because the band had made a marvelous reputation through the medium of having played all the acts' music better than it had ever been played before, because we used to take the music home and have section rehearsals on it, play it perfectly. So everybody, all over the country, would say, "Man, have you played with that band out in St. Louis, that George Hudson band? Man, you got to play with them." So we had a reputation. Our reputation preceded us.

We had in this band a little tenor [saxophone] player by the name of Willie Parker. We called him Weasel, and I don't think Jacquet knew what a demon this little cat was. We also had some marvelous arrangements written by Bugs Roberts, who did a lot of writing for the shows that played at a venue there called the Club Plantation. Bugs had written us a show-stopper on an old standard, *Body and Soul*. When it was time for us to play our last number, before Jacquet came on, we always figured on closing with *Body and Soul*. On this particular number Weasel played so fantastically great, and everybody – on opening night in – here in New York at the Apollo Theater, everybody was there. Everybody that you could think of. So the theater was – everybody was standing while Weasel was blowing. We finished, and it was time for Jacquet to come on, and Jacquet couldn't get on. The crowd wouldn't stop screaming for us to come back and some more Weasel. Jacquet brought us back and said, "Take it out. Take that number out. Take that number out. Don't ever play that again."

Brower: In your mind, why didn't the George Hudson band go to the next level?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: First of all, they were mostly home guys, local guys, guys who weren't really built of the stuff that would keep them out there on that road. You had to be dedicated to diligently stay involved in traveling, and most of the guys weren't really there. A trip away occasionally for a couple weeks or so was okay, but not to go out of the state continuously, like [Duke] Ellington. He was born to be a trooper, a troubadour, traveling. Basie, it's the same thing

Brower: So you're saying one of the qualities of, and one of the things that separates musicians, and we get to know them because they go to that next level is their – is not just the musicianship, but their willingness to undergo the other things, the extra-musical things.

Terry: Absolutely. Absolutely. Right. The hardships and the pitfalls and the stumbling blocks.

Brower: Anything else you'd like to share about the Hudson band? Any other . . .

Terry: We had a couple of marvelous . . .


Brower: . . . memorable situations?

Terry: We had a couple of marvelous vocalists. We had Jimmy [?Carns] and Jimmy Britton. Jimmy Britton was a vocalist with the Ellington at one time, too. They were both great singers.

I think the band was really formed by George, because if you had a good band, there was a good place in St. Louis to work, which was the Club Plantation, and the best band would always get that shot, and George got that after he had worked there with [the] Jeter-Pillars Orchestra.

Brower: I just want to talk about some people that I believe to have been peers of yours, or other musicians that would have been around St. Louis. We talked a good bit about Ernie Wilkins. We didn't say much about Jimmy Wilkins.

Terry: Ernie Wilkins and Jimmy Wilkins were brothers, and they were two of my choice buddies. When I was a member of the Tom Powell Drum and Bugle Corps once, they showed up at one of our rehearsals. We rehearsed at [the] Tom Powell Drum and Bugle Corps Building, which was 3900 on Enright [Street], which is an area which we referred to as the West End, in St. Louis. They came by one day. They were members of the Sumner High. There were two [?] high schools: Sumner High School, which is out in the – sort of the elite area, and Vashon High School, which is the downtown, more common-type residence area. They came by our rehearsal, and they'd heard about me as a new player. See, they wanted a new trumpet player, so they came to this rehearsal and

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

asked me to join their band. I was – I had mixed emotions, because at the time we were trying to get a little group started at Vashon High School, called the Vashon Swingsters, and they had the Sumner – Sumner High School Swingsters. I had to feel like I was kind of betraying my school, if I had worked with them. But then I wanted to get involved. I wanted to learn how to get into more depth, into playing arrangements, big-band charts, because we only had a small group there. So that's how we happened to . . .

Brower: Would you say Ernie Wilkins was fairly advanced at a young age?

Terry: Yeah, he was. Very – extremely talented young man. We also, the three of us, when this movement came to recruit people for the Navy, we all went in the Navy together, in 1942.

Brower: Emmanuel Duke St. Clair Brooks. Duke Brooks. Does that name ring a bell?

Terry: Duke Brooks. He's a piano player, right?

Brower: Right.

Terry: He's a cat that lived over in East St. Louis, and he's played with Miles [Davis] a lot. As a matter of fact, he was trying to get to New York to – after Miles got established – to come to New York to work with Miles. I think he was killed in an accident or something like that. But I have a funny story about Brooks. We were all good buddies. We'd go over to East St. Louis and jam 'til the wee hours of the morning. One morning we'd been jamming 'til the wee hours, and I finally went home – I'd like to say 4 or 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, and the phone rings about 7 or 8. I said, "Ooooooh." "Hi. This is Duke." I said, "Man, what the hell are you calling me at this time in the morning for? You know this is wrong, man. Call me later on in the day." Wham. I said a few unkind words and slammed the phone down.


Later on that day, 5 or 6 o'clock that evening, the phone rings again. He says, "Hi. This is Duke again. Maybe you feel a little better about talking now." I said, "Duke who?" He said, "Duke Ellington. I called you this morning, and you told me – you sounded like you didn't feel like talking. You asked me to call later, so I did." I felt like crawling under the house, not under the bed, because I had insulted Duke.

Brower: Had you known him before?

Terry: Had I known Duke before? No.

Brower: How'd he get your number?

Terry: I don't know. I don't know how he got the number.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Is this when he called you about being in his band, or what was the nature of the call?

Terry: Yeah. He was calling me to . . .

Brower: Was that to sub or to go full-time?

Terry: To sub, at that particular time. But he had a way of doing things like that. He'd try you out, see if he wanted to keep you. I think it's some years before I was a member of the band. He had decided that he would ultimately get me in the band as a regular.

Brower: Jimmy Blanton.

Terry: Jimmy Blanton was the man who revolutionized string bass playing. Duke came through St. Louis and heard him. Duke had an old bass player. I don't know if it was old man Billy Taylor. Wellman Braud, I think it was. He liked this kid so much that – Jimmy was a violin player, regular violin, and he grabbed up the bass violin and played almost as articulately as he did the little violin. Of course that knocked Duke out. Duke right away started getting ideas about how he was going to use this kid, which he always did whenever he surrounded himself with somebody new or different, somebody that had something that he thought his musical ideas could extend through.

Brower: Did you play with and know Blanton in St. Louis yourself?

Terry: I never got to know Blanton really well in St. Louis. I think maybe one or twice at a session at one of the restaurants on Jefferson Boulevard we might – I might have sat in and played a number or two, but I didn't get to know him really well.

Brower: So you don't have much of a recollection of him.

Terry: No. His cousin Wendall Marshall, who still owns Blanton's bass – he and I were good buddies. We were – played in Duke's band together.

Brower: Did you know Wendall – was Wendall from St. Louis as well?

Terry: Um-hmm.

Brower: You knew him well in there?

Terry: Knew him well, very well.

Brower: Tell me – give me some recollection of him.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: Wendell is a very quiet, reserved person who had studied along – under, rather – his cousin Jimmy. I suppose that’s how Jimmy got in the band – Wendall got in the band. When Jimmy left, he probably told Duke, my cousin here can . . .

Brower: Handle it.

Terry: . . . do the job. And he did. He did a marvelous job. In fact he played very, very well. He got married here in New York. I was with a friend who dabbled a little bit in real estate, and we sold him his house on a hillside out here. His kids are all grown now, but his mother was an invalid. She was blind, and she could just only lay there in her bed. Wendell gave up everything and went home to nurse his mother. He took good care of her. Meanwhile he felt the call to come to preach. So he started preaching. I don’t know if he was ordained or what, but he’s a preacher.

Brower: Two names: Clyde Higgins and Mabel Higgins. Do those ring a bell? Saxophone player.

Terry: Clyde Higgins was a saxophone player, right?


Brower: Right.

Terry: Clyde Higgins – when Jimmie Lunceford’s band was popular and Jimmie Lunceford died – no, no, before. This is before. When Willie Smith left the Lunceford band, he tried all sorts of people to replace Willie Smith in his band. Willie Smith, as you all know, was a very, very fair player. He looked completely caucasian, and he was a marvelous player. Lunceford was always trying to find somebody like that, that looked like Willie, played like Willie. Like Duke Ellington used to always say, if he ever found a vocalist who looked like Lena Horne and sang like Ivie Anderson, she had the job. Well, Lunceford more or less wanted a guy who looked like Willie and played like Willie. Clyde Higgins came along, and he played – he was a great player. I would say he played better than Willie. He was equally as good in different ways. A marvelous player. But he was ugly. He was an ugly dude, man. And he was completely – his complexion was completely the opposite of Willie’s. Lunceford couldn’t use that, so he couldn’t make the band. So we always say, he uglified himself right out of Jimmie Lunceford’s band.

Brower: How about Mabel Higgins?

Terry: About who?

Brower: Mabel Higgins. That might have been his wife.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: I don't know her.

Brower: Someone that's mentioned in Miles's book, but I don't know whether you've – actually, all the books on Miles: Bobby Danzig, trumpet player?

Terry: Bobby Danzig was a beautiful little player. He played a lot like what you would call the modern, advanced-type trumpet players, like Dizzy [Gillespie]. Bobby Danzig was one of the first people around St. Louis that we heard that was following Dizzy's pattern. He – the last thing I heard from Bobby, he – I don't know whether he was a diabetic or not, but he was an amputee. I think I heard he was a double amputee, and I don't know whether he's still around or what. But he was a marvelous trumpet player.

Brower: A band with an intriguing name to me: Adam Lambert's Six Brown Cats.

Terry: That one I don't know. Adam – I never heard that one.

Brower: Okay. Moving on.

Terry: Is that a St. Louis band?

Brower: Yeah. But, moving on. We talked a good bit about the [Club] Plantation and what that was like. Tell me about the [Club] Riviera and in particular what you recollect of it, and in particular Jordan Chambers, who he was.

Terry: Jordan Chambers was a – for some – I don't know how he gained his wealth, but he was a pretty wealthy guy. He was a political person. He bought this club out on [North] Sarah [Street] and [East] Finney [Avenue], I think it was. I think it was on Sarah and Finney. It was a huge club, beautifully decorated. The decor was fantastic. It had good acoustics for music, and it was the favorite hanging-out spot of black people in St. Louis when they wanted – as far as the nightclub scene was concerned. So it was to black people what the Club Plantation was to caucasians.

Brower: Did white people – could white people come, and did they come?

Terry: I don't really recall if many did, but they could have. It wasn't restricted to – because I know there was a guy by the name of Littleton M. Tough, who – we called him Mother Tough. He used to have a jazz club, and he used to gather all of us cats together, me and Charlie Fox and Wendell Marshall and Jimmy Forrest. We'd do sessions for him. I know he used to come into the – to that club. I really don't recall whether it was highly frequented by caucasians or not.

Brower: You mentioned Charlie Fox last time.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Tell me about Charlie Fox.

Terry: Charlie Fox was a piano player. Years ago, in 1935, Charlie Fox was a drummer in the drum and bugle corps that I was in – Tom Powell Post. He played drums in those days. We won the – I think I mentioned earlier – we won the championship, the Missouri state championship in 1935. Charlie was the drummer, and his brother, John Fox, was the drum major on occasion and he also played the bass drum. We had a lot of fancy things together.

Charlie Fox a little later on became very, very deeply ensconced in jazz as a piano player. He played with Dexter Gordon and a few other people. He was the top man in demand around St. Louis. I remember a few dates we did with Betty Roché, Jimmy – Wendall Marshall, Charlie Fox, myself, and a drummer whose name escapes me at the moment. That was another candidate for the big time. I can't think of his name at the moment.

Brower: You mentioned Betty Roché. Is she from St. Louis, or she was touring?

Terry: No. She just . . .

Brower: She came as a singer.

Terry: Yeah, came as a singer. Yeah. She just passed about two months ago. Great scat singer.

Brower: Did you hang at the Riviera yourself?


Terry: I went there occasionally, but usually it was the working hours when they operating, and I was somewhere on a little old gig of some sort – a scab gig or whatever. They wouldn't accept us young kids too well in the union, particularly since we didn't have union cards, so I used to get me some scab gigs, go out – take it for less money, but I didn't belong to the union.

Brower: How about the Rhumboogie Club?

Terry: Rhumboogie in Chicago.

Brower: There was not one in St. Louis?

Terry: No.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: I got this wrong.

Terry: I believe it was in Chicago.

Brower: Let me scratch that. We were talking – I want to go over again some persons that were at Great Lakes and see if you have – we went through a few – but see if you have recollections of some of these others. Dave Young?

Terry: Dave Young was a saxophone player from Chicago, and as I mentioned earlier in our discussion, the group that came into Great Lakes from St. Louis under the leadership of – the old fox, we used to call him – Len Bowden.

Brower: How do you spell Bowden?

Terry: B-o-w-d-e-n. The people who came in under Len Bowden, we were considered to be ship's company, which means we stayed right there at Great Lakes for the whole term, and our duty was to form recruits that came through Great Lakes Naval Training Station, put them into bands, and then ship them out to various naval stations and naval bases, ammunition dumps, etc., around the United States. Dave Young, he came in with a group, and I think he was shipped out in a group that might have been the one that went to California. Was it Treasure Island? Or . . . I don't remember. So many groups went to so many places, but he was in one of the bands that was shipped out.

Brower: There seemed to have been a whole West Coast contingent of people. Buddy Collette . . .


Terry: Buddy Collette.

Brower: Marshal Royal, Ernie Royal. I don't know whether – is Jerome Richardson from there?

Terry: Jerome Richardson. They all came in a band collectively from California. They were recruited like we were in St. Louis, but we were already ensconced there. We had the upper hand. They came in as a bunch of recruits. I think it might have been pre-arranged, but they were to have been trained at Great Lakes and formed into a band and sent back to some base in – I think it was Treasure Island in California.

Brower: Gerald Wilson was part of that?

Terry: No, Gerald Wilson wasn't part of that group. He came in at another period, and he stayed at Great Lakes with us, because Gerald did a lot of writing for the band. When I got out of the Navy, I went to California to join Charlie Barnet. Gerald was the first person – in fact the only person I really knew in California. So I called him up, and he

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



met me at – I came on the train. He met me at the train, and I stayed at his home at 5612 Ascot in Los Angeles.

Brower: I got a quote from Buddy Collette. This is in some oral history that he did, where he says two nights later they had a big jam session – I guess two nights after you arrived. He said Clark Terry kind of ran things. Was that a fair characterization of the role that you played there?

Terry: It was – we had in those days, when we were forming bands, what they called the pool. Everybody was in the pool, and out of the pool we chose people to put together – to form bands to send to various places. I was young and an eager beaver, so I was involved in most of the sessions. I don't know. I wouldn't say that I took over, but I guess I was instrumental in naming the tunes and keeping things in order, as far as the routine sessions are concerned.

Brower: How important was that period for your own development as a musician?

Terry: I think it was very, very important, because I was having an opportunity to meet a lot of big-name players who had been out there doing it for years. Had a lot of opportunities to meet younger players, my age and younger, who were just getting involved and were just as ambitious as I was and some even far more talented than I was. So it was a mixture of cultures and people coming from different areas, with different ways and means of life. It was just a beautiful thing for me. It enlightened me and opened up my viewpoints tremendously.

Brower: Pee Wee Jackson.

Terry: Pee Wee Jackson was a trumpet player from Chicago who had formerly been with the Jimmie Lunceford band. Pee Wee Jackson and Freddie Webster were sidekicks in the Lunceford band. He was a very ebullient, big-smile cat. Played good trumpet. He, I think, ended up being sent out in the Treasure Island band, out in California.


Brower: You mentioned Freddie Webster. Did you know Freddie Webster?

Terry: Not really, really well, but I knew him enough to know – if I saw him, I'd say, "Hi Web."

Brower: He has a kind of a – he's sort of a minor myth in jazz.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: There's not a lot of him on record, and he has – his sound is sort of legendary.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Yeah, absolutely. The thing that most of us remember Web by is – he was a notorious character, as far as wrong-doing things. He did a lot of that. But what we remember him by musically is the introduction that he played on the record with Sarah Vaughan. The tune was *If you could see me now*. [Terry sings the first sentence of lyrics: “If you could see me now, you’d know how blue I’ve been.”] He made a beautiful introduction. It’s got – it’s difficult to write this out, but it went [Terry vocalizes the melody]. Just that much, but it’s so beautifully done . . .

Brower: That was enough to establish a reputation.

Terry: Yeah. It was just 10 or 12 notes. [Terry sings it again.] Everybody, when they heard this the first time, said, “Wow, who is that?”

Brower: Luther Henderson, Dudley Brooks.

Terry: Luther Henderson and Dudley Brooks were two of our chief arrangers on staff at Great Lakes. Of course Dudley Brooks had been ensconced in the Hollywood scene, so he was doing a lot of writing for movies, etc., in Hollywood, but Luther – Luke, I used to call him – he’s an East Coaster. He’d been writing a lot – he’s a piano player, and Dudley’s also a piano player – he had been writing a lot for people on the East Coast. As a matter of fact I saw Luther two weeks ago. He came someplace where I was. Someplace where I was receiving a little award for some sort, and Luke came along.

Brower: Why’d you call him Luke?

Terry: Luke? I don’t know. I always have a thing for nicknaming people.

Brower: It just pops into your head.

Terry: It just popped into my head.

Brower: Big George Matthews.

Terry: Big George Matthews was a trombone player. He had been a member of the Count Basie band. His claim to fame was a record called *Lazy Lady Blues*. [Terry vocalizes the trombone melody.] He had a very, very unique style. He was a huge person. He must have been 7 1/2- or 8-feet tall, and he was big, aside from being tall. He played [with] a very strange type of embouchure. He played almost out of the corner of his mouth. I don’t know how. It must have been this side, because [Terry vocalizes a few notes] you could almost feed him through the other side of his mouth.

Big George Matthews. He never liked to fly. He had a West Indian accent, and Sweets [Edison] used to give it to him all the time. We called him Truce, T-r-u-c-e, because that was his pet word. He say, “Hey.” “What’s happening there?” “Truce, truce.” He loved to ride the train, because he hated airplanes. He said, “I’m going to get on Iron Michael.” He called the train Iron Michael. “I’m going to get on Iron Michael. I’m going to go home tomorrow.”

Brower: Robert Russell.

Terry: Robert?

Brower: Russell

Terry: R-u-s-s-e-l-l.

Brower: Um-hmm.

Terry: That one . . .

Brower: . . . doesn’t ring a bell.

Terry: . . . doesn’t ring a bell.

Brower: Wilbur Baranco.


Terry: Wilbur Baranco. I don’t know.

Brower: Doesn’t ring a bell. Andy Anderson.

Terry: Andy Anderson. The only Andy Anderson I ever remember was a little short cat who sang in Hathcock’s vocal group, which was at the Great Lakes, in barracks 1812. I don’t know if that’s the same Andy Anderson or not. But he was a sort of a nondescript person. No particular indulgence in one thing. Just a straight-laced little cat.

Brower: Stack Walton.

Terry: Stack was a m.c. He was a huge cat, great big guy. His name was Alonzo. We called him Stack because he was stacked up. He played a lot like Ben Webster. He was a master of ceremony. I saw Stack shortly before he passed away. He came to a concert down in Oklahoma. He lives – I think he was from Tulsa. Tulsa, Oklahoma. Marvelous player. Great guy.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Any other persons or incidents that you might want to recall or you think are important relative to Great Lakes?

Terry: That would pertain to jazz or music or the band.

Brower: Yeah, or your experiences that you felt were significant. You want them in the record.

Terry: The only thing that I can remember is that we had a little Chief Petty Officer. He had – every four years or so you get a stripe for service. He had stripes all up his – he must have been born in – and all of the officers for long enough to get their degree and get their officer’s stripes – your higher officer, you’re supposed to salute him. I’m trying to think of his name now. He used to walk around, sauntering around, and he would never salute any of them. They all respected him, because they knew he was a real salt, a real sailor.

Brower: Been out there. Let’s stop for a second.


[The recording resumes in mid-sentence.]

Terry: Just a flower on the wall, huh?

Brower: I want to resume with two things about Basie. Here we’re going to probably touch on some points that I lost on the tape last week. We talked about – tell me about your audition for the Basie band, how that came about, what happened.

Terry: I was in New York, and the Basie band was in the market for a trumpet player. So they hired me to come in to rehearse with the band at Nola’s Studio. Nola’s Studio at that time was at 1619 Broadway, up in the penthouse. So we went up. It was customary – on the whole scene, it was customary to give a new person a hard time joining a band. They’d give him hell. Put him through the mill. I sat in the rehearsal. They passed out some tunes, and we played them. I guess they were just warming me up. Then they threw a tune on me called *Hey Rube*, H-e-y R-u-b-e. *Hey Rube* was a call that the carnies used to use – carnies: people who worked on the carnival. If anybody ever got in trouble, all you had to do was yell “Hey, Rube,” and the whole damn carnival would drop whatever they were doing and come to your rescue. So *Hey Rube* – this was the name of this tune. *Hey Rube*.

Hey Rube had a whole bunch of high C’s. [Terry vocalizes the high-pitched trumpet melody.] It was three or four pages of long, high, shaking high C’s. This was on Emmett Berry’s part. The section at that time was Emmett Berry, Ed Lewis, Sweets Edison, and – I wonder whose place I was taking? But it was Ed Lewis, Emmett Berry, Sweets Edison. Maybe Bill Clinton was just going out or something. Anyhow, Ed

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1410  Smithsonian National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Lewis was the lead player, and when Emmett Berry came in as assistant lead, he shoved this part off onto Emmett Berry, whom we called Reb. So Reb – this was a chance for Reb to get rid of it and shove it on to me.

Luckily, I was in pretty good shape. I'd been rehearsing with the George Hudson band, stylizing the band, playing all the solos and playing all the lead. So I had good chops. I went through them C's. I ate them C's up. [Terry vocalizes the high notes.] The cats looked at me like, "Damn, where did this dude come from?"

So then they said, okay, we'll give him the real test. They played – next they passed out a tune called *South*. [Terry sings a substantial portion of the melody.] Now the next chorus goes [Terry sings a riff twice]. Right here [He sings it again, ending with an upward leap]. An octave, on a high A. Snooky [Young] had just made this record with the band, and Snooky had the most phenomenal chops going in those days, so he had made this high [Terry sings the end of the phrase an octave higher.] I never made a high A before in my life. I never even dreamed of making a high A. So they passed the part out, and I got the [Terry sings the passage again.] I made the high A. I thought, I don't know where in the world this high A came from. And then after I got lucky and made the high A, I said, "Okay. You guys got anything else you want me to do?" [Terry laughs]. I got belligerent then. I got lucky. I don't know where that A – I've not made one since nor before.


Brower: A few times you've mentioned – we're talking about the Hudson band – that you stylized it. What does that mean?

Terry: By using your imagination of the type of phrasing. For instance, you'd have a tune or passage, it might say eighth-note, quarter-note, eighth-note. You could either say "ta-ta-ta" or you could say "baw-dat-tah" or still – or I'll use a elongated type of phrasing, "boo dap too-doo bap doo doo dah-dat dah," where the average articulation would be "too tup tah-dup tup tup tuh-tuh tuh," but I reverse with "boo-dap dah-doo bap doop deep doe doht dah," which we call the laid-back, swinging version of a piece.

Brower: That's a preoccupation with you. It's in your ideas about singing, your ideas about tonguing and articulating the trumpet, this business of the nuances of accenting, holding notes, when you hit them, emphasize them, space.

Terry: Yeah. Exactly.

Brower: What was – if you'll again for me – give me a sense of the spirit of what was called the Old Testament band and what you got out of being in that trumpet section, what you got out of being in that trumpet section, or playing with those particular players.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center




Terry: One thing, we adhered to respect. It's a well-known fact that in each section, one man has been delegated the role of the quarterback or putting – keeping things in order. You just can't go and put 18 men on the bandstand, and 18 at random just choose the way they want it. So the trombone section would – the leader of that – the first trombone player – section would figure out a way of putting together the phrasing for that. And the saxophone section. The same thing in the trumpet section. Then contrapuntally they would figure out ways and means of making them fit.

I think I told this little joke the other day, about Ellington's – the thing – the message that he used to pass on to us about listening. He would say, "Listen" so much so to us, it would make us think that he thought we were deaf, until he would hit a discord sometimes to get our attention, so he could say, "Listen." We realized after a bit what he meant by total listening, which mean that what did you – did you pay attention as a lead player – a section player, to follow the type of vibrato which was being used by the lead player? Did you pay attention to what your part contrapuntally meant to the trombone and collectively the brass section? Or is everybody aware of what this overall picture is going to be with the indulgence of each section contrapuntally putting their parts together? It's all a part of an overall thing. The final analysis of the thing is, how does it all put together? Like a puzzle. Put two or three pieces of a puzzle, it don't mean a damn thing. If you put the whole thing, then there it is.

So we would get involved in this and have – I forgot what – I get talking so fast, I forgot what here's my point.

Brower: I was asking you to speak about the spirit of the Old Testament band, the band before the small-group breakup, and additionally, what you got out of being in that trumpet section with Emmett Berry and Sweets.

Terry: Oh yeah. I was talking about we paid – we had respect for the traditions. This more or less answers it, because we did pay attention to each other and listen to what the quarterback was – the guy who was delegated the role of keeping it together, and contrapuntally what it all meant. I was about to tell you that we sometimes get better results through the medium of a joke, because young people can remember that. In jazz education, we use this a lot. These tuba players that met in the supermarket – did I mention this the other day? – and one said, "Yeah, what'd you do last night on our night off?" he said. The other said, "Oh, the old lady dragged me out to the opera." He said, "Yeah, what did they do?" "They did *Carmen*, man." Said, "Yeah?" He said, "Yeah. You know that area down measure 456 where we go boo boo boo boo-boo-boo boo?" He said, "Yeah, that the one we have so much fun at. All the tuba players trying to out blow each other." He said, "Do you know what the rest of those idiots were playing?" He said, "No." He said, [Terry sings the troubadour melody from *Carmen*].

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

So at some point we get so involved in what we're doing, we – it makes no difference what our overall participation means to the piece. We're concerned with what we're doing right then, right there, and how loudly we can do it, and how much we can outdo the other person, not to think that it's just a part of the puzzle. Very often, we get involved in a situation like that, and particularly in jazz education we have to make kids realize that whatever they're doing, it's a part of an overall project.

Brower: Tell me about the – how the small group came about.

Terry: Which?

Brower: When Basie broke down the big band into a small-group band. In much of the literature, it's attributed to the collapse of the big bands in general. You gave me a slightly different insight.


Terry: It was due basically to Basie's indebtedness to the office. He owed the office a lot of money, and he got in trouble through the medium of the horses. He was a big horse player. I guess that's where Al Grey got his training from. But Basie, every time he's got \$10 in his hand, [Terry whistles], straight to the race track. They say he wouldn't bet long little bets like \$2 and \$5. He had to bet \$50, \$100. If he won, he won big, but when he lost, he lost bigger.

Brower: So the business of breaking down the band was so that they could somehow . . .

Terry: They wanted to get Basie out of . . .

Brower: . . . a bigger part of the fee.

Terry: They wanted to get Basie out of debt, so they put a small band around him, paid him a small salary. As a matter of fact, Buddy DeFranco, the clarinet player – caucasian cat. You know who he is – he was making more money than Basie was, and they put him in Basie's band. The group started out with Basie, Gus Johnson on drums, Jimmie Lewis, who is a bass violin player that we had run into in Louisville, Kentucky, and Freddie Green, of course, guitar. In the front line was me, Buddy DeFranco, and a saxophone player. The way we acquired the saxophone: Basie called me up in St. Louis. He says, "Hey man, who's out there that's playing any saxophone." I said, "We got two cats here who play very well. One is an old, established brother named Jimmy Forrest and the other is a young caucasian kid named Bob Graf." So he said, "Get the kid." I guess he figured he wasn't going to have to pay him much money, as much money anyhow as Forrest. So I got Bob Graf to come join Basie's band, the newly formed septet, or whatever it was.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



We opened at a place called – right in . . .

Brower: In Chicago?

Terry: In Chicago. There's another club on the South side with the same name where they used to feature . . .

Brower: Was it the Brass Rail?

Terry: Brass Rail, exactly. Yeah, the Brass Rail. While working in the Brass Rail – we worked there regularly for long period of time. Basie was working himself out of debt. Probably not making much more money than I was. I was making \$125 a week. Buddy DeFranco was making a big salary. Of course, the office that Basie was working out of was the same office that was handling Buddy DeFranco. Buddy was on the rise in bread, and Basie was going down, because they tried to get some of the money back from him that he had lost in the crap game.


I'm trying to think of the name of the guy who managed – Willard Alexander. Willard Alexander was the one who was running the Basie band, and he was also running Buddy DeFranco.

Brower: Did – do you remember Wardell Gray being in that group?

Terry: Absolutely. I was the best man at his wedding while he was in that group. He had been married to Geri Gray, the dancer who just recently passed away. That's how Geri Gray got her name, from Wardell Gray. At this point he was married to Dorothy. He was getting married to Dorothy. They got married in [Las] Vegas, and I was the best man at their wedding.

At one point, when Bob Graf was with us at the Brass Rail – Carlos Gastel, who was a representative for the Woody Herman band, used to come in the club every night and listen to the band. Little did we realize he was scouting Bob Graf to go with Woody Herman's band, which he eventually did. Bob Graf is an obnoxiously little, nice looking blond kid, but he used to – when I first brought him up, we used to room together, because I was to get him acclimated. He'd get up in the morning, comb his hair, and say, "Do you realize that I'm better looking than 50% of the women on this earth?" That's the kind of a person he was. Of course I don't have to tell you what I had to say to him. But anyway, he eventually allow Carlos Gastel to scout him out of the band, put him in Woody Herman's band.

Right after that we got Charlie Rouse for a while – oh no. We got Bones – Wardell. I call him Bones. We got Wardell first, and that's when Wardell met Dorothy and got married. Then when Wardell left, we got Rouse – Charlie Rouse.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: What was your estimation of Wardell Gray as a player?

Terry: My estimation of Wardell? He was a magnificent player. Very unique, very individual player, very articulate, and a very knowledgeable person. He was a guy that – he was an unusual type of cat. Very thin. He was so thin – I always compare him with Miles. They’d be so skinny, if they turn sideways, they would have marked them absent. He was really a skinny little cat. He loved to cook. He’s from Oklahoma. He was some sort of an Indian: Choctaw or something. He worked with a lot of big bands.

He and I became very, very good friends, real tight. Even after he left the band, we used to write each other. At one point, I had heard that he was using stuff, and I spoke to him. I said, “Man, I heard the most stupid thing I ever heard in my life.” He said, “What’s that?” “Somebody told me that you were using stuff,” and I laughed and laughed. Little did I realize that he was. Shortly after that, he used to make himself as scarce as possible from my presence.

Brower: Do you remember Serge Chaloff?


Terry: Serge Chaloff, right. Serge Chaloff and Rouse and Buddy DeFranco and I were the front line in Basie’s band when we played the Band Box in New York. Serge was a junkie, and Rouse was messed up, so Buddy DeFranco’s out front, playing a solo, and the rhythm section’s back there, Basie and Jimmy Lewis, Freddie Green, and Gus Johnson, pumping away, and I’m playing in the background [Terry sings a riff], and I’m holding up both of them with elbows. I got an elbow over here holding up Rouse, an elbow holding up Serge Chaloff. They’re trying to play and swing.

Brower: What about Chaloff’s musicianship.

Terry: Serge was a marvelous musician, fantastic baritone saxophone player. His mother was a teacher, so he had a natural – naturally he was marvelous player. But he was a victim, a real pitiful victim.

Brower: Is it true that out of some concern about the uniforms the band had, that you did – tell me what you did?

Terry: That is a fact. We were in Toronto at a club – I can’t think of the name of the club. We had been wearing these old ragged uniforms for years. [They] were actually torn all up on the sleeves. The liner was ripped out. It was really horrible. We said, “Basie, why don’t we go get some” – “Aw, don’t worry about the uniform.” [We] said, “okay.” One day, in the early afternoon, I went by Marshal Royal’s room. Marshal was in the band then on clarinet, after Buddy left. We were making a film in Hollywood. This same group: Wardell, Buddy DeFranco, Freddie, and Gus, and they wouldn’t film

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Buddy DeFranco, because they said it would ruin the Southern market. So that's when we hired Marshal Royal to play clarinet. On any given day, Marshal Royal is more caucasian looking than Buddy. Anyhow, we're in Toronto at this point, because during that period, Al Grey was killed – not Al Grey. Al Killian was killed. Somebody shot him right in the head, in the middle of the forehead, like the same as they did Howdy Doody – what's his name? Little trumpet player.

Brower: Howdy Doody.

Terry: What's the trumpet player whose wife shot him in the head?

Brower: Oh, Lee Morgan.

Terry: Lee Morgan, yeah. This cat shot Al in the head the same way. We went from California to Chicago, and Al Killian's body came from California to Chicago, where they buried him, and we, the band, were pallbearers for Killian.


By this time, Marshal Royal is a member of the band, and we're in this club in Toronto. I said to Marshal, "Marshal, this dude thinks that we're kidding about the uniform. Bring me your uniform," and I took mine. We went over to Basie's room, and I tore them in strips. I hung them on a doorknob outside his door, and I lit them with matches – lit the bottom of it, and I banged on his door. He comes to the door, saw all this fire, say, "Oh my God." He started jumping up and down, and the flames – [?] the flames up. Me and Marshal Royal were around the corner, peeking around the corner at the smoke and the fire and Basie doing this dance. So we went to work that night, me and Marshal, sharp, sharper than him. He screamed at us, called us – laid a few epithets on us. We laid a few back on him. He said – I said, "Basie, I told you we were tired of wearing these things and we need some uniforms. So now you can do what you want to. We can come to work in our own clothes, or you can buy us some . . . [interruption of recording]

Brower: I'm going to stop.

[The recording resumes.]

Terry: Did it get dark a little? My eyes are always playing tricks on me. I'm gonna go get me another toothpick.

Brower: You were – first of all, this is Bill Brower interviewing Clark Terry on June the 22nd, 1999, for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program. I want to pick up the interview with some further discussion of your days with Basie, talking about the economics of it. You were telling me about a situation which had to do with union dues, I believe. The dollar story.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: We talked about the uniform already, didn't [we]? Yeah.

Brower: Right. We talked about uniforms.


Terry: This was – I think we used to pay 1% – 3% tax – work dues, they called them – of which we were returned 1%. It had gone on for a long period of time. At this point each member of the band was due back about \$357. I kept abreast of it. I kept saying, said, “[?], we’re going – you’re going to have to play that money, because it’s rolling up. It’s getting higher.” He said, “Aw, man, don’t worry about that money.” [I] said, “Okay.” It kept going, until it finally got up to \$357.” [I] said, “[?], now I’m going to tell you. If you don’t want to face the whole situation, you can just pay me, and I’ll just step out of it, and everybody else will go for themselves. But I just want you to give me my \$357.” “Aw, yeah, man.” I said, “Okay, I’m going to go to Leo [?Clusom] on it.” Leo Clusom was the head of – the secretary of the union, the national body. So I wrote Leo Clusom and he made it mandatory that Basie had to pay within a certain few days \$357 to everybody in the band. He came to me. He said, “You” so-and-so-and-so. I said, “I told you. You could have paid me, and look at all the 357 you could have saved. Now you have to pay everybody.”

Brower: When you were in the band, did you have an opportunity to play with the rhythm section that had Walter Page and Jo Jones in it, and Freddie Green, or not?

Terry: No. Walter Page had long since been out of the band when I – of course I did work in the band for a while with Papa Jo, and of course on many other occasions I worked with Jo: studios – jazz studio gigs and record sessions and so forth. But I never worked with Big Walter Page.

Brower: What was Jo Jones, Freddie Green, that rhythm section like to play with in the first band, when you first got there?

Terry: It was very – like a well-oiled machine, something that was so fitting and so beautiful, ’til you could just relax. It’s like sitting back in your most comfortable chair at home, just sitting back and relaxing, because you could play, because you knew that they had you. You could relax. You could lay back. That was the – one of the prime prerequisites to play in the Basie band, to be able to lay back and relax, and with a rhythm section like that, you could do that, because Freddie Green has a system of playing with a “chunk chank chunk chank.” We used to call it a “ching” and a “chang.” [Terry sings a descending line] “Ching chang ching chang ching chang ching chang ching chang.” That plus what Page and all the bassists that followed there [Terry sings the same line] “doom doom doom doom,” that descending type of walking bass, and of course Papa Jo had some cymbal maneuvers that were majestic and just unbelievable. [Terry vocalizes a swing rhythm on a ride cymbal.] He could turn the cymbal beat

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

around and just make it swing and then come back. And Basie was phenomenal at comping. He knew how to play and leave just enough space for you to kill yourself.

Brower: You called him a master of simplicity and understatement and the utilization of space and time . . .

Terry: Absolutely.

Brower: . . . and that you felt this came basically out of his life style.


Terry: I think so, yeah. I think so. He was a person that was – he indulged in many facets of enjoyment of life, and he had lots of friends. To use the rhythm section the way he did, he – in a club like the Cherry Blossom in Kansas City, he would have lots of friends around. It was a small room, about twice the size of this living room. Gingham cloth tables and many of them very close to the bandstand. He would start off playing a tune, “plink,” and Page and Jo Jones, “cha-boom bing doom ssh-sh-ssssh,” and Basie say, “plink cha-plink,” and he’s going over, socializing at one spot – one table. Comes back and hits another [Terry sings a repeated riff] and he walks off again. He’s economizing. He’s not playing everything he knows at once. [At the] same time, he’s using that rhythm section. That rhythm section is becoming a part of everything, of the whole atmosphere. When we get young students to realize this, how important space – the utilization of space and time really is, it proves to them how valuable the whole thing is. You don’t have to – like we used to always say, you don’t have to spend all your salary in one purchase. Spread it around.

Brower: How did the band change? Or how was the band that came after small group, so-called second or New Testament band?

Terry: The first . . .

Brower: How was it different than the old band?

Terry: It was horrible, because he had people in there who were not traditionalized. At least they didn’t – they weren’t really ready for that type of life, the laid-back, relaxed indulgence in playing. A lot of them were – come from different areas, different walks of life, and they had different objectives and different goals, and they played that way. Collectively, they couldn’t put it together. He had a lot of strange people. He had people who just maybe never thought together. I remember the band – some of the personnel of the band we had in the Strand. People like Leon Comegys, Lammar Wright, Jr., Lucky Thompson, just to name a few. Most of these people were not really the type of people who were really zeroed in on becoming a Basie-ite. Before you can really be an important cog in the wheel, a person who wants to get involved or something, they have to really want to be involved in that. They have to have a concept of how they’re going

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

to fit in that, even before they get in there. When they get in there, it's still a well-oiled part.

Brower: You brought Ernie and Jimmy Wilkins into the band.

Terry: Right.


Brower: Tell that story.

Terry: Basie needed – he needed an alto [saxophone] player. We were in the Strand at the same time. The band was at its lowest ebb, so I got to thinking about my old buddies back home. I said, “Yeah. I got an alto player for you.” Ernie never played alto, but he was a great tenor [saxophone] player. I called him out of Basie’s dressing room while Basie was taking a steam shower, and of course the steam, “pssssssssss.” [He] couldn’t hear what I was saying, so I called Ernie, and I said, “Hey, man. You want to come join Basie’s band?” He said, “Oh, man, don’t be kidding with me.” [I] said, “Oh, I’m very serious.” He said, “Are you serious?” I said, “Yeah, but you got to come here right away, and bring Jimmy with you.” “Jimmy too!?” I said, “Yeah, but you got to get an alto.” “Alto!” “Yeah,” I said, “alto. Don’t scream, because – you got to get an alto.” He said, “Okay.” I finally convinced him that I was serious, and I knew that he really wanted to do it, so I told him, “Take a train right now, tonight, and come to New York, 47th Street. You’re not too far from Penn Station. Come on over to the hotel. Then we’ll go the theater in the morning.”

So they took a train that night and got there the next morning. I took them in, Ernie and Jimmy, and I said, “Bas, this is your new alto player and your new trombone player. They couldn’t make it last night because they were out on a gig.” I didn’t tell him they came from St. Louis. So he said, “Okay.” I said, “In case” – the two arrangers were Jimmy Mundy and – I can never recall this guy’s name. I call him Boot-whip so much, I can never think of his name. Anyhow, everybody knows who the other writer was. I said, “In case they get too busy, this cat can write, and he can help them out in writing.” He said, “Yeah, okay. All right.” So shortly after that he said, “I think I’ll give this kid a chance to do something.” So he called Ernie and asked Ernie to write something for our newly acquired singer, who was Joe Williams at the time, and he wrote *Every Day I Have the Blues*, and from that point on the band was catapulted right back to the top, where it’s been ever since.

Brower: Did – was Joe Williams working with the band – with the small group too at the Brass Rail? Was he doing things in Chicago?

Terry: Yeah. Joe was with the small group. I’ll never forget, because that was the time he bet me and Basie that Ezra Charles was going to beat Joe Louis, and Basie and I laughed at him. He cleaned up on both of us, because Charles did beat him.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Ezra Charles was a big jazz fan. Did you know Ezra Charles?

Terry: Yeah. He was supposed to be a bass player, but I didn't know him real, real well, but I know he was a jazz buff.

Brower: Did you recruit other people for Basie? Did you bring other people into the band?

Terry: Yeah, I got a lot of people in the band from time to time: Bernie Peacock, Ernie, Jimmy. [Let's] see. Who else? I got Paul Campbell.

Brower: Is he also known as Soup Campbell?

Terry: Soupy, yeah.

Brower: Is he from – he's from St. Louis.

Terry: He's from St. Louis.

Brower: Did he replace you? Did he take your chair when you left the band?


Terry: In Basie's band?

Brower: Yeah.

Terry: I don't really know who took my chair when I left Basie's band. I really don't. But quite a few guys in that band – Ellington's band too. They would always – both of them would always come to me when they needed a change in personnel. I must have been batting pretty good with them, because everybody that I put in there, they kept them.

Brower: How did you give notice to Basie? When and where?

Terry: When Duke wanted me to join his band, he said, "It's not proper protocol to snack one key player out of one's buddy's band, so why don't you just get sick, go home, and wait until we come through there. We're coming through St. Louis on Armistice Day, November 11th, and you just might want to feel like coming back out, trying your chops out again." So I put my notice in. Basie had just given me a raise to \$140 a week, but Ellington made me an offer of \$250, I think it was. When I finally decided I'd go with Duke, he said, "and while you're going home, resting up – while you're home resting for these" – it was about three months, I think, between – he said, "I'll put you on salary." That put the icing on the cake. I said, "You got it, man." So I

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

went home. I thought I was a big-time celebrity, just leaving Duke, going home to St. Louis to hang around to wait for my next gig to come through, Duke Ellington's band. Meanwhile, on salary. You couldn't beat that.

Brower: When Basie passed – let me ask you, before I ask you that – did you – I think I read somewhere that oftentimes Basie would have you conduct the band or . . .

Terry: He would have a lot of us from time to time do – kick the band off and stop it or something like that, but if he was going to be off the stand or something, socializing heavily or something, we – either one of us would take the responsibility of doing that, but for the most part, he would get a saxophone player, because he was down front, and all he had to do was stand up and say, “bing.”

Brower: When the – when Basie passed, did you want to run that band? Or was it not . . .

Terry: At one point I was asked to front the band, and I was up for consideration. This was before Thad [Jones] or Joe Williams or any of the cats that took over. Was it Frank Foster or whatever. Before any of them were considered, they asked me. Norman Granz was on the board, and Norman vetoed. He said, “No. I will not allow him to do that.” I said – somebody called him Smedley – I said, “Smedley, why did you not want me?” He said, “Because you'd be dead in a year's time.” So I suppose I have to thank Smedley for not allowing me to front the band.”

Brower: How did Norman Granz get the nickname Smitty?

Terry: Smedley.

Brower: Smedley.

Terry: Smedley, because Oscar [Peterson] said he looked like an old British butler. He said, “Home James. I say there . . .” So we used to call him – lovingly, we called him Smedley, but not too many people would call him that. Like not too many people call Miles [Davis] Inky, either.

Brower: Where'd that name come from?

Terry: I don't know who nicknamed him, but we used to call him Inky. He was very . . .

Brower: . . . rich in color.

Terry: Yeah, rich in color, and we'd – I'd asked him one time, say, "Miles, why they call you Inky?" And of course he would answer with a few choice words and tell me why.

Brower: Did you have a nickname for Miles?

Terry: I used to call him Inky.

Brower: Okay. You characterized your time with Ellington as being like being in college, and you further said – just reading a quote – "I would say that probably the most outstanding thing was the period during which I worked with the Ellington band" in terms of maybe characterizing your career. Do you want to expand on those ideas?


Terry: I refer to my stint with the Ellington band as the period during which I attended the University of Ellingtonia, and that encompassed – every university has to have, what? Five schools. There were far more schools than that that you became well educated in at the University of Ellingtonia. I refer to my stint with the Basie band as the period during which I attended the prep school in preparation for enrollment at the University of Ellingtonia. So both those schools were – both bands were very, very important to me as far getting my jazz education and jazz chops together.

I think that with the Ellington, one of the most important things that happens to you is something that happens, you don't – you're not even aware of. You wonder sometimes, in a pinch, what am I going to do here? All of a sudden, you stop and think: while I was Ellington's band, while I was with Ellington's band, I used to wonder about a situation that would come up. Sure enough, these situations are coming up: how do you establish a rapport between the bandstand and an audience? How do you psychoanalyze men? How do you confront men with egos and attitudes, or as we sometimes call it, "ego-tudes"? It's a combination of the two. How do you deal with that? How do you program an important concert? How do you choose tempos? How do you choose material? What motivates you to play this tune for this audience and not this tune for that audience?

All these things, without your being aware of it at all, become a part of you, and you sort of computerize them, and they're there for instant recall. When you get in a jam or a place like that, bing, you push the button, and there it is. The same thing with Basie when you're dealing with tempos for something that you want to play in a way that's going to make a difference. You think about his expertise in space and time.

Brower: What about the – what did – what was your – what is the – what was your learning that came from sitting in the trumpet section with Cat Anderson, Shorty Baker, Ray Nance, and others in the Ellington band?

Terry: First of all . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: What would you walk away with from that band?


Terry: First of all, when you walked into that band, you were pretty well aware of what had to be done in order to be there, regardless of who was sitting on either side of you. So it didn't matter too much about who was sitting on either side of you, because whoever was sitting on either side of you had to be well into ways and means of fitting into Ellingtonia in Ellingtonia fashion, with Ellington-type music. So it was just like pulling out – if a battery dropped one out, you put a new battery in, but it was going to do the same function as the battery which you took out. So they themselves did not actually determine Ellington's music. Ellington's music determines itself, and he made sure that he put people there in these slots that would interpret the music in the fashion that this slot called for. So you really – when you got there, you knew what your chores were. You knew how to do it, and you did it.

As a matter of fact, when somebody would fall out, or didn't show up, maybe got sick or had to leave early or something, that part had to be played, and it was expected from Ellington that everybody – you could take this slot out here and put it over here, put this slot right here, and the music would still – was supposed to be the same. 99 times out of a hundred, it was. In other words, what I'm saying is, if I was not playing the lead part on a certain tune, and Cat Anderson didn't show up, I fit in that slot. I could make the band sound exactly the same. Anybody in the section, except of course for the extremely ionosphere-type notes that had to be played, and Duke was slick enough not to use those type of things unless that particular person was there.

Brower: Is it true that it was not first trumpet or whatever, that the pieces – the roles were identified and style that he wanted?

Terry: Absolutely. They didn't write the music, the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth. When they pass out a piece of music, you saw the names: Ray Nance, Harold Baker, Cat Anderson, Willie Cook, Gerald Wilson, Clark Terry, whomever. All the people's names were on the music. That used to be a mark of distinction and a great satisfaction as far as your ego's concerned, because you might sit there all night, and you didn't have to say, "I'm playing the fifth book" or the fourth book. You're playing your book, because there's some passages in there, if you're playing fifth, that he wanted you to play. [It] might be [Terry sings a brief ascending melody]. Then you go back to the low part. But he knew what he had himself surrounded with, and he would write for these things.

As I mentioned once before, I think, when they pass out a new chart, our compliments to them would be just heavily loaded, heavily loaded, and they would say to us, "Did you enjoy your parts?", which I think is a marvelous thing, because not too many

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1410  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



arrangers or composers would care less – could care less about what you enjoyed or not. Just play my fourth part. Play my fifth part. I wrote it, and you’re playing it. So play it.

Brower: How was the – what was the – how was it like, breaking into the band on a personal level?

Terry: It was a very, very difficult thing, to break into that band on a personal level, because they were not very friendly people at all times, particularly to new people coming in the band. They used to have a saying there: “don’t put your laundry in ’til you’ve even been there a while.”


I would very often wonder what tunes we would play, because Duke never called a tune. He never announced it. He would indicate what was being played through the medium of the introduction which he played on the tune. He would go [Terry sings a phrase], and people would start digging for their music, those that needed it. A lot of them didn’t even need it, so they’d just be prepared for the down beat. I could ask people – cats sitting next to me, “Say, what is it?” “I don’t know, man. I don’t know the number on that.” It could have been true, but a lot of them were just evil like that, because the music was all tattered and torn. You couldn’t see the numbers. You couldn’t see the parts. You couldn’t see the names half the time, but if you’d been there long enough, you knew what you had to do.

Finally I found out that Quentin Jackson – Butter, we called him – was a good buddy. I would say, “Hey Butter, excuse me Butter, what tunes are we playing?” “456.” I’d dig through the books. By the time I found it, through these old torn-out, tattered edges of the music, they’d finished playing that. They had something else. “What’s the name of that one, Butter?” “309.” So I spent the whole night digging digging digging digging, like a dog digging for a bone, looking for the music.

Brower: Did the – how much of that band was on the paper? How much was in those guys heads?

Terry: All of it was on the paper originally, when he wrote it, and most of it was remembered by the – over a period of years, except that Harry Carney was there longer than anybody, but he always got out every piece of music, every night, that was being played – every night, every piece of music. And though I’m sure that 99% of it he knew, like most of us would know, but there’s some things you – there’s a couple of little passages in there that are intricate, that you would need to see the music on from time to time.

Brower: I asked this a little bit different, when I asked you to go back again – did you learn anything as far as technique or in the jazz idiom in that band?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1410  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: In Duke's band?

Brower: In Duke's band.

Terry: Oh sure. I learned, first of all, how to interpret Ellington's music in the fashion that I knew he wanted it interpreted. I knew that in order to manipulate and articulate properly the plunger movements, you had to do it a certain way. You just couldn't go in there and take a plunger, say "quack, quack, quack," which is what most people do. You have to indulge in the total manipulation of the plunger. One thing that we teach in jazz education today, young people who are getting involved, we teach them to really articulate and manipulate the plunger with, in mind, one of the old English lessons: "how now brown cow." All of these manipulations and movements of the plunger that get these effects – "now": come from out, in. "O" would be marked as an open tone, and "+" would be closer to the bell. "goo gok goo gok gok grow." Then you could use that in conjunction with a growl, or a burr, or a flutter-tongue [Terry vocalizes each one]. So you got "umm grr drrrrl," all of them with manipulations of the plunger.

Brower: What about derbies? [derby mutes]

Terry: Derbies, the same thing, same thing. We got into – the Basie band was very notorious for that, and that's a lost art today: how far in, how far out, and how far to swing the derby. [Terry vocalizes derby-muted effects.] You could bend notes with it. But it's something that you have to do in order to be good at it.

Brower: How did you come to – how did *Perdido* get to be your piece?

Terry: When I joined the band, everybody used to play a little bit on *Perdido*. When you come in, in order to make you feel welcome, Duke would always try to find something that you could stretch out on. So he would let me stretch out on *Perdido*. It wasn't 'til a long time there that he actually wrote something for me to play on. I think *Juniflip on the Flugelhorn* was the first thing he wrote for me from the left hand corner to the end.

Brower: Let's talk about the flugelhorn. How did Duke come to know that you were into the instrument, or how did that develop as another color for his palette? How did that come to be?

Terry: In 1957 we were playing one of our many, many stints at the Blue Note in Chicago. Billy Taylor was in town. He was recording in Chicago at the Universal Studios. He was using, as his personnel for this record, the Ellington band, everybody except Duke of course. He – Billy himself played piano. So we had all of us – [Johnny] Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, Jimmy Woode, Sam Woodyard, Jimmy Hamilton. We were all on his date. The date was called *Taylor-made Jazz*.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Every time I'd play Chicago, I'd always stay with a good friend of mine who was also in the Navy with me. His name's Sykes Smith. Sykes was from St. Louis. He was one of the earlier trumpet players in St. Louis. He worked with the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra at the Club Plantation. When I was a kid, he used to invite me up, to come up the back stairs of the place, which we all had to go up. He'd put a chair up in the corner and said, "Come on and sit up there, kid." I'd sit there, and he let me – when he had a solo, he'd point to me, and he let me take his solos. So I garnered quite a bit of experience working with Sykes.

Whenever I tell this story, I start elaborating a wee bit, and I forget what I . . .

Brower: We're pursuing the flugelhorn.


Terry: Yeah, the flugel. So, I always stay at Sykes's house in Chicago. There was one particular morning we went to do the Billy Taylor record session. About halfway through the date – we were almost through the date, Sykes jumped in his car and came down to the date and came in the studio with a big box, like the box you opened for us this morning, and there was a flugelhorn in there. Opened up the case, and there was this brand new, gold plated flugelhorn that had been sent from Paris, but they sent to the address in Chicago. Sykes knew that we were down in rehearsal. Said, "I think you might want to see this," so he brought it right down, and I opened it. It looked so beautiful. I played a few notes. It sounded beautiful. So Billy Taylor said, "Why don't you play that on the date?" I said, "I intend to." We did it on the date. That was November 1957. I went to the club that night, to the Blue Note, and Duke said, "Hey, let's keep that in." Next thing I knew, he was writing *Juniflip on the Flugelhorn* for me.

Brower: Duke is well known for utilizing the ideas that are around him to develop things. Are there any of the materials that you used or you played that he then took and used in some way or another, or elaborated into compositions?

Terry: Oh yeah. He was very open like that. He welcomed all sorts of suggestions and little bits and pieces. He would write in a fashion that he would leave you the privilege of elaborating, improving on an idea or a note or the way the phrasing should be. He would leave that up to you, because that was part of his thing.

It had often been said – I'm sure you've heard it many times. Everybody has heard that Duke played his band like we play our instruments. He knew what kind of effect to get for a certain effect on a certain piece. He'd point to you. You got it. Or he'd write it in your part. It was very, very beautiful to be able to respond to his whims that way.

Brower: Do you remember an incident with Oscar Pettiford, when he . . . ?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Oh yeah, that's [laughs] – a few of them with Oscar. First of all, he was of [American] Indian descent. We used to travel along, and on the road in those days we had no toilets, so we'd always find a spot where we could traipse up into the woods and use it to relieve ourselves. Oscar would always go way back in the woods. We'd always say, "Man, don't go back over there. There's bears up in . . ." And he said, "The bears know me. I'm Indian. They ain't going to bother me." Oscar was so [?].

Brower: What else – what other – you said you had a few memories of Oscar. They don't have to be really to Duke, but . . .

Terry: Yeah. One was that when we played in El Paso, Texas, Oscar was always – time to go to work, he was always missing. A little town across the border was called Juarez. Juarez, New Mexico – Juarez, Mexico, rather. Not New Mexico. So Oscar became known as "Juarez [where's] Oscar?, Juarez Oscar?" Every time we looked for Oscar, "Juarez Oscar?" "He's in Juarez."

Brower: Another incident I came across related to Duke's band was an incident involving Tony Scott and Charles Mingus.

Terry: Oh yeah. Charles Mingus – Tony, rather, always wanted to play in Ellington's band, and he always wanted to play Ben Webster's book in Ellington's band. So we finally got that going. The first trip was down South. We traveled on the bus. Mingus is sitting – Mingus was with the band then. Mingus is sitting on the left side of the bus, two seats behind me. I'm sitting about two seat up on the right side. In front of me is . . .

Brower: Tony Scott.

Terry: . . . Tony Scott. They started talking about various and sundry things, like you do on a bus trip, particularly with no ladies on it, and it got deeply ensconced in sex. Tony went on to use a term that is used – in caucasian vernacular, it has a slightly different meaning than when we use it in the ghetto vernacular. He kept using this word . . .


Brower: "C" and ends with a "k"?

Terry: Huh?

Brower: It starts with a "c," ends with a "k"?

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Okay.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: So he kept using this word, and Mingus got angry and said, “Your face always changing the meaning. It don’t mean” so-and-so. “It means” this, and he went on to explain what we usually refer to when we use it in the ghetto vernacular. So Charles kept talking, and he kept repeating it. So Mingus got up, walks up to the bus, two seats up to where he was, where Tony was sitting, and put his hand around his neck, around his – from the back of the seat, and pulled his head back. He was choking him to death. I thought he was kidding at first, ’til I saw Tony turning green and blue. I had to pull them apart.

Brower: You did some work with Mingus outside of the band. One of them is a situation in Town Hall.

Terry: Oh yeah. We did a concert at Town Hall with a big band. We had rehearsed, and he had a lot of new music, but he brought it all too late, and it was impossible for the music to have been played in the short period of time that we had to rehearse it in. He was just going to bulldoze the date anyhow, which he did. So he had us come in tuxedos for the concert at Town Hall, and he was a little late showing up. We’re on the bandstand. Finally he shows up with a tank shirt on – a tee shirt, rather, and a sloppy cap hanging down. His sandals, with his toes hanging out, and blue jeans with patches all over them, and he made the announcement, “I don’t know what you guys are here for, but this is a record date.” He said to the audience, “So anybody wants to watch us record, okay. If you don’t, you can go home.” People had paid their money to come see this concert.

He started out on a tune that was just a head blues, and he said, “What we’re going to do is get this thing rolling here with a little tune we call *Clark in the Dark*.” And I was really in the dark. I didn’t know what the heck he was talking about. He called me down. Me and Eric Dolphy started doing some [Terry sings a fragment of avant-garde melody] – fussing and fighting at each other on the instrument, and that’s what he called *Clark after Dark*.

Brower: I understand that at the – somehow at the end of this concert, that he walked off and they were bringing the curtain down, and you started playing *In a Mellotone* or something like that, trying maybe to further salvage the evening?

Terry: Oh yeah. He ended up playing some tunes that the audience would – were familiar with, because the stuff that he had written or had had written just didn’t make it at all. It was impossible to play that stuff. So we ended up playing some old familiar Ellington tunes by memory, by ear.

Brower: Just to salvage . . .

Terry: Yeah. The people didn't get to angry about it, because they heard some Ellington and they heard some good solos, but they were really hacked at this new stuff that he had written. They couldn't figure it out. "Why? What's he trying to do?"

Brower: Going back to Ellington – besides *Juniflip* and *Perdido*, Duke really started to utilize you during some of his suites and so forth.

Terry: Yeah, he did. One of his biggies, *The Newport Suite*, he did on this something which he would often do on a lot of his pieces: he would write so far, and then he'd get to a point where he – he hated finality. He hated to write endings, because endings had a connotation of finality to him. So he would get up so far, and he would say to a person in his band, "Hey, write me a little ending on this. Make it 18, 20 measures" or whatever. 6 measures. "You don't have to orchestrate it. Just write it out. I'll orchestrate it." He knew, when he explained it to you, that you would know what he wanted. He said, "Make it a little boppish, a little modern, but still remember, I'm going to orchestrate it." And he got exactly what he wanted from you.

On this one particular thing which we recorded, which is called *Newport Up*, he wrote a little thing up to a point, and he said, "I want you to tack an ending on it for me." I said, "Okay." So the ending that I put on there [Terry sings the melody of the bop theme *Hot House*], that was the end of the whole piece, symphony orchestra and all. It came off beautifully.


Brower: What about the Buddy Bolden thing in *The Drum is a Woman*?

Terry: Buddy Bolden. He had told me, "Sweetie, you're going to portray the role of Buddy Bolden . . .

Brower: He called you what?

Terry: He called me "Sweetie." He would say that to everybody. "Sweetie." "Hi Sweetie."

So I said, "Maestro, you don't know a thing about Buddy Bolden. You know I don't know anything about Buddy Bolden." He said, "Oh sure. We know all about Buddy Bolden. He was suave. He was debonair." Then he psychoanalyzed me then. Making you – he's transforming you into Buddy Bolden. He'd say, "He played a lot of diminishes. He could bend a note. Oh, and he had a big, fat sound. When he hit a note in Algiers, it was so powerful 'til it would break glasses across the river in New Orleans – from New Orleans to Algiers, he'd break glasses." Meanwhile he says, "Play me some half notes." I play some. "Bend me some notes. Play me some diminishes." He'd say, "That's it. You are Buddy Bolden."

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



So what I played on the record was exactly what he asked for. [Terry sings a melody] and so forth. I'd play some diminishes and bend some notes. [Terry sings further.] He said, "That's Buddy Bolden. You are Buddy Bolden." He had me thinking I was Buddy Bolden.

Brower: How about Puck in *Such Sweet Thunder*?

Terry: I had a tendency from time to time to imitate little things that Rex [Stewart] used to do with Ivie Anderson when they were doing their comedy bit together, with the semi-suppressed valve [Terry vocalizes a screechy effect]. Instead of a note, you get the "errr." So at the end of the thing, where Puck was supposed to say "What fools you mortals be," I said it on the horn with the cocked valve [Terry sings the effect].

Brower: Was that your idea to do that?

Terry: No, no. It was Duke's idea at first, but I don't know how. I guess it might have been written, "What fools ye mortals be," but I'd just make it a simmer [Terry vocalizes the effect] instead of playing the notes.

Brower: Speaking of vocalized devices in the Ellington band, how much of the tradition of Bubber Miley was conveyed to you in that band?


Terry: Bubber Miley was one who created the utilization of the plunger, and he kept ideas – ways and means of using the plunger on a spread basis [Terry vocalizes a wa-wa effect] to play melodies and make it sound almost human. So that was one of the things that those of us who were around Ellington for a while, we learned a lot about that too.

Brower: Speaking of Rex Stewart, I don't know whether I would call it a controversy or not, but this is a quote that I got from your responding to someone saying that you got your style from Rex Stewart: "with regard to the so-called half-valve thing, it's not true that I derive my style from Rex Stewart."

Terry: That's true. I didn't. Actually the only time I used the half-valve was when my valves stick or something. I'm too busy trying to make many notes instead of slurring on a note, except that when I did that little funny thing on "What fools you mortals be" on Puck. But I never knew Rex. I never listened to Rex. As a matter of fact, I hadn't heard too much of the Ellington band before I got – had a chance to be around it, after – of course Rex was gone long since then.

Brower: But to achieve those effects, or effects like that, did you use things other than the half-valve?

Terry: I never attempted to use the effects that he did.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Okay.

Terry: Even playing [?]'s horn and all, I never did use those type of tunes, where they "brtt brtt brtt." I never did do a lot of that.

Brower: Billy Strayhorn. What was your memory, recollection of him? And did he do material for you, to try to feature you?

Terry: Billy Strayhorn was Duke's alter-ego. He was an extension of the maestro. The maestro gave him carte-blanc as far as writing and living was concerned. I understand he didn't even have a salary, that he just did whatever he felt like doing, and Duke of course being backed up with his ASCAP earnings – he got lots of money from ASCAP every year, so he and Strayhorn just lived and paid the expenses with their – his ASCAP earnings.

Billy Strayhorn was – I called him Peas. His nickname was Sweetpea, and I one-upped him. I have personal names for people, so I called him Peas.

I mentioned earlier I think about this tune, that the arrangement he brought in on *Sophisticated Lady* – we played it, and after – it was so beautiful, afterwards I went up to him and said, "Peas, this is just fantastic." His reply to me was, "Did you enjoy your part?", which I thought was a fantastic statement to make.

Brower: Rick Henderson.

Terry: Rick Henderson was an old roommate in the Basie – in the Ellington band. Rick was at one time the leader of the Howard Theater band in Washington, D.C., on 7th and T [Streets, NW] – 7th and Wiltberger [Street, NW].

Brower: Do you have – speaking of Washington, do you have any particular recollections of Washington, D.C.?

Terry: Yeah. Edwina's, where you could go and eat all you want. Pissy widow, we used to call her. Pres used to like to live there – Lester Young.

Brower: Liked to lived in Washington?

Terry: Yeah, and in particular at Edwina's.

Brower: Where was Edwina's?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: I can't figure out the name of the street, but it was about 7th and T, Wiltberger, back, facing the theater, the Howard Theater. If you stood like the Howard Theater and you walked across the street, it was diagonally right and up in there.

Brower: Did you work other places besides the Howard during that era? Do you remember other venues, or . . .

Terry: Only the Wolf Trap.

Brower: Wolf Trap, which is a more recent phenomenon.

Terry: Yeah. But my favorite thing about D.C., that I'll never forget, always remember, is Tim and Grace's Hot Dog Stand, the half-smokes, right next to the Howard. Remember that little half-smoke joint? A little small place, about not much bigger than this table. They cooked half-smoked sausages and hot dogs. Hot Dog Tim, we used to call him. A little tiny little cat. His wife was Grace. She had a rooming house around the corner on a big street. The street that ran – what was the name of that street? Close to 7th and T.

Brower: Probably U Street or Florida Avenue. U Street. U Street?

Terry: U Street, I think it was, yeah. Didn't U Street and Florida make a corner?

Brower: Right. 7th – one is Georgia Avenue, and then 7th Street.

Terry: Yeah, right in that immediate area. Right around – you walk out of the Howard Theater, turn left, go to the street, the first street, and turn left, and that's where Grace's apartment was. I used to live there.

Brower: I see a bunch of pictures of you at Ellington's birthday party at . . .

Terry: Which one? At the White House?

Brower: At the White House.

Terry: Oh yeah.

Brower: Give me your recollection of that evening.

Terry: That was fun. That was – Willis Conover put that together, and he got almost everybody. I saw – I remember Billy Eckstine and Joe Williams. They were there. Was Pearl Bailey there?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: I'm not sure.

Terry: I don't know if Pearl was there or not. But I remember Milt Hinton and Mona. It was a beautiful occasion.

Brower: How do you – I think it was 19 – I want to say – 78 when Jimmy Carter did his – did a big party at the White House, I guess it was.

Terry: Yeah, and Dizzy had him up singing *Salt Peanuts*?

Brower: Right.

Terry: Yeah, that was fun. He was sitting out on the lawn. He had brought up a lot of these New Orleans cooks. They had tables all over the lawn of the White House. Man, we were eating up a storm. Good jambalaya, gumbo, spare ribs, red beans and rice. All the goodies, all the New Orleans goodies. It was just beautiful. Jimmy was sitting there in his shirt-sleeves and was listening to the music, and Dizzy had him come up and sing [Terry sings *Salt Peanuts*].

Brower: How many times – if you can recollect – have you performed at the White House?

Terry: I've been there so many times I can't even – I'd say roughly a dozen times. I was there with Nixon a couple times, with Johnson a couple times, with Lady Bird [Johnson], her Christmas party, with Carter a couple times, and with – what's the one that succeeded Carter? The Republican?

Brower: Reagan.

Terry: Yeah. He had a real snobbish party. He had guards that escorted everybody to their seats.

Brower: Was this the Lionel Hampton thing?

Terry: No, that's another one. I was there for that one too. Yeah, when – who was it? Illinois Jacquet – somebody was conducting Art Blakey's drum solo. That was funny.

Brower: That was strange, because I think Lionel came out and played something about *When It's Sleepy Time Down South* or some song that . . .

Terry: . . . Wasn't too cool. No.

Brower: That wasn't really . . .

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Yeah, I'll never forgot that. Anyhow, what the President said this time, "This time last year you had a party and you stunk up the neighborhood with spare ribs and stuff. This time we're going to have our party inside, and we're going to serve caviar," and he escorted everybody in with the guns and went inside the White House, and there was about enough caviar for you and me to have a mouthful.

Brower: Did you find any of the – of all the Presidents you played before and all that situations you've been in, who did you find that you felt, or what ones of them you felt were really connecting with the music?

Terry: Kennedy, for instance. He had started a program that when the kid learned to read from left to right, they were going to learn something about music. Because I was on the panel, Mercer Ellington and I. It never got off the ground, but I know he was 100% into that. Now, the current President – I've been down there several times for Clinton. He's really into it. He's doing – and Gore also. I've been to Gore's home about 5 or 6 times. He's marvelous. And Tipper's a drummer, you know.

Brower: Yeah, I've seen her drumming.

Terry: A nice drummer, too.

Brower: And you're not just saying that.


Terry: No. She's plays nice, yeah. She keeps good time.

Brower: Let's talk about some other associations musically: Lionel Hampton. What was your experience with him?

Terry: Hamp was a masterful leader, and it was a great experience. I – that was the first band that I played with when I came out of the navy. But he was really a staunch believer in the fact that the people paid to come see him, regardless of who was in his band. He used to chew us out on a couple of occasions and say, "The people paid there money to come see me, not you. So just sit up there and do what you're supposed to do."

Brower: Earl Hines.

Terry: Earl Hines was a marvelous leader. I didn't have an opportunity to work too much with Gates, except on a couple of occasions with a small group, after he had Marva [Josie], the singer, and Budd Johnson was with him at the time. But he was a nice man, a great musician. I'm very proud of the fact that he got Louis Armstrong involved in – with his playing, or Louis got him involved. They inspired each other. But

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Louis played – Earl played what they call the trumpet-style on piano. He was a good musician.

Brower: I hear that, but what does that mean, the trumpet-style on piano?

Terry: It means [Terry sings] arpeggio-style [he sings further]. A single thing [he sings] instead of [he sings] a chord progression.

Brower: Gerald Wiggins.

Terry: Gerald Wiggins is a marvelous accompanist, a great pianist, and underrated like hell. He'll play – he'll swing you into bad health. He's a good player, and his little boy plays great bass, little Junior, whatever his name is.

Brower: Tell me about your time with Gerry Mulligan.

Terry: Mulligan was a great experience. When I first started doing mumbles, it was right after I had been doing it on "The Tonight Show," and Gerry scowled every time I'd ask him to do it. So after we did it, made the record, and made a big hit – it's still providing nice royalties for me – every time I would see Gerry, he'd say, "Just think. I was stupid enough to not claim that. I could have had that on my own."

Brower: How did he use the flugelhorn? Was that – talk about how the flugelhorn was played within that.

Terry: He didn't particularly condone it. He just had – I had a trumpet part – a trumpet book to do, and I just chose to use my flugelhorn mostly for solos, rather than play . . .

Brower: So that was your choice.


Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Thelonious Monk.

Terry: Sr.?

Brower: Sr., yes.

Terry: The old man. I felt very flattered to have been one of the – still feel very flattered to be one of the few people that Monk recorded with as a sideman. He – there's very few records on the scene except the one that he did with me and Art Blakey as a sideman. He never bothered to do it. He was so busy doing his own thing. But I was with Riverside Records and so was he, and Orrin Keepnews asked me on a date. He

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

said, “Who are you going to use on the date?” I said, “I don’t know.” So he said, “You want to use Monk?” I said, “Oh, sure,” jokingly. And sure enough, he brought Monk in, said, “Here’s your piano player.” I couldn’t believe it.

Brower: You then – you recorded with Monk.

Terry: Yeah. One time he came down to the – to Birdland and said, “Man, see, I’m making a record tomorrow, and I want you to record with me.” So I said, “Okay.” He said, “We’ll talk about the date after the gig.” So we finished the job like 4 o’clock in the morning at Birdland, which we usually did, and I jumped into a cab and went with him uptown. It turned out it was Nica’s [Baronness Panonica de Konigswater] apartment, up Central Park West. I think it’s the same place where Bird passed. We went up, and he walked in. First thing he did was – in the winter. Fireplace was there – first thing he did was throw something on the fire, and it turned orange. Then he sat there a little while, just looking at it. He threw something else in, and it turned red. Then he – about a half hour later he threw something. It turned green. It went about 7 or 8 different colors with different stuff he would throw in there, and he’d sit there, nah nah nah, doing his sit-down dance. We never discussed what was going to be done on the record date. Then finally I had peeked out the window, and it was [?]. I said, “Hey chief, if you’re going to do this date today, I got to go home back to Queens and turn around and come back.” “Yeah, okay, man. See you at the date. Bye.” Never did discuss the date.

But he was a character, a loveable character and very, very creative. He had a zillion tunes in his noggin, almost as many as Duke.

Brower: You also worked with Cecil Taylor.

Terry: With who?

Brower: With Cecil Taylor.


Terry: Yeah. Cecil Taylor and I did one of the first dates that the – years before the term “avant garde” was coined, this was the type of music that they were calling this in those days. Roswell Rudd, I think.

Brower: Trombone player.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Buell Neidlinger?

Terry: Yeah.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: Playing bass.

Terry: And what's that – Mon – Grachan Moncur [drums].

Brower: Um-hmm. How did you relate to that music?

Terry: I don't know. All I – I didn't have any idea about categorization of the music, and this person and that person consider themselves this and that. I was just a trumpet player out there trying to get my thing together. Somebody who was connected with the record said to me, "Hey, we want you on this date with Cecil Taylor" and so forth. So I said, "Yeah, okay." So next thing I knew, I was on the date. I had no idea what it meant, what it stood for, nothing. I didn't even know how much money it paid.

Brower: So Ellington, Mingus, Monk, Cecil Taylor. Is there any line of connection in your mind between them musically?

Terry: The only thing I can say is that each of them had individual ideas about where they were going with their music. Ellington of course was a master. Cecil Taylor was considered to be one who would try different things. Monk was an iconoclastic person, in that he – nobody else would dare try to outdo him at what he did. So all these people were superior in their walks of life and their choices of indulgence in music. Who was the other one that you mentioned?

Brower: I mentioned Mingus. Ellington, Mingus, . . .

Terry: Mingus.

Brower: Monk, Taylor, because Mingus pays great homage to Ellington. That's probably why, at that Town Hall concert, it would be so easy to do what you did.

Terry: Yeah. I think that all of them too were people . . .

Brower: Do you think that they come out – let me ask it this way – do you think that it's fair in any way to say that . . .

Terry: They came from Ellington?

Brower: . . . Mingus, that Monk, that they come out of . . .

Terry: They all – they all come from Ellington. Some parts of them all came from Ellington. You could see, hear, smell, taste, and touch Ellington in Monk. And then Cecil – he was a little bit cloudy, but he was out of Ellington too. Of course he wanted

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



to do something totally different and non-conventional. He didn't believe in the 8-bar bridges and the 4 . . .

Brower: *aaba*, the hell with that.

Terry: He didn't believe in the *aaba*. Ellington sometime would defy that purposefully, make a 9-bar bridge or a 7-bar 8. So they all had some sort of a flavoring, some Ellington standpoint.

Brower: Gary McFarland.

Terry: Gary McFarland was a very, very suave, debonair, young, talented cat who – I know he loved Ellington, because we used to talk about it all the time. He was just a nice cat. He was a rather dangerous living cat. He'd – was wasting himself playing Russian roulette with a drink. He takes the – a person like him or Joe Maini. Joe Maini did it with a gun. Spin it around and walked to a cat's house. Bam. Blew his brains all over the house. This cat did it with a drink. Three card Monty – switch switch switch switch – pick up – [Terry makes a swallowing sound] – wrong one.

Brower: What was the drink?

Terry: I don't know. It was some kind of poison in one of the drinks. I don't know what it was. But the two drinks were good, and one was destined to take you on away from here. He got a hold of that one, and he went. But he was marvelous cat, marvelous player, good little vibe player, great writer. He had a lot of young, different ideas about . . .

Brower: What about the *Brotherhood of Man* piece?


Terry: Yeah, that's one of the – I recorded that two – three times, I think. With him, with his big band. We did it with Mulligan, I think. And we did it with Oscar Peterson.

Brower: Did you find his treatment to be especially efficacious for you? or . . .

Terry: Ironically, all three of those records I made on that were pretty much the same, and I'm trying to remember which one I did first. I think it might have been Gerry . . .

Brower: McFarland.

Terry: McFarland, yeah. All three of them were in the same key, and I'm sure that the other two dates that we did after that date, they did it because it was in that key and the same tempo and everything. It had proven to be a fairly decent vehicle for me, so I guess they thought they'd stay in the same vein.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Okay. We're working through a list of musical associations. J. J. Johnson.

Terry: J. J. The stuff that this cat is made out of is unbelievable. He's the type of person that could just stop doing this and start doing this and do it successfully. Get tired of it. Go do something else. He's a great trombone player, great musician, great composer, great arranger.

One time during the period of the heyday here in jingles, there was a guy named Mark Brown. Mark asked me to – we were real good buddies, but he's a wealthy little old dude.

Brower: This is Mark Brown Productions?


Terry: Mark Brown Productions, yeah.

Brower: I'm just curious. White, black, or is he gray?

Terry: He's Jewish. He's white. But he the corner – he had the market completely covered, because he had a huge office, and every day he would serve lunch and invite all these possible clientele and customers in, have lunch and discuss things. He had the market covered. He needed somebody to just run his office, musical office, and take care of the music. First I got Ernie Wilkins, and he did it a little bit. Then Ernie had to leave for something. I got J. J. then. He'd never done anything like that. He was contracting the dates and conducting the dates. Jingles is big business then. You go and then you say [Terry sings] "Coca-cola hits the spot, dah dah dah dat, diddle-diddle-diddle-dit," and that's 20 minutes with a possible – no, it's one hour, booked for one hour with a possible 20. This went on all day long, one product after another.

So J. J. did that. Then he got tired of winning all the polls all the time. He's still winning the jazz polls. So he decided to go to California and work in the movies, write movies. He quit playing. Then all of sudden he decided, I want to play again. He comes back, and he gets Norman Granz – for Norman's label. He says, "Let's make an album. I want to make an album." So he makes an album. Hires his son on drums. He's a good little drummer. Norman called me. I went out and did the date. J. J. – he's been off 10 years now. Been out there writing music. So he sat down, and he just [Terry sings a complicated melody]. So I said, "J. J., how the hell do you do that, man? How do you do it?" He looked at me very seriously and he said, "Clark, you just do it." That's the kind of person he is.

Brower: Let's talk about – when you got into – let's talk about the jingle business. Are there products out there at some point that had Clark Terry's trumpet behind them? Tell me some of those products and some of the jingles that you did.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: I've done so many. We did them day after day, one session after the other, and I – sometimes I don't even know what they are. You just go and say [Terry sings a melody]. "Next."

Brower: What period were you doing this, if you can put dates on it? Was this in the early '60s or . . .

Terry: It was in – it was after I came off the road, so it had to be, I guess, in the '70s. '60s and '70s and, yeah, some '80s. I did it for a whole lot of years. The cats who were doing that – it was so lucrative. All the cats bought their homes, their summer homes. Sent their kids to school in cars and all that. It was an extremely lucrative period.


Brower: How lucrative? Give me a sense of what the economics were.

Terry: I'm trying to figure. I know – I don't remember the figures. It was a scale thing, but whatever the scale was at that time, you could do that all day long for day after day after day.

Brower: Were you in a sense breaking barriers?

Terry: In a sense, yeah, because there were not a whole hell of a lot of black musicians who were doing the jingle scene. During the time that I went at NBC – that's when I first became – Gwen's probably got some old checks around here that – I had kept a whole stack of them, all my NBC salary, which was something like \$350, something like that, a week, plus the doubles, overtime, and so forth. When I went on staff, the way I got on staff was that the Urban League was doing an inquiry into many – all of the major industries that was using television. There were – the inquiry was, why there was not more black representation on television? NBC, ABC, and CBS. You've got three networks, and at this time, each network had to maintain a staff of 175 musicians. 175, three times. On each one of these networks, they had more or less a token, ABC, CBS. NBC, nobody. So they went to NBC and said, "Why is it that you don't have any black musicians on" – playing on your show – on your t.v. things – on your commercials. They told the Urban League, "You don't have any black musicians who are qualified to play music on television." And they said, "Oh?" So they printed up ballots – questionnaires, to find – to send them around, for people to fill out, just asking, who do you know who's black who could possibly play music on television, that would cover the whole spectrum, and my name came up many times on many of the ballots. It just happened that I was in Europe at the time this experiment was done. I was with *Free and Easy*, with Harold Arlen and Quincy Jones. This must have been . . .

Brower: '60, '61.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Yeah, something like that. So they called me – called my wife and told her that they wanted to get in touch with me. They wanted me to join staff at NBC. This cat Aaron Levine was the contractor. So she called me. Told me – I had just signed up with Harold Arlen’s *Free and Easy*, and I’m under contract the length of – a long period of time. I don’t know exactly. But anyhow, we opened the show in Holland, I think it was. Broke it in in Holland. Then we went to the Maurice Chevalier Theatre in Paris and opened in Paris for the first week. This – prior to this week, we were just breaking the show in, and that’s when this thing happened here, this experiment. So when we opened at the Maurice Chevalier Theatre, this is when they had called me to ask me if I could come in. No, they called me the week prior to that, and we were opening in Paris. The show started. The attendance started going down the hill right from the very beginning. I had to turn the show – turn them down, so I didn’t appreciate it very much, but I can’t come, because I’m under contract to – with *Free and Easy*, Harold Arlen. So he said, okay.

Five days later, a sign goes up.

[Terry coughs]. I’m going to have to get me a room. I slept on a bench last night, and somebody left the gate open.

Five days later, a sign goes up: the show is closing. I hurried up and got on the phone and called and told my wife to please call Aaron Levine to see if the job was open. He said, “Yeah, we’re still looking.” So she said – she told me that it was still open, so I asked her to tell him I – if it was – I was still invited, I’d be right home. So I did. I always say, I caught the first thing smoking, which was a dude with a pipe. But seriously, I came home right away and went right in and took the gig. I was the first long-term signee, to sign on staff at NBC.

Brower: So you were the first black musician . . .


Terry: First black, yeah.

Brower: . . . on the NBC payroll.

Terry: Right. They had had a couple of black – they used Teddy Wilson a couple of times, Milt Hinton a couple times, and a few blacks, for personal-type – indi – special-type shows.

Brower: But as far as being a staff musician.

Terry: That’s right, yeah. You have to understand now. Each network has 175 musicians. So this went on beautifully for a while, and the Urban League pressured them a little more. Said, “I think you can do a little better than that.” So now, Aaron

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Levine comes to me. “Clark, you got any of your buddies there that can play first trumpet, great solos, and has a family, has children,” and he has to be a certain age, has to be – there’s about 15 prerequisites that he laid down. He just couldn’t be another cat. I had to rack my brain to think of somebody that could fill those shoes. Finally I came up with Snooky Young, who had just came out of retirement and gone back with Basie’s band. I called Snooky’s family, and they said, “Oh yeah, Uncle Clark. We got to get – oh, we’d love for dad to be there. Can you tell him that he’ll be there?” I said, “Okay.” So we called him in Seattle. He was at the World’s Fair, when the Fair was out in Seattle. That will tell you what year that is, because I don’t know. So he came in. I introduced him to Aaron, and Aaron says, “All right.” So now we got two.

It went on for about – not even a year. Finally Aaron Levine called me into his office one day. He said, “Clark?” I said, “Yeah?” “We’re going to have to let your boy go.” I said, “What do you mean, you’re going to have to let my boy go?” He said, “Snooky, he’s – he and Skitch don’t get along.” Skitch Henderson was the conductor of “The Tonight Show,” music director. I said, “Aaron, I tell you. I happen to know”, because we live close to each other. We came to work every day. We came early enough to be on time, trousers pressed, shoes shined, shaven, hair combed, clean shirt, necktie, and beautiful clothing. And everybody would go, “Hey Clark. Hey Snooky.” We were just – we had to be models, because I knew we were in a test . . .


Brower: Under a microscope.

Terry: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. We couldn’t have a speck on our trousers. We couldn’t have a wrinkle in the clothes. We couldn’t have a dirty shirt. We couldn’t wear filthy clothing. We had to be immaculate at all times. On time. If we hit at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, we’re sitting in our chairs at quarter to 4, ready to hit. And if somebody – which usually happened – ran into a piece of music that was too difficult, “Here, Clark. Here. Take this. Here Snooks. Take this.” It’s something that’s a little too difficult. They don’t want to work quite that hard, play them high notes or that hard stuff on the jazz part, so they would . . .

Brower: Let me ask you this: since the representation was made to you, that we can’t find any musicians, when you got there, what did you find in terms of the level of musicianship? And how did it – when you compare them to your peers in the jazz world, what conclusion did you draw?

Terry: There was no comparison. There were people of my color who could do anything that any one of them there had done, and in most instances, better. It was all a big . . .

Brower: Horsepucky?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Huh?

Brower: Horsepucky?

Terry: It was what?

Brower: All horsepucky?

Terry: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah.

Then Aaron wanted to – said he wanted to let Snooky go. So I said, “Okay, Aaron. I’ll tell you what you do.” I’m in his office when he’s talking about it. I said, “Tell you what you do. You write Snooky’s notice, and you let him go, and see . . .

[interruption of recording]

Brower: This is Bill Brower, talking with Clark Terry on Tuesday, June the 22nd, 1999, at Mr. Terry’s home in Glen Cove, New York. I’m interviewing him for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project.


I want to pick up with the Snooky Young and NBC.

Terry: Yeah. After Snooky was hired – did we get past that part?

Brower: Yeah. Actually, we’re at the point where it seems like you’re about to give them an ultimatum, because they were ready to let Snooky go.

Terry: Yeah, right. I’m in the office of Aaron Levine at NBC, who was contractor of musicians at NBC, and he’s telling me all these details about why Snooky Young was not wanted there any longer. Skitch didn’t like him. He was doing this and that. I know that Skitch loved him, and everybody there loved both of us. We were immaculate. We came on time. When the conductor hit the downbeat, we hit. When he cut it off, we stopped. We didn’t fool around in between. We didn’t carry on any nonsense. We didn’t get drunk and come back wasted and not able to play, like a lot of them did. We had a couple guys who wore wigs. They reached in their locker to put their little sloppy looking wigs on to go on and do the show and come back and sling them on the floor or anywhere, and a lot of them that didn’t have clothes – the proper attire. But we had to be immaculate, because if we didn’t do it right, they would never – the door would never be open again. So we made sure that we did it right.

So I said, “Aaron, okay. When you write Snooky’s notice out, just go right ahead and write mine out, and you’ll probably have what you wanted, a lily white studio – NBC studio band.” I stormed out of there. He said, “Wait.” I said, “No, I’ll see you later.” I

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

said – just as I walked out the door, I said, “I want you to know that Bob Johnson,” who – he’s no longer with us, but he was the top reporter for Johnson Publications. I said, “Bob is a very close friend of mine, and he’s just egging for a good story like this for Johnson Publications. The *Jets* will sell for \$5 a piece, and the *Ebonys*.” I walked out the door, and by the time I got home – you won’t believe this, Bill, but he had called me 10 times from the time I left downtown to – got out to Bayside, where I was living at the time. My wife said, “Aaron Levine has just called.” I said, “Okay. Let him call.”

The next day I went to work, got off the elevator on the sixth floor. He’s pacing the floor, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. “Come on. I want to talk to you.” We go downstairs into the – I said, “I may be a little bit late, Aaron, if I don’t . . .” He said, “Oh, that’s all right. Don’t worry.” He told them, “Clark may be a little late.” “Okay.” So we go downstairs, and he – I ordered a cup of tea. He reached out in his pocket and pulled out his little plastic thing with – he says, “I’ll have a cup of hot water.” He got a little hot water and he put his own tea bag in the [laughs] – he’s carrying his own tea bag. All he had to do was get a cup of hot water.

So we sat there and we talk – he talks to me about this. “Clark, you see, I think we can work that out, Clark.” I said, “Whatever you do. It doesn’t matter to me, Aaron, whatever you think. And if you – as I said to you in the beginning, Snooky and I both used to not know you, and we both made a decent living. He met all those requirements. He’s got a beautiful horn. He’s got a beautiful wife and kids, and he’s a great trumpet – first trumpet player, great lead player, great soloist, and a great section man. He’s disciplined. He’s immaculate in his appearance. He’s immaculate.” I said, “I don’t know what you expect, so if you want to stick to your first agreement, go right ahead and do it. It’s perfectly okay with me. Just remember: Johnson’s got a great story coming.”


So he says, “Oh no no. We can do without that. We can do without that. We can do without that.” So finally he got up off of Snooky. Snooky didn’t even know about this for a year. I never told him.

Brower: You started to characterize what the studio routine was like. I just want to read back a quote that I got from somewhere, that you said, and then have you reflect on it. “One of the old-timers warned me, when I first went into the studio . . .”

Terry: A house is not a home. That’s true. That’s so true. And it wasn’t.

Brower: Did you really have to take out hotel rooms, because you – it was just – you were – the turnaround between the day time stuff you do in the studio . . .

Terry: Sometimes we would have to work – we went every day in the studio, Monday through Friday. We were finished at 7 or 8 o’clock with the studios. It’s a late afternoon

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

thing. By the time we would have dinner – most of the time we were working in a jazz club, like the Blue Note, down on . . .

Brower: The Half Note?

Terry: The Half Note, rather, down on Spring and Hudson [Streets]. On our way – after the gig, we had to go down – after the show, we’d kill a little time, eat lunch or something, then go down to the Half Note and work down there from 9 o’clock ’til 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning. The next morning, you’ve got an 8 o’clock jingle. There ain’t no time to go drive two hours all the way back out to – or an hour and a half back to Bayside and an hour and a half or two hours in the morning in traffic back to the gig, which is on, maybe 57th Street or 42nd Street or 3rd Avenue or whatever – to a studio. So we have to take a room at a hotel close to where the gig was. This went on sometime for weeks at a time.

Brower: One commercial that I read about – maybe you can enlighten me on – was the Volkswagen commercial.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Tell me that story, particularly the part about Everett Barksdale.


Terry: Oh yeah. We had a thing for – a jingle for Volkswagen. Ten of us got out of a Volkswagen playing *When the Saints go marching in*, something like that. Snooky was driving the Volkswagen. It just drove like “Vrrrrrrrr” and stopped, and we got out, and everybody’s playing. It was just to show how amazingly this area was. Ten cats could get out with instruments and playing. Everett Barksdale was one of the people who was on the gig. I was the contractor at the time, and Barksdale and I – after a while, there were several black musicians involved in jingles.

Brower: I’ve got a list here: Milt Hinton, Jimmy Nottingham, Joe Wilder, Ernie Royal, Jerome Richardson, Thad Jones, Joe Newman, Hank Jones, George Duvivier.

Terry: Right.

Brower: Who am I missing?

Terry: Everett Barksdale was one. He was a guitar player. Wally Richardson was another one. He was a guitar player. The guitar players were on every kind of date there was. Aside from the four or five caucasians, who were always extremely busy, they needed more, so that opened the door for a few of the black qualified people who could do it. There were a few more, but not a hell of a lot more than what you have already named.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: In the same way that you talked about the universe, like ABC, NBC – that’s 175 times 3, which is basically, what? 525 musicians . . .

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: What would you say was the universe of musicians that was involved in jingles? Was it 100 people? 200 people? 500 people?

Terry: Black people?

Brower: No, just in general.

Terry: In general, that same number – that same group of people who were on staff were generally the ones who were called – on first call of all – you see there were several contractors in town. One contractor couldn’t possibly handle all the jingles. So they had several people who were officiating in the capacity of contractor. All the studios, the first call came off the list. Each studio – there must have been at least 50 people on each studio’s – I would say there were a couple of hundred people who did almost all the work, all the work. It was a very, very lucrative thing

Brower: You were talking about the Volkswagen commercial where – I think Jimmie Crawford was in that?

Terry: Yeah. Crawford’s on drums. Snooky.

Brower: Ernie Wilkins?


Terry: Ernie Wilkins.

Brower: Jimmy Cleveland?

Terry: Yeah, Cleve. Yeah, man, that was way back. I couldn’t remember. When you list the people, I can remember them now. Snooky, me, Cleve, Craw, Ernie. There were 10 of us. I can’t believe that all 10 got out of there playing instruments. But we did the music, and then we got ready to film, and the cats said, oh no. We can’t do this, because we have to have somebody whose more ethnically in line with the rest of it.

Brower: Evidently, dark-skinned.

Terry: Absolutely. Yeah. So, the way Milt Hinton got on it, Milt took Barksdale’s place as a guitar player. Milt’s a bass player, you know, but he came out with the banjo or something. But he was darker skinned, of course, than Barksdale, and Barksdale

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

couldn't make the gig. This is the same thing in reverse when we did the thing with Basie for the Snader Productions. Remember that?

Brower: No.

Terry: We were doing a film with Count Basie and Billie Holiday and Sugar Chile Robinson. The band was Basie, Gus Johnson, Freddie Green, Wardell Gray, me, and Jimmie Lewis. Buddy DeFranco was in the band. Buddy DeFranco – we got ready to film at Snader Productions in Hollywood . . .

Brower: Oh, this is why – how the other gentleman came in – Marshal came in . . .

Terry: That's right.

Brower: . . . to play clarinet, . . .

Terry: Yeah, yeah.

Brower: . . . because of the color issue.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: How did – what did you say amongst yourselves when something came – did you laugh about it? Were you angry about it? How did you react to that kind of thing?


Terry: You reach the point, Bill, after so many years of being subjected to that kind of indignity, 'til you had to laugh at it. That's the way we learned from the slaves. That's the way the cakewalk was born. That's the way . . .

Brower: Laugh to keep from crying?

Terry: Laugh, yeah. Laugh to keep from crying. We just – what can you do about it? You get mad enough to kill. There's no point in killing. You got to hang in there and make it work.

Brower: Let's go back to the NBC years and move from where you first came here as a staff musician and then to the Johnny Carson show. The real question I want to ask is, should you have gotten that job when Skitch Henderson left?

Terry: I was up for the job. The reason I know I was up for the job: the lady who married Johnny's producer, Rudy Tellez. Her name was Jeannie, I think. She was a friendly, beautiful little girl, and she befriended the guys, and particularly Snooky and me, because she knew what a hardship it was for us to have to endure all that. She used

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

to tell me about the letters that were coming in, about people who requested that I should have the band, and the meeting that they'd had, because they reached that point. She said it's not going to happen, because the general consensus of opinion is that with a black leader, it would ruin the Southern market.

Brower: These meetings went on – were you invited to these meetings?

Terry: Oh, no. This was staff meeting. These were meetings like . . .

Brower: Did you even know – did you know you were being discussed in the meetings?

Terry: I didn't even know I was being discussed. Absolutely.

Brower: So if she hadn't shared you with this confidence, you wouldn't have known any of this.

Terry: Never would have known. Never would have known. Actually I'm not so sure that it would be a good idea to expose what she had told me, but – I don't know.

Brower: A fact's a fact.

Terry: And figures is figures.

Brower: During the time that you were working – during “The Tonight Show” band – you were still maintaining a per – because they were then in New York City – so you were still actively maintaining your life in nightclubs or in the jazz circuit.

Terry: Oh yeah, yeah. You had to keep abreast of things, because a lot of times the jingle situation was really garbage music, so you had to do that in order to subsidize your yearn to play good jazz.


Brower: Were you doing jingles and “The Tonight Show” at the same time?

Terry: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Brower: And doing clubs?

Terry: And the clubs. Yeah.

Brower: What time would you go – when would you go to do “The Tonight Show”? What time of day would you be there?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: 4 to 7 every day. So you might have – as I explained before, you go in . . .

Brower: At 8 in the morning.

Terry: 8 o'clock and do a jingle. 8 to 9 with a possible 20. Then you might have a 12 to 3 record date. Then you leave the record date, and you've got time to get over to NBC. Do NBC from 4 to 7. Then have a little break for lunch and drive down to the Half Note and do the club from 9 'til 2 or 3 in the morning. Then you got to – maybe 4 sometime – then you've got a – the next morning, you've got another jingle at 8:30 in the morning. So there's just not enough time to leave Spring and Hudson and drive into Bayside. Even at that time in the morning, it would take you over an hour, hour and ten minutes. In the morning, when you come back, it's going to take you almost a couple of hours in some instances, with the traffic.

Brower: Was this the period when you had the group with Bob Brookmeyer?

Terry: That same period, yeah.


Brower: I read somewhere where sometimes you'd even drive to Philadelphia and make a gig.

Terry: Yeah, we did. Absolutely. As a matter of fact, we went to London on a weekend to do the 625 ["Jazz 625"] with Terry Henebery. There was a British [television] show during the period that they called "That Was" – TW3 – "That Was The Week That Was." The producer's name was Terry Henebery. We went on a weekend, Brookmeyer and I, over to do that show, came back. But it was easy to do, as far as the staff was concerned, because we had shifts. There were enough musicians that nobody had to work six or seven days a week. My assignment at that particular time, say, might have been Monday and Wednesday. Snooky might have been Tuesday and Friday or something. Sometime we'd just swap dates, swap times. I could take Monday and Wednesday off. So I have Monday – I have that whole week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and the Monday and Wednesday off the next week. I could stay in Europe a week and come back and make it up with Snooks the next time, or whomever I swapped the time with. It was easy. There were guys on the other networks who were being paid every week, and they were not – they used to mail their checks to them – mail them to them. They didn't even have to come in and sign up or come or anything.

Brower: Doc Severinson got "The Tonight Show" job. You'd known him . . .

Terry: Known Doc . . .

Brower: . . . a long time.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: . . . ever since he first got involved in the business, yeah.

Brower: I know you would have – for example, you knew him well enough to have him sub for you on some other engagements, like with Gerry Mulligan and people of that sort.

Terry: Yeah, and many times we used to do that.

Brower: How did he – how did you feel, and how he feel, when he got it and you didn't? Or was it an issue between you two?

Terry: There was no issue between us, because we were both well aware of the situation, the racial situation. That's the way it was, and there wasn't a whole heck of a lot that you could do about it.

Brower: Did you talk about it?

Terry: Oh yeah. Of course we talked about it. Yeah.

Brower: What did he say?

Terry: There wasn't much – what could he say? All we could do is laugh about it. You either make fun out of it and frolic and forget it, keep steppin', or you get angry and get sick and not even be able to do what little bit you can do.

Brower: We talked earlier about trumpeters. We talked about influences. One player that we didn't touch upon is Jabbo Smith.

Terry: Jabbo. I never knew Jabbo very well until he came back onto the scene, but he had played beautiful trumpet for years. He gave it up. He went to Milwaukee, and he retired. He was parking cars there, in a parking lot. Somebody talked him into coming back into the business. He came back. Of course he was pretty old at the time, and his chops were not good. He had false teeth, and he couldn't play like he used to, but he was with that show *One Mo' Time*. He had a singing part. He did a good job on that.

He was the type of trumpet player – I don't know if I explained it to you – in those days, when a trumpet player had a – all the musicians had something very swift to play, like [Terry sings a fast rhythm] that tempo, they would for some reason, I guess for lack of indulgence in playing fast, lack of ability to keep that cadence, they would play what they call cut time [Terry sings a half-time melody while clapping the fast rhythm], but Jabbo say [Terry sings a double-time melody]. He was playing like that, real fast, even

back in those days. Duke used to try to get him to join the band. He laughed at Duke and said, “You got to be kidding.”

Brower: Talk a little bit about Sweets Edison.

Terry: Sweets, one of my favorite subjects. He’s one of my most beautiful friends. He’s got a reputation for being able to play two notes and everybody knows it’s Sweets. He has a remarkable sense of relaxed time. He can lay back and play a quarter note [Terry sings]. This was one of his signatures.


In teaching jazz today, we use – we have had to take the Italian dictionary and rearrange some of the words that are used, because you can’t always explain what – the feeling you want in jazz with the Italian words. I think we touched on that, but that one little phrase that Sweets plays a lot reminds me of that. In order to get the kids to get as much out of a quarter note as they can. Instead they’ll have a tendency to say “pip pip pip” or “tut tut tut” or “ha ha ha,” but we have them think in terms of spelling the note out b-a-h-d-t, “bahdt.” It takes a little longer to say “bahdt bahdt bahdt bahdt bahdt bahdt” instead of “bip bip bip bip” or “bop bop.” “Bahdt” takes it – that’s the way Sweets expressed that phrase with the quarter notes – long – getting as much out of the quarter note as you can. Make it – we used to say, make a quarter note sound like a whole note. But Sweets is remarkable for that.

He’s a prankster, plays all kinds of funny little things on people. He’s a fun cat to be around, a prankster.

Brower: What about Sweets and the Harmon mute, and mutes? And from that, talk about the mute and the development of it.

Terry: There was a time in St. Louis that all the trumpet players – I don’t know actually who really started it. A lot of people think Miles started it, but he didn’t. Cats were doing that in St. Louis long before Miles played a Harmon. They would take the stems out of the mute and play, because a lot of the clubs would require a softer type of playing, and they didn’t allow the blatant-type approach of the trumpet. So they put this in, and it was soft, whereas with the other little thing in it, it was good for animated type of [Terry sings a wah-wah effect] with that little stem with a little cup on it, but you do [Terry sings another wah-wah effect], like the modified version of the plunger, or a smaller version. But when you took out the stem, it just mellifluously cut the sound down to a different character altogether. It became a very popular thing. A lot of people think that Miles created that, but he didn’t really. He was getting on the bandwagon along with a lot of the rest of us.

Brower: Speaking of Miles, now I want to talk about some of your – a few people that you might think of as – or people think of as protégés. You talked earlier about how you

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

first saw Miles, first met him, and then later came to meet him, or later came to appreciate him as a player. You told me those two stories. But I've – it's pretty consistent in the literature on Miles, the biographies, where they almost liken you into – as a kind of a chaperone or someone who shepherded him around St. Louis and brought him on scenes. Is that accurate?

Terry: Yeah, yeah, more or less. It might have been exaggerated a wee bit – not as regularly as it might have sounded, but we did chaperone him around and help him. When I first met him, his teacher, Buchanan, had me come over. “Hey, you got to come over. This little dude Davis, man, he’s mean.” When I got to meet him and I got to know him, he always that – how we got to be real good friends. I used to find mouthpieces for him. So I feel very proud of the fact that in his book he mentions nice things about me. In fact I was one of the few people that he had some nice things to say about.

Brower: He talked about you extensively. I don't want to – do you think that Miles over-inflated the amount of contact that he had with you, or . . . ?


Terry: He might have pushed it up a little bit. But there too, I don't like to sound like I'm the big man or something that does . . .

Brower: Putting it in perspective, what kinds of places did you take him?

Terry: Places like the Barrel, where we used to go and sit in and play, and a little place on Olive Street, across from the Tune Town Ballroom, that we used to play. Then there was the club where I first saw him after we had met a couple times, at the Elks Club, which is on – I forgot the name of the street. Places like that, we would go out.

Brower: Later in Miles's career, how did you – if you're looking at evaluating Miles's music, did you feel differently about, say, the *Bitches Brew* period on, than you did about the earlier Miles bands?

Terry: Yeah, I would say that he was – he could have been as productive all the way through as he was in the period of *Bitches Brew*, and as far as our acceptance of his type of music and of his playing, but he reached a point where he was delving into commercialism, and he found that people would go for – whatever they would go for, he would give it to them. He found that people wanted that type of stuff. So I – just to give you an idea: one time he was playing – I don't know if I mentioned this to you before – he was playing at the Village Gate, down in the Village, and they had two areas where they had music simultaneously. One was downstairs, and the other was upstairs at the bar. Junior Mance was playing up at the bar. Miles was downstairs, during the psychedelic period, with his – this is a new invention. They'd come out with the Varitone, where you could play one note above – play the note that you're playing,

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

and below, it would come out an octave lower. So you heard the two notes, and at the same time there was a gadget on there where it would make your sound go around the room. Miles used to play [Terry sings]. It would [Terry sings an echo effect], like it's going all around – echoes all around the room. He used to very dramatically [Terry sings a fast, high-pitched melody] and he'd look and see where the sound was coming from. Meanwhile they got psychedelic lights and stuff flashing [Terry sings] and all sorts of weird rhythm [Terry sings] and little kids running around and bouncing up and down, very mysterious-like. But he found – he was slick enough to know that people liked this, and they would pay for it. He could – it required less music ability than it did for him to dig in and really play like he knew and we knew and everybody else knew that he could do. So, he got away with it.


We went down to this club, me and Dizzy [Gillespie] went down to catch this band, his new band, because he had all these little kids – sun's getting ready to go down. I got to . . .

Brower: Want to finish this and stop?

Terry: Yeah. We'll finish it.

So he played this – I don't know whether you'd call it a set, or tune, or an experience, but it lasted – when I was down there, it lasted for about 45 or 50 minutes. It would change tempos and change moods and change dramatic scenery and psychedelic fixtures and all that. Different echo [Terry sings] all around. It was really something that people would enjoy. I don't know why, but it was – to me, it wasn't jazz. It wasn't Miles I went down there to hear. So I told Birks, I said, "Birks, I can't stand this much longer. I'm going to go upstairs and get this out of my ears and just listen to Junior Mance play some blues or something." He said, "Okay, you go ahead." Said, "I'm just going to stay right here and see how long he's going to carry out this business." So he stayed. I went upstairs. So finally they finished the thing, the experiment or experience or whatever – the happening. Whatever they called it. Birks came up just a little before him, and I happened to be standing – sitting at the bar. They're very close to where you come up the stairs from downstairs. So, Birks and I are standing. He comes up. He said, "Hey Clark, hey Birks." So we spoke to him. Birks grabbed him over, said, "I want you to tell me one thing. Just tell me, what the hell are you doing?" He said, "I know you know chords, because I taught them to you." That's what Dizzy said. He said to him, "I know you know chords, because I taught – now tell me, what the hell are you doing?" This is the way he replied to Diz – it's hard to verbally explain what – he slapped his pocket bap, bap, bap, and turned and walked away, and he said, "You know what I'm doing."

Brower: You were about to enlighten me with a story about Eric Dolphy that was similar.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Oh, Eric Dolphy, yeah. Eric Dolphy – we were talking about how guys – what motivates guys to do certain things, change their objectives and ideals and music and so forth. Eric came into New York one time with Chico Hamilton. It was during the period that Brookmeyer and I had the group down at Half Note, down on Spring and Hudson. He came down, came by to visit, as he always did whenever – we always visited each other when we were in the vicinity of each other’s whereabouts. He – after the intermission, we got to talking as always. He said, “Man,” he says. I said, “How you doing, Dolph?” He said, “Clark, I’m studying, and I’m playing good, and I’m doing okay,” he said, “but I ain’t making no money, and it just irks the heck out of me to see all these little upstarts coming along and half learning their instruments. They have nothing to offer, and they’re making all the money and getting all the publicity.” He said, “You know what I think I’m going to do?” I said, “What’s that, Dolphy?” He said, “I’m going to get me a weird instrument.” At this time he’s an alto player, an excellent alto player. Played a little clarinet and flute, but he said, “I’m going to get me a weird instrument and just start b.s.-ing on it.” I said, “Yeah?” So, next thing I knew, I saw him with the bass clarinet” [Terry sings a harsh melody] and all over Europe you see people [Terry speaks in a fake foreign accent] “Eric Dolphy, Eric Dolphy.” They’re bowing and scraping, and they’re immortalizing him, and I know he was b.s.-ing, because he told me he was going to b.s. before he started b.s.-ing.

Brower: We’ve talked, I think, fairly completely about Miles, but I do want to get on the record your – again, your version of how you encountered him when he was down and out, and what you did to try to help him, and then the humorous way that you and he dealt with that experience over the course of your friendship.

Terry: When he was an addict, he was in bad shape. One particular day – we – I lived in a hotel down on 47th Street, and his wife and his two kids lived in this same hotel. I used to – his son and I used to hang out. I used to carry Gregory around with me every place I went, and people thought he was my son. Right to this day he tells people sometimes, he’ll say, “Clark was more of a father to me than my father was, during those days.”

On this one particular occasion, I took – I happened to be walking down Broadway – this was when Broadway was two ways, uptown and downtown – and I saw this lump laying in the gutter. Walk over, and kick it over, and it’s Miles. I said, wait a minute. So I picked him up. He’s just laying there limp. I picked him up and got a – shook him up and held him up a little bit, and I took him into a restaurant. There was a chain of restaurants called the Ham and Egger, where you put the – they cooked your ham and eggs or bacon and eggs in the skillet, and you ate it right out of the skillet. I took him in. Fed him. Then I walked him down to my hotel. This was on 51st Street. I was at 47th. I took him to my hotel, put him in the bed and told him, “You get some rest, because I’m going out of town this morning anyhow, and I don’t need to go to sleep. I’ll sleep on the

bus.” I said, “I’ll come back just before it’s time to leave. I’ll get my things, and I’ll bring you some tea or soup or something.” I came back with some stuff, and when I got onto my floor, the door was open. I rushed to the door. Miles was gone. Miles was gone. My horn’s gone. My clothes were gone. My radio was gone. Everything was gone. He had absconded with all my belongings.

The next day I saw Philly Joe Jones walking down the street with my brand new Phil [?Cromfell] shirt on that I had just bought, which Miles had obviously used to cop with. Every time I would see him thereafter – I knew he was sick, and every time I would see him thereafter at a bar, large-timing with money, I would grab the money, put it in my pocket. I said, “Okay, now, knock me out.” He was known for punching a cat out.

Brower: He ain’t going to punch you out. You’re a boxer too.

Terry: Yeah. He knew that.


Brower: Another person that you – trumpet player that you’re close to and that I think you befriended when they were developing, was Quincy Jones.

Terry: Oh yeah.

Brower: Tell me how you came to know Quincy and what – how the relationship developed.

Terry: I was working in Basie’s small group. We were working at the theater. We’d been there a long time in this theater in – I think it’s Van – it’s either Vancouver or Seattle. He’s from Seattle. It probably was Seattle. This kid come up to me and said, “Mr. Terry?” I say, “Yes.” He said, “I’m trying to learn how to play trumpet, and I would sure like to take some lessons from you.” I said, “How are we going to do this? I’m working late at night.” We’re working the theater and in a club. I said, “I’m working late at nights, and you’re in school all day. How are we going to do it?” He said, “Could I possibly come in the morning, before I go to school?” That means I’m going to bed about 4 or 5 o’clock. I got to get up at 6, to give him a lesson. I said, “Yeah, okay, all right.”

He’d come by every morning and take his lesson. This went on for – we were there for two or three months at a time. Finally I said to him, “Are you going to continue with your horn?” “Yes, I want to continue after.” He said, “You know what? Not only am I going to play the trumpet. I can write music too.” I said, “Oh yeah? Very good.” He said – he brought in an arrangement, and he said, “Can you get your band to play this?” I told him what the person – what the instrumentation was. So he wrote this chart. I said, “Yeah, sure.” We took it to – we went out of town some place to play, took the chart with us and passed it out. I think it was the same Basie band I mentioned before –

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

passed it out and – the sextet – and played it, and it was pretty horrible. The cats laughed at it. I said, “I don’t know,” laughing, “but he may get better.”

I took it back to him. The next lesson, the next morning after we got back, he said, “Did you play my arrangement?” I said, “Yeah, Quincy. We played it. But you made some – a few mistakes in there. I think you’re on the right track, though. You should continue to pursue that career. Just study hard and keep doing it.” He said, “Yeah? You think so?” I said, “Oh yeah. I know.” I shudder to think what might have happened if I had told him to forget it, put him down or something. But I did see some kind of a – his genuine curiosity and his eager-beaverness to really succeed in what he’s doing was an indication to me that he had something that he was going to prove, and he did. Way down the line, when he became the big man, he always called me to contract his dates or play in his sessions, travel with him, whatever.

Brower: Did you have any direct contact with Nat Adderley?

Terry: Yeah. When Cannonball [Adderley] first came to New York, he went down to the Bohemia, a club downtown called the Bohemia. He sat in, and he was blowing everybody away. We got to be good friends. He said, “I’m going to move into New York.” I had just got an apartment at the Dorey Miller Co-op on Northern Boulevard and Grand Central Parkway, and it was still – they were still taking in people. So I said, “I think I can hook you up with Dorey Miller.” He said, “My brother Nat and I, we’re going to be here together.” I said, “Yeah.” So I got them hooked up with Dorey Miller. They first went into Dorey Miller.

I was with Riverside Records at the time, and I hooked them up with his first record date, with Orrin Keepnews. He and Nat became good buddies at a very early age, and their family – his father was a cornet player too. He used to call his mother Sugar. It was a very, very beautiful family. So I’ve known – knew them right from the beginning, a long, long time ago.

Brower: Then, reaching yet into yet another generation, you had a relationship with Wynton Marsalis.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: How did that – talk about how that developed. Was that based on you knowing his dad, or . . .?

Terry: Actually . . .

Unknown: Good night. Thank you.

Terry: Okay. You guys get it fixed?

What is it?

Brower: I was asking you about Wynton . . .

Terry: About Wynton.

Brower: . . . how you came to know him and things you did in his behalf.

Terry: Wynton. Wynton's dad used to teach at a little – he had a private school. He taught all those kids down there, both his – all his kids, and I think Nicholas [Payton] went there. A whole bunch of kids studied with Wynton's dad. I got to know Wynton and Branford pretty well. When I took my youth band to Europe in – when was it? I don't know. '82 or something? I don't remember the exact date, but I got Branford in the band. Branford was playing third alto. I had him playing third alto under – Danny House was playing lead alto, who eventually ended up in Basie's band. If you remember seeing the band with a little blond kid playing alto, that was one of my little kids. Branford was in the band – in my band that went to Europe, with that alto combination, him and Branford – Branford and Dannie.

Then I got to meet Wynton, because we spent a lot of time in New Orleans. We were playing at the Atri – the – what is the name of it? The big hotel that has a huge atrium, and they have music in the lobby.

Brower: The Sheriton?

Terry: No. Right where the . . .


Brower: Maison something?

Terry: Hyatt. The Hyatt.

Brower: Okay.

Terry: We played at a place called Le Club, in the Hyatt. Wynton was a little kid at the time. I had him come up and play on the bandstand. The first – one of the first times that he played with a professional group. He played real good. I used to write to him. I used to call him the demon. I gave him – sent him a flugelhorn. I don't think he ever played it, though. He's still got his own.

Brower: He remembers it.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: He does remember it?

Brower: One of the quotes he says is, “Once he,” meaning you, Clark Terry, “got up early in the morning to hear me play the Brandenburg Concerto with the New Orleans orchestra . . .”

Terry: Sure did.

Brower: . . . “and I’ll never forget that. He’s playing in a club until 1 o’clock in the morning, then he gets up at 8 o’clock to hear me. He had to have set his alarm clock to do that.”

Terry: Yeah, and he played it flawlessly, too. I had goose bumps all over from listening. He played the heck out of it.


Brower: Do you have any sense of what it means to these young musicians to have someone like you take such a – go out of their way to such an extent to . . .?

Terry: Do I have what?

Brower: Do you have a sense of what it means?

Terry: Oh yeah. I know what it means, Bill, because when I was a kid, I used to ask questions of the older musicians, because I didn’t have parents that had enough money to send me to school and learn, so I had to learn by asking questions. I used to ask an old dude how to improve my tone in the lower register. He says, “Yeah, son.” Says, “You got a mirror at home.” I say, “Yes, sir.” He say, “You take that mirror, and you look in that mirror while you’re practicing. Sit flatfooted, straight back in the chair, keep the arms up and the chest out.” I said, all that sounds great. I know that was correct. Then he said, “While you’re looking in that mirror, grit your teeth, grind them together, and wiggle your left ear. Not the right ear, but the left ear.” So I said, wow, that’s the secret. I was naive. I didn’t know that none of that had anything to do with producing a good sound. So I tried it, and I got to the place where other people said, “Did you see that kid wiggle his left ear?”, not being aware that it wasn’t going to help my playing with a better sound at all, which it didn’t.

Luckily I overcame that. It was a customary thing for old-timers to tell young musicians the wrong thing, and then they would go home and gloat. “We got rid of another one of them little whipper-snappers.” I thought that that was such a wrong thing to do that I made up my mind, if I ever had an opportunity to impart knowledge to youths, then I would bend over backwards to do so.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: Of the young trumpet players out there now – you talked about Wynton – what is your – how do you feel – what is your sense of the future of the trumpet, given the young players that you see out there now? Are you concerned? What do you . . .

Terry: I think it's fantastic. I think there's a whole slew of great young players out there, Bill, and little Nicholas Payton, he's among the ringleaders. He's a fantastic little player. I have a little nephew in St. Louis – a great nephew, my nephew's son. He's going to be a demon. He's already learned how to circular breathe. I have to – every time I go out there, I have to give him a lesson. I was just out there a couple of weeks ago for the induction into the wax museum. He of course was on the scene, and we had a chance to do a little more studying together. I think that the whole situation is extremely healthy for young trumpet players. There's a lot of good ones out there.

Brower: You made a comment at one point that you felt that – and I don't know what you were referring to – but that a lot of musicians today don't have an individual identity.

Terry: That's true. A lot of them get on the bandwagon and follow suit, follow the leader, like Judas Goat. You hear one of them say [Terry sings an etude-like melody]. You hear the next one [Terry repeats the melody]. They all play the same licks and the same moods and so forth.

Brower: Why do you think that is so?

Terry: They want to get on the bandwagon. They want to be accepted. They want to be cool with their peers. They feel that that's the way to do it. A lot of them aren't content to dig in and try to find themselves and give vent to their feelings in being themselves. A lot of them aren't content to do that, a lot of them don't know how to do that, and a lot of them don't have what it takes to feel the individual person. They feel like they have to follow.

Brower: We've talked a bit about the flugelhorn, but I want – now I want to concentrate some questions on that. Did you ever have an occasion to borrow a flugelhorn from Miles Davis or was that . . .

Terry: Yeah. Miles. As a matter of fact, Miles had his flugelhorn. He used to call it his fat girl. He'd say, "Hey, man, you ought to take my fat girl home with you. Try it, man. It's mean."

Miles, Emmett Berry, and Shorty Rogers were three of the cats who had come upon flugelhorns. They were using trumpet mouthpieces in them, because you could play high with them. They're larger tubing, "brrr." They were screaming away on them. But

they didn't really use them for the thing which they were built for, for a more mellifluous approach to playing. They didn't use them for that.

After I finally got Keith Eckert involved in trying to reconstruct one, when he was with Selmer – he was the technical adviser for brass at the Selmer Instrument Company. We finally put one together and hooked it up. I decided I was going to really try to do it like the old Lunceford band used to do. That's where I first heard them. All three of them: Steve [Tommy Stevenson] and Sy Oliver and whatever the other trumpet player. They all used them. They used them for balance and nice little [Terry sings] tempo things like that. It was beautiful. This is what I had in mind when I was trying to – always trying to capture that sound. I would put a felt hat over the bell of my trumpet and try to grasp that flugelhorn sound, until finally Keith Eckert said, "Let's try to put it back together." So we tried some different tubings and so forth. Finally, we put the first one back together on the line for Selmer.

Brower: How does this relate to 1957 and the Duke Ellington experience of bringing . . .

Terry: This is just prior to that. We finally put that horn, that very horn together. Keith sent it back to Paris, and they did the final . . .

Brower: So that was the horn that was sent to your friend in Chicago.

Terry: Right. That was the horn.

Brower: So this is how the story gets connected.


Terry: Yeah. That's the horn that you opened out of the case just now. That's that horn, because I kept it and lent it – I lent it to the Ellington exhibit for the Smithsonian.

Brower: The "Beyond Category" exhibit the Smithsonian's doing.

Terry: Yeah, and then I lent it to the Kansas City thing. They're just sending it back. They made it look so pretty again, I want to start playing it again. It's an old, old horn.

Brower: Would you then – it's a fair statement that you were instrumental in the revitalization of the flugelhorn and its coming back on line to be manufactured. It was a dormant instrument, basically.

Terry: I don't know. I don't like to make statements like that. I don't know. I just like the sound, and I want very much to get involved in it on – for my own. Of course other cats were getting involved for a different purpose. I wanted to get into that

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

mellifluousness of it. I don't know whether you could say I was instrumental in it or not, but . . .

Brower: How about the electronic trumpet?


Terry: That – the Varitone? I got hooked up in that, and I'm so sorry that I got messed up in that, because it caused a kid to rely on electricity before he reached a point where he had found the center of his tone. It takes a while to develop an embouchure and get the point where you know [Terry buzzes his lips] right where the center of your tone comes from, from the standpoint of the formation of your embouchure. If a kid doesn't do that – you can just put that thing up there and say [Terry blows air, without buzzing his lips] and it'll make a sound [Terry blows without buzzing again], that electric thing. I hated so much when I was associated with Selmer and that Varitone. I knew it was a crutch for the kids. Instead of being a gimmick for variety for pros, it became a crutch for kids, and I hated that. I'm glad it didn't get too popular.

Brower: Your son Tony was saying earlier that he thinks the reason why you have such a strong embouchure goes back to the fact that early on, when you were making instruments out of tubing, that – because the back end of the tube is flat, that it forced you to have a very tight formed embouchure, simply using the musculature of your face.

Terry: No, I don't think that's correct, because I only made that one hose horn, and I only did that to have something that looked like a trumpet, because I couldn't afford one. But what might have helped is I adapted the policy of the Mexican – I always have trouble thinking . . .

Brower: Mariachi?

Terry: Yeah, mariachi players, who are forced to master their mouthpieces before they're given the horns. They learn how to single-tongue [Terry does so], single-tongue, double-tongue, and so forth, without their instrument. Then when they get their instruments, it's no problem. This is something that we prescribe for kids – not only kids, but for professionals, to get – they're trying to get – if you've been off a while, like I have, if you just do this [Terry buzzes his lips to sound a complex melody]. This is an exercise called Herbert L. Clark. It deals with the intervals, of course. If you can reach the place where you can control your embouchure like that, it makes it a lot less difficult for you when you are playing. So if you keep your – the embouchure under control [Terry buzzes wide intervallic leaps], it's always conducive to a nice warmup, always conducive to erasing the horrors of absence from playing. It's a good thing. We try to entice kids to buzz as much – we call it buzzing, just buzzing the chops [Terry buzzes]. When I get ready to go back to playing, the day before I buzz all day long, all day, just buzzing [Terry buzzes another complicated etude]. You can be doing

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center



something. You can be reading or writing or whatever you have to do, and it doesn't take up much time to do that, much effort.

Brower: I notice that your lips are not as scarred or as disfigured as many trumpet players are.

Terry: Sometimes trumpet players use a lot more pressure than they have to. If the pressure comes from the diaphragm, "HUH," like the karate expert who has to make that sound when he goes through the brick, "HUH." That's the control that we're supposed to have from the abdomen [Terry buzzes]. If you don't, you're going to have to have a strong left arm to pull it. You're pulling that horn to you. But you should be able to eliminate atrocious-looking chops by using the buzz more so than the pressure. There's no such thing as non-pressure, but as little pressure as possible.

Brower: Talking about technique, a few things I want – words I want to throw out to you, or phrases, and tell me where they fit into your concept: the primacy of note selection.

Terry: The first?

Brower: The primacy of note selection.

Terry: You mean as far as producing a solo is concerned? Or . . .


Brower: Yeah.

Terry: When you're playing a solo, which is more important to you, the choice of notes? That's very, very important, the choice of notes, but your style and your concept of playing is going to determine the notes that you choose. If you like to play swiftly [Terry rolls his tongue, "rrrrrrr"], you don't want to settle on any note, but if you like pretty notes, you pick out the notes in the chord [Terry sings a phrase of a ballad]. You find the notes that you can sustain and get something out of.

A lot of guys that have different – for instance, Miles, he used to say to me, "Man, I like to start on the ninth." Of course I couldn't make too much sense out of his reason. I said, "Why do you like to start on the ninth, Inky?" He said, "Because when I start on the ninth, I can go this way or that way." Almost wherever you start, you can . . .

Brower: Go this way or that way.

Terry: . . . this way or that way, yeah. He must have had something in mind that he really wasn't explaining to me in the fashion that he understood it. Then there's another thing he used to always say. He said, "When I'm playing, I like to miss." I said, "Why

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



do you like to miss?” He said, “Because if I attempt to make something, and I miss it, it makes the dude – it makes the people wonder, ‘I wonder what he would have made if he had made that?’”

Brower: That’s an inverted way to think about something.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: Velocity.

Terry: Velocity. I like very much to encourage kids to be able to play with speed, but the secret to velocity, I always try to impress on students, is that equal distance from point A to point B, evenness between the intervals. For instance, a passage. When you play a passage, the difference – the only difference between a drum lick and a dance step and the melody is, if the melody’s taken away. If the melody’s taken away from it [Terry sings a melody] and I play it on a drum [Terry pats the rhythm of that same melody], if I dance it [Terry sounds the rhythm with his shoes], that’s the only difference. It’s still – and if there’s 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8- – there’s 9 notes, right? If I play those notes without indulging in the interpretation of the jazz language – if I just play those 9 notes [Terry taps out the rhythm of the 9 notes, without any differentiation in articulation]. See, it don’t mean anything. But the highs and lows and the hills and the valleys [Terry sings and then taps the melody slowly] 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9. Or I could say [Terry plays it without articulation] 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9, but you don’t hear the highs and the lows. If I wanted to speed that up and get involved in velocity, I have to make sure that the distances are equal [Terry sings and taps the melody four times, increasing its speed] and so forth and so on.

Brower: You’ve still got your highs and your lows.

Terry: Huh? Yeah, still got your highs and your lows. Yeah, and the distances are equal. But what causes a cat to play sloppy when it comes to dealing with velocity, is that he has not practiced the distances between one interval – one point A and point B. To make it easy, he might say [Terry sings and taps in a sloppy manner], and this is what causes you – whereas if he slows it down [Terry sings and taps the melody slowly, 3 times].

Brower: Colors.

Terry: Which one?

Brower: Colors.

Terry: Colors? Different tones on the instrument have a connotation of tones of colors to me. I always like to think of my favorite colors, which is blue and white and red. This is something that's almost subconscious, in a sense, because you can't draw – you can't play a blue. You can't play a red, but it does help you to – help to inspire you to play something pretty and bright and blue, say [Terry sings a melody]. If it's blue, it's because you're thinking in terms of getting up to up, blue, instead of bley or blah. It's a blue instead of a blah.

Brower: So is that why we have white leather furniture everywhere?

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: White everywhere?

Terry: Yeah, I love white. I love white, and I love blue.

Brower: You're into painting.

Terry: Yeah, I'm into painting somewhat.

Brower: When did you start? When did you start pursuing that?

Terry: Let's see. This must be eight – less than 10 years ago. We went on a little vacation out in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My friend, who was a trumpet player also, Bob Farley, who used to have a music store, his wife owned a – what do you call it? – art museum – art – what do you call . . .


Brower: A gallery?

Terry: Gallery, yeah. She owned a gallery, and she was a painter. So they had painting equipment around the house, said, "Let's paint something tonight." I said, "Man, I don't know anything about . . ." "Oh," she said, "yeah. Everybody knows how to paint. All you have to do is take the time to give in to your feelings and try it." So we tried it, and he said, "You have a talent for that," and Gwen does too, and our kids. I'm finding almost anybody who really takes a chance, takes time to try it, they can do it. Some better than others. Al's a good painter. He gave vent to his feelings one day and he started painting. He's got some marvelous paintings over there.

Brower: Is there a relationship between the type of imagination involved in playing . . .

Terry: Definitely.

Brower: . . . and the type of imagination involved in painting?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: Definitely. Definitely, yeah. Almost invariably, if you are a good creator of a solo, you can create a painting.

Brower: I want to now take all of this and tie it into jazz education. What got you started in becoming a clin[ician]? Let me ask you this – another question first. Do you think – I know of at least two books that you’ve done on trumpet. Are there more?

Terry: No. *Let’s Talk Trumpet from Legit to Jazz* and *The Interpretation of the Jazz Language* and the . . .

Brower: The circular breathing book?

Terry: Circular breathing, yeah.

Brower: Do you feel that – would it be fair to say that these works are an attempt to codify jazz trumpet technique?


Terry: Not necessarily. I think we – everybody has a different system – method of modus operandi, and everybody has a different message that they want to give to the kids, but they all have a different way of doing it. All I can say is that when a teacher tells a student that this is what you have to do, that’s wrong. You don’t have to do that. You say, this is my way of doing it. I find I get better results this way. But it’s a known fact that one man’s poison is another man’s meat, and you can’t – you just can’t force a kid to do something that you think he should do, when he might find better ways and means of getting results that you want him to get.

Brower: How did you get on track to become a clinician and to do the kind of educational things that you’re doing?

Terry: The first thing that motivated me was that incident I spoke to you before about, asking questions because I was from a poor family and didn’t have any source. I’d ask questions from trumpet players. Who else would I ask them from, if I couldn’t study with one? They gave me wrong numbers. That made me realize there’s something wrong with that picture, and if I ever had an opportunity to correct that, I would do that, which I have been doing, because I hate people to just deliberately steer somebody wrong and then go home and laugh about it and gloat over it.

Brower: Did your work in the studios in any way open up the doors to educational opportunities – educational possibilities for you? Did this . . .

Terry: Yeah, it did, because, first of all, it made me understand the importance of precision in music. Sometimes you have to just play what’s there [Terry sings a

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



melody]. It wouldn't be the type of thing that I would play on a solo. That's why I say sometimes we were working in clubs all night long, go back and play that. So we have to do the stuff that we love to do – in order to do the stuff we love to do, we have to play some things that we don't particularly like to do, in order to subsidize our love for whatever it is that we like to do. For instance, we used to do a whole pot full of – we called them garbage dates, where you sit up there [Terry sings a simple funky brass riff]. That kind of garbage. You've heard it on the record. [Terry sings a funk rhythm, with the brass riff interspersed.] All that kind of stuff. Paid the same money. That's why I say we had to subsidize our yearn for that, playing that kind of music, by going somewhere and playing a lot less – for a lot less money and playing jazz, but you're keeping your soul together.

Brower: Tell me about the – are you still involved with the Clark Terry Great Plains Jazz Camp?

Terry: No, we finally – they – we had this going beautifully, and finally the school – it was originally – it was done at a school called the Teikyo Westmar University, which is out in Iowa. The Japanese bought in half of it, and they supplied more than half of the student body. They had a little quibble about the controlling stock. The Japanese had it, and they said, we want it. So the Japanese said, you got it, all of it. They pulled out. Took the kids out. They went back to Westmar University, and the attendance just went boom, boom, boom, down to the bottom. It was so low, 'til they couldn't find a president. They finally found a president who was a jock. He was a bench-warmer for the San Francisco 49ers and had a couple of Super Bowl rings and never played. He became president of this university, and he almost literally hated jazz. He made a statement, "If I ever become in possession of \$1,000,000 for subsidy, I wouldn't spend one nickel of it on jazz." At this time, all over the campus, you could see signs of this department: science department, geology – the geographic department, this department, that – physics – nuclear physics, and over here is Clark Terry's jazz studies department. We had our own little area, and he didn't like the idea. He said it had nothing to do with education. So he refused to . . .

[doorbell rings; interruption of recording]

We just had – we went down the drain. Anyhow, the school did so badly, 'til it finally – they had to close it down completely, and it's – they tore the building down. It no longer exists.

Brower: What about the International Institute of Jazz Studies?

Terry: The which?

Brower: The International Institute of Jazz Studies, in LeMars?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: That's the one I'm talking about.

Brower: That's the same . . .

Terry: Yeah, institute, yeah.

Brower: Clark Terry Great Plains and that are the same thing?

Terry: Yeah. The Great Plains, that's an old camp that we had, but the Clark Terry Institute of Jazz Studies was – that was at LeMars, Iowa.

Brower: Okay. So actually, I asked you about the Great Plains, and you told me about LeMars, Iowa.

Terry: Oh yeah.

Brower: When was the Great Plains?

Terry: The Great Plains was when we had a camp, a band camp, in – it started out in Emporia, Kansas, and it went down the drain, but from there we got involved in this other thing.

Brower: So one led to the other.


Terry: Yeah, one led to the other, yeah.

Brower: What is your current activity in terms of clinics and jazz education? What form is it predom – mostly taking?

Terry: I still do clinics and concerts, and I have – in that same town, LeMars, Iowa, one of the people who helped me to start this institute has all my music. We have a publishing thing there, and whenever I get a call to go – my son Gary is my manager. He runs all this. They'll call him and say they want me for a clinic, such and such a place. He'll tell them, in turn – he'll arrange the financial thing, the travel things, and he'll tell them to get the music from this concern in LeMars, Iowa. We sell it to the schools for a very, very, very, very small fee.

Brower: So they're getting charts, basically.

Terry: Yeah. In other words, a chart that costs me 7-, 800-hundred dollars, they could buy it for 40, 45, 50 dollars, just to cover the paper, the mailing, and the person that did the chart, a small stipend. That's the way we keep going.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History i.edu
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Some of those kids from – on this cruise that I’m doing – that they’re doing in my honor, in November, they – knowing that I’m involved in jazz education, they always allow me a little space. So they got a spot on the program, on the cruise, for some kids. They call them Clark’s Kids. So Clark’s Kids will get a chance to play five concerts crossing – along with Oscar Peterson and all of the great big stars. They don’t get paid, but it’s great exposure for them and a great learning thing.

Brower: How does one get an opportunity to become one of Clark’s Kids?

Terry: I have to choose them for this particular thing. The thing that’s very difficult for me: I like to be fair about it and cosmopolitan and democratic, and I got – for instance, on this I got three rhythm: piano, bass, and drums. I got three horns, a front line of three. But it would look strange – and this has happened, because when I’m searching for the best talent out there, you can’t always think in terms of color. But I have to be aware of that. It just wouldn’t look right for me to stand up there in front of six caucasian kids. So I have to be very careful about choosing. I want to make sure that everybody’s represented.

Brower: Why do you think that there’s not as many black or hispanic or other non-white students that can do what you want?

Terry: Because I’ve tried finding them.

Brower: But why do you think they’re not there? What do you think is going on in the culture and educational system that’s making – they’re not being produced?

Terry: That’s an excellent question. I’ve tried to find reasons – answers to that question for years. I don’t really know what it is that causes these kids to not – it’s like a – we’ll go somewhere and have a class of 50 kids, and 40 of them will be caucasians. We’re teaching what we – it’s our heritage. The black bourgeois families, for one thing, are the ones who will say, “We don’t want our kids involved in – getting involved in that filthy music called jazz. We want them to learn something about Bach, Beethoven, and Haydn.” So the minute that they say Beethoven, they don’t know what they’re talking about, because he was one of us. By the standards of the American whatever, they say one drop of blood makes you one of what I am. So he had more than one drop of blood, Beethoven did.

It’s difficult to find – if I could find – I still would like to mix it up a little bit, anyhow, but you can – it’s very difficult to find kids, that I have had any dealing with.

Brower: Tie this into your work with the IAJE [International Association of Jazz Educators]. In what capacity do you work with them, and do you think that they're doing enough to make music education – jazz education, broadly available?

Terry: I have mixed emotions about some of that. They're doing an excellent job, but I think they could do better. I don't know how to put my finger on it, but I went to one convention, one time, and the whole tab was taken up by people on the dais, telling jokes, so much so until the little educator that – he's caucasian – what name – he has all of these Music Minus One things.

Brower: Jamey Abersold?

Terry: Jamey Abersold. He jumped up and said, "What had this got to do with jazz education, all these jokes that people are telling?" I was 100% in favor of what he had said. A lot of the effort – the time is wasted in the wrong direction. I think they could do a far better job.

[The recording resumes on a new topic after a change of tape.]

He got some friends, or mutual friends, from Holland, who always send us flowers. They are here visiting for a short – for a few days. They want to go down to the thing tonight, but I never felt like it. I don't like to go in a place by myself. I can't very well any more, anyhow. So I'm going to have to call them and see if they can page him to come to the phone.

Brower: This is Bill Brower, interviewing Clark Terry for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program on Tuesday, June the 22nd, 1999. I want to . . .

Terry: You think I should make that call first, or what?


Brower: Certainly. We can do that. Yeah.

Terry: But I've got to take my insulin, if that's the case. Gwen! Gwen!

[Recording interrupted. It resumes in mid-sentence.]

Brower: . . . talk to you about some of the – of your bandleading. We talked a bit about the Bob Brookmeyer band that you had with that band, but talk about that band, some of the membership in that band and what you think you achieved and what you were shooting for.

Terry: The CTBB band – Clark Terry - Bob Brookmeyer band – started as a result of a mutual admiration society. I loved the way Bob played valve trombone, and he loved

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

the way I played trumpet and flugelhorn, so we decided – the Blue Note was putting together some groups that they wanted to feature in the club on a regular basis, a regular turn.

Brower: You mean the Half Note.

Terry: The Half Note. I keep mixing the Half Note and the Blue Note. Yeah, the Half Note. Zoot [Sims] and Al [Cohn] had formed a group. A couple of other people had formed a group. Phil and Quill, Gene Quill and Phil Woods. So we formed a group, CTBB. Our first group, I think we had Bill Crow on – no, maybe we had Joe Benjamin and Osie Johnson, and I think Roger Kellaway on piano, and me and Bob. The personnel didn't change a heck of a lot. We had – at one time we had Joe Benjamin on bass. One time we had Bill Crow on bass. One time we had Osie Johnson on drums and then Dave Bailey on drums. Piano players were Don Friedman for a short while, and Roger Kellaway, and – I don't know who . . .

Brower: Derek Smith?

Terry: Who?

Brower: Derek Smith? Did you use him?


Terry: Derek for – maybe he might have subbed for a time or two, but he never was one of the regulars that played with us.

It was a great group. Right now, people still tell me that's one of the greatest groups that ever came down the pike. We had a beautiful repertoire of a variety of things. We played anything from the swift, hip stuff to the old, lowdown, greasy, grimy blues. One of the things that we used to enjoy very much doing was an old tune called *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. It went [Terry sings] "Glory, glory hallelujah." When we played this, the owner of the Blue [*sic*: Half] Note – Frank Canterino was the cook and he ran everything, took care of the kitchen – but whenever we would play that, he would drop everything he was doing and walk out of the kitchen and stand there and listen to it. We subtitled it – as a matter of fact, on the record, it's called *Get Frank out of the Kitchen*. It was a fun group.

Brower: Did you have Miroslav Vitous in that band?

Terry: Miroslav was in the band for a short while when we were – we played in Chicago at the – I can't think of that club. It's non-existent any more. On – right on the lake, on [?Rocker] Drive, on the lake there. I mean on the river, right by the river.

Brower: Did somebody recruit him from you? Did you recruit him?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: Yep. I was just about to tell you. We were playing this club and Inky – Miles came in to play a concert. He sat there all night, and then he left. Said, “I’m going to Pittsburgh.” He went to Pittsburgh and called me from Pittsburgh. “Hey, man,” he said, “That bass player you got is mean, ain’t he?” I said, “Yeah. You like him?” “Yeah. Ask him if he wants to play with me.” So I told Slav that Inky wanted to play with him. He went crazy. He couldn’t believe it. To make a long story short, we hooked it up, and he got with Miles.

The same thing happened with Herbie Hancock. Herbie, I forgot, was one of my piano players. We made *Watermelon Man* and *Cantaloupe Island* and all those records together. When Miles came through and heard Herbie with the band, he did the same thing. He went to Milwaukee or somewhere and called me. “Hey man, the piano player you got is mean, ain’t he.” I said, “Yeah, he is. You want him?” He said, “Yeah. Ask him if he wants to play.” So I told Herbie that Miles wanted him in his group. He went crazy. So we got two of – I always like to help people promote themselves, go get further, because I knew I didn’t want to hook anybody up or tie anybody up, because we weren’t doing that much on a regular basis anyhow. Here was an opportunity for him – a dream come true for him. I’m sure for both of them, for Miroslav and for Herbie. It worked out great for both of them.

Brower: Tell me about the Big B-A-D . . .

Terry: Big Bad Band. We had a terminology in those days. Everything that was outstanding, we called “big bad”: big band horn, big bad car, big bad lady, big bad whatever. The band was smoking at that point. Ernie Wilkins was writing for the band. Ernie called the band, said, “This is a big bad band,” so we titled it the Big B-A-D Band.

Brower: How many pieces?

Terry: 18.

Brower: Was Chris Woods a favorite musician of yours? Isn’t that right?

Terry: Yeah, Chris was one of my all-time favorites. As a matter of fact, Chris’s son, who is now about 16, is my godchild. He’s playing trumpet now. I thought he’d play the alto [saxophone], but he’s playing trumpet. They live up in – way up in New England or somewhere.

Brower: Were you writing for the band as well?

Terry: Yeah, I wrote some things, and Bob wrote some things, Holloway wrote some things – Roger Kellaway, rather, wrote some things. Everybody contributed something.

Brower: Who were some of the other personnel of that aggregation, besides Chris Woods?

Terry: Of the . . . ?

Brower: Of the Big B-A-D Band.

Terry: The Big B-A-D Band. Oh, I didn't write anything for the Big B-A-D Band. I'm talking about the combo, I wrote. No, I wasn't too much into big-band writing. In the big band, Ernie Wilkins, who wrote for us. He played tenor [saxophone]. We had Charles Davis on baritone [saxophone]. We had Charlie Williams on alto [saxophone], Chris Woods.

Brower: C. I.?

Terry: C. I. Williams, yeah. Let's see. I'm trying to think of who else. Trombones were John Gordon and Jimmy Wilkins, Ernie's brother, and a cat from Quinnipiac College, Sonny Costanzo. In the trumpets we had – we had a couple of different trumpet sections. One was Lloyd Michaels, Johnny Melita – what's his name – Gamby. Oscar Gamby. I'm naming all the trumpet players that I can think of that were in there.

Brower: Fred Copeland?

Terry: Ray Copeland. Yeah, Ray played the Carnegie Hall concert with us.


Brower: Ernie – Ernie Royal play with that?

Terry: Ernie Royal started out with us, but he didn't – he always put us out, because he was so busy. He'd say, "I think this band should disband." Yeah, Copeland was one of our mainstays.

Brower: Did you have Lew Soloff?

Terry: I was just going to say Lew Soloff. Let's see. Who else was in there? A little cat that ended up in the Basie band. He was my manager's son, Carley – Dale Carley, a great little player. We had Victor Sproles on bass. Don Friedman was there for a while, and – I can see these cats. I can't call all their names right now.

Brower: Did Ron Carter play in that band?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 2025 Smithsonian  [si.edu](https://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Terry: Ron Carter was the very first, when we had Ernie Wilkins and Ron Carter. Ron was the beginning, and of course Patti Bown was the original piano player. We had Grady Tate for a while. Big Eddie Jones on bass. I don't know. We had so many cats in there.

Brower: How long did you keep that enterprise going?

Terry: Keep that band going?

Brower: Yeah.

Terry: I would say roughly two or three years – three years at the most. It became impossible to keep it busy and to keep the same personnel. It was no fun if every time you look up, there's a new third trombone or lead trombone player, or second alto, or lead trumpet player, new drummer. So we just let it fade away. We got some good records around, though.

Brower: What is your – of the recordings that you did, what recordings did you – most pleased you with the Big B-A-D Band?

Terry: I like the Wichita one, the one live at Wichita. We had – Phil Woods was with us then. I think Phil Woods and Chris Woods were there, weren't they? Jimmy Nottingham. We had Richard Williams at one time. We've had a lot of wailing cats in that band.

Brower: What about Clark Terry and his Jolly Giants?


Terry: That was a small group. We – when I was being managed by Joe Carley, every place that he submitted for the band to play, every place that he had submitted our group, they would always ask, what's the title of the group? He said, "You can't sign for them, just the name. You've got to have a title." So I thought of the Jolly Giants. My manager said, "Let's call it the Jolly Giants." Actually, he thought of it, but there was already a group that was titled – Shorty Rogers had a group called Shorty Rogers and his Jolly Giants of Jazz. So I didn't know how that was going to work out, but he said, "It doesn't matter. There can be two Jolly Giants."

Brower: Another flugelhorn player.

Terry: Shorty Rogers, yeah. He sure was, yeah.

Brower: I know one of the things that you – one of your close associates is Bill Cosby.

Terry: Yeah, old B.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Brower: Every – the two years that I worked on the Monk – the t.v. show that the Monk people did with ABC t.v., each one of them opened up with a skit that you and Cosby concocted. Who was writing that material?


Terry: We just did that. Bill and I, we just do things off the top of our head. Every time I do the show – for instance, we did the show once down at – on 23rd Street, when – I don't know if you remember seeing that one. I was sitting on the curbstone, playing – on one of those brownstones, and this cat walked down the street with a great big case. When I went there, the lady – she was a black lady who was – what do you call the people who run the shows?

Brower: Producer or director.

Terry: The director or something. Yeah. She said, "I'm going to give you this script." "But," she said, "I know when you two fools get together, you're going to change it and make it what you want it to be anyhow, so, whatever you want to do." I had already a thing in my head. I had . . .

Brower: This is "The Cosby Show" we're talking about.

Terry: "The Cosby Show," yeah. I had this old gnarled, beat-up, ragged, rusty, ugly-looking flugelhorn. I had planned to use it as a gimmick. I told her, I said – she said, "Just go ahead and do it. You're going to do what you want to do anyhow." So I'm sitting there playing on the stoop, and this cat walks down the street in the crowd of people out there, and he said – I said, "Hey, man, what you got in that thing." Said, "Got more horns, man." I said, "You play?" "Yeah." I said, "Come on up here and play something with me." I'm sitting up on the steps. He came up, and he sat down, and he opened this great big old case and pulled out a bass clarinet, like Eric Dolphy, pulled it out. I said, "Yeah, that's it." "Yeah, that's my instrument, man." I said, "Play something." He started playing, and it – making atrocious sounds. I said, "Man, that doesn't sound too good. As a matter of fact, I don't think you're playing the right instrument. You should have an instrument with a – a brass instrument." He said, "I ain't got one of those." I said, "I just happen to have one for you." So I reached behind and had this old beat-up flugelhorn. I had a new mouthpiece on it. So I said, "Try this." He played it. His eyes – he lit up, made some noises on it. I said, "I'll tell you what you do. We're going to start out. We're going to play something together. When the camera – so the camera says, "okay." We start playing. He would play such loud and wrong notes. I said, "Wait a minute. I think something's wrong with the horn. We got to fix it." So I had a big bottle – we always had this thing about hot sauce. When he reached – I reached behind me, and I said, "You need to put some hot sauce on those valves." So we took the valves open and sprinkled hot sauce all over the valves. Then he said, "This will make it work?" I said, "Yeah, that's going to make it work good."

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: That's about like that guy telling you, do this and . . .

Terry: Yeah. He put the hot sauce on it, and then he started playing again. This time, when he played, the camera – when he was playing, the camera – when I played, the camera was on him, but I was playing. So he started fast [Terry sings a swift melody]. Say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” That was the end of the bit.


The hot sauce started when we got married. When Gwen and I got married, we had chosen to go to Disneyworld for the honeymoon. She always wanted to go down there, and I did too. So we go down to Disneyworld. We get off the plane, go to pick up the baggage. We're getting ready to go get the car that we had rented. We go to the hotel that we had arranged for. There's a guy standing there with a big sign saying, “Mr. and Mrs. Clark Terry.” I said, “Look at that, baby.” We went over there, and this guy says, “Mr. Cosby has sent me to fetch you.” I said, “Mr. Cosby?” “Yes.” I said, “We have a car that we have rented.” “We've cancelled that. We have a limousine for you.” “What?” Said, “But we've got a hotel . . .” “We've cancelled that too. We have a penthouse for you.” “Oh, wow.” This big long stretch limo from here to there – we go sit in this, and he's got cigars there. Just class A. We got to the hotel. After we checked in the hotel, there's a great big huge suite with a big four-poster bed and two bathrooms, a balcony all around the place. It was fantastic.

Pretty soon a gentleman comes up and says, “I am the manager of the hotel here, and I am a friend of Mr. Cosby. He told me to tell you that you're not to spend anything. All you have to do is sign for everything.” I said, “Okay.” Then pretty soon here comes a big package. In this package was a huge bottle of hot sauce. We always had this hot sauce thing. There was a sign on it that said, “This is for your Johnson.”

Brower: There's a – I understand that when you do – when you play the Blue Note or places you play in New York, and Cosby shows up, he'll come, and he has a character that he does, a Boppenstein or something?

Terry: Yeah. Last time, when I gave him that horn, on the case, Bebop Steen. He came in the club. He sat at the bar, and said, “I think, if I'm not mistaken, I think I see a bad trumpet player back there – flugelhorn player.” I said, “Unless my eyes are playing a trick on me, I think that's old Bebop Steen back there.” He starts walking through. He says, “Yeah, that's Bebop Steen.” He comes up, and we do our stupid bit.

We've got a lot of little funny things that we do together. He gets me little cameo parts on the show whenever he can. One time we did a – I don't know if you saw the show. I was – it was in the gymnasium, this particular scene. He was trying to get insurance, but he couldn't get this insurance unless he passed his physical exam. So he's on a crash program to get his body in shape. He's in the gym. This whole scene takes place in the

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

gym. He's working out, doing all kinds of things to try to get his body in shape. At one point, he came in. I had on my gym togs, and they said, "Okay, Clark, take care of him then." We were at the back – all of a sudden, the next scene was he's laying on the floor, and I'm standing there, and I'm talking. He said, "Man, I don't know what – I ain't never seen anything like that in my life. I've been running gyms all my life." He said, "This cat came in. He did 150 on the bicycle. He did 200-something on the rowing. Then he jumped over there and he grabbed a 200-pound weight, and he lifted that weight, and that's when it hit him. And all I can remember saying [Terry mumbles]" – I went into the mumbles bit. And there he is. He was laying there.

Brower: This is an incredible segue, because I was coming up to some – another question about some mumbles. Gus Johnson says that – in the interview segment he did with Stanley Dance in his book on Basie – that you were doing the mumbles bit in the '50s on the bus, that this was something that you used to entertain the guys with.

Terry: Yeah.

Brower: That's accurate.


Terry: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

Brower: You did – you must have worked on this for what? Six or seven years before you ever – it ever saw . . .

Terry: That was a long time, because I – when we were in the Navy, 1942 to '45, I used to be in charge of the gear – the equipment. On field day, which is everybody clean up, I used to do my bit, to keep the cats cheerful [Terry mumbles], talking nonsense like that and singing stupid things as I passed out the gear. So that was way back then that I was doing that kind of **crap**.

Brower: Did – someone – I can't remember exactly where I got this quote from – said that they thought that your experience in carnivals, in hearing the people ballyhooing to their audiences, was perhaps a model or something where you might have gotten that idea.

Terry: No, not from that. That was the thing that was conducive to longevity, however, because we'd go out and do [Terry sings], play loud. Then they've got to draw a lot of people in. Then we go behind, like we're going to start the show, we're separated in a little alcove things behind the stage. The people go in and think they're going to see a show, but then we come back out and do another two or three ballys, while they're sitting in there waiting, because they had some kind of little jive show to entertain the people, selling stuff until we got a full house, and then we'd do a show.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1413  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



There's always some interesting things going on on a carnival. You always pick up things as you go along. What I did see on the carnival was the circular breathing, the clarinet player who used to play a long note and take the bell of the horn off, unscrew all the joints and get down to the mouthpiece, and he unscrewed the ligature and whistled on the reed. All this while dancing. Hold this one long note. That was the first time I saw circular breathing, and I got involved in that. I figured out a way to explain how it happens and teach it. That's become a thing with me and a lot of students.

Brower: Tell me about Joseph Casavubu and Patrice Lamumba.

Terry: Years ago there was a trumpet player by the name of Nick Travis. He used to – we used to call each other Deedle-ee and Nicholai and stuff like that. One time, a cat named Olatunji, a bass – a conga player, called – let's see. How – I don't remember how this actually went down. But he called – I don't know how it was, but he insulted . . .

Brower: Olatunji?

Terry: . . . Olatunji, because he [Travis] thought it was me [Terry] calling or something, and he [Travis] came on with this title, and he really insulted the heck out of Olatunji.

Brower: It was a private joke, and you . . .


Terry: Yeah, right. That made me think of that first. But the Lamumba – Nipsie Russell had a bit that he used to use, where he said, during the race for the nuclear physics thing, they had a program going on in Africa where they were going to put something in space. So the Africans were working on a project to put a baboon on the moon. He said you could fly low over this country, and all you could hear was a drum beat, “bing a boom, bing a boom,” and everybody's humming, saying, “A baboon on the moon by June. A baboon on the moon.” The nuclear physicist who was the head of the program, he was a descendent of Casavoubu and Mabut, and his name was Sackodudu. “A baboon on the moon.”

But I thought about that Olatunji thing first, because Olatunji was mad, man. He was angry.

Brower: Was he calling for you?

Terry: Huh?

Brower: Was Olatunji trying to reach you?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1413  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: I think – I don’t know how – I was on – I don’t know how that phone call came about. Nick was calling – it might have been, maybe Nick might have – Olatunji might have called Nick for a date, because we used a big band. Nick was a great trumpet player, and I did almost all of Tunji’s dates. Nick might have been on one of them. So he might have been calling him about the date, and Nick thought it was me, and he came on with this stuff. I imagine it was very insulting, almost like someone using the “n” word.

Brower: Tell me. You’ve got a lot of jokes, but do you have any favorite jazz jokes or – yeah, jazz jokes?

Terry: To tell you the truth, Bill, I don’t really know, because most of the stuff I get into is kind of blue anyhow. It might not be too fitting for a history of this sort. So, I don’t know.

Brower: That’s an answer. That’s an answer in and of itself. So we’ll move to the next area.

If you were going to summarize your philosophy of jazz and your idea of the jazz aesthetic, what would that be?

Terry: If I were to summarize it?

Brower: Yeah, your philosophy, your aesthetic of jazz.

Terry: It depends – it would depend on whether I’m talking to a student or just generally assessing it, because it’s very difficult to say what jazz is and what you expect to get from it, what you expect it to do for and to people, because everybody’s got a different theory, and as the old saying goes, different strokes for different folks. I think that Fats Waller and Louis and those cats summed it up when they said, if it had to be explained, then the person who’s trying to get an explanation didn’t really need to know about it, because it means so many things to so many people. I remember that record I made about happiness, “Happiness is. Happiness is.” You can say that about jazz. [Terry sings:] “Jazz is different things for different people. That’s what jazz is.”

So, with that – when you’re dealing with students, we have to really get involved and let them know that it’s not all fun and games. It’s a certain amount of discipline, a certain amount of indulgence and perseverance that you really have to get involved in and work hard in. You dig deep in order to go higher. There’s so many theories. That’s a topic that we could elaborate on for ages. I don’t really know how to settle on an answer for that.

Brower: The – while we were taking a break, I was asking you something about the economics in jazz. Things we've gone through, you've pinpointed what the economics were in different situations, but I – and I – the question is, had it not been for your period in the studios and what that afforded you, would you be as comfortable today as you are? And just how do you – and then, building on that, how do you assess the economics of jazz from the standpoint of the everyday working player?

Terry: I think, Bill – to answer the first part of your question – I don't think I would have been as – in as comfortable a position now had I not been through the scene of – the studio scene, where I was on first call on all the contractors' lists, because of the fact that I was on staff, and staff carried a lot of weight. This is the first – this meant that whomever was contracting, their list – their top list of the first couple dozen people were studio musicians, NBC, ABC, CBS. That was very, very important. I don't think I really would have been as comfortable today if – had it not been for that period.


Then, the second part. It is still very difficult for musicians to make a good living, because things are governed by what we call scale, the union, and they are the ones who say that when you work so many hours, you're supposed to get so many dollars. Then people who hire the people who are supposed to be paid scale, they don't want to pay even scale. It's very difficult for a person to get from a club on a decent salary, except in some instances. We've been very, very fortunate. We've had some people who felt – like the Village Vanguard, ever since Max Gordon passed away, his wife has been running it. A lot of people say unkind things about her, but I love her [Lorraine Gordon]. I think she's fantastic. She's a great businesswoman, but she just don't stand for any nonsense. She don't like a whole lot of singers, for instance, coming up on the bandstand. She's strictly a businesswoman. We do very good business in there for her, and every time we go in, she is very sweet, very beautiful and compassionate. She even gives – when she does great business, she gives us a bonus. That's more than I can say for most club owners anywhere in the world. She gives us a bonus.

It's difficult – back to the answer – it's difficult for a musician to really say, I demand this. You have to – over a period of years, you have to prove your worth, prove that if you're going to get a little more money, you got to bring in a few more people. There's still a few name people who are able to bring people through the tills.

Your tape's two minutes.

Brower: How did – I under – is it true that the diabetes is a result of the shock your body went through as a result of a car accident and you cutting yourself?

Terry: I don't think so, because the medics don't agree with that, but that's when it happened to me. I thought it was the result of some traumatic experience, the likes of which I went through. I cut my – the tips of my fingers off on the wheel cover of my

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



front-wheel drive Caddie [Cadillac]. I tried to sue that way. The medic said he never heard of any such thing. So it didn't work. But I also found that there was a trend of diabetes in my family, so I think the heredity had something to do with it too. So I don't really think you could – I don't think really the medics – maybe they know and don't know, but it seems to me that that could be possible. A traumatic shock of some sort can trigger things like that.

Brower: How did it force you to change your lifestyle? Or how has it impacted you personally and professionally.

Terry: I would say it has been very, very devastating to me, because, first of all, it affects certain parts of your body that you'll find it's difficult to do without: your eyesight, for instance. I can hardly – sometimes I can't see well at all. It's difficult to – your feet – you lose sensitivity as far as your nerves are concerned. Your extremities get affected. You can't – you don't have the feeling in your fingertips and your feet. You step on a nail or something, sometime you might not even feel it. It's a very, very – no disease is comfortable, but it's – this one is . . .

Brower: Does the fingertip – did that affect your playing?

Terry: Yeah. I have no feeling in the tips of these three fingers. Those are my three fingering [Terry taps his fingers] on the instrument. Left hand's okay. That's why sometimes, when I play the two horns, I can play better with the left hand than I can with the right hand.


Brower: Talk to me about women in jazz and what you feeling is about that. I raise that for two reasons. One, I know at one point you had an all-female band, and you toured.

Terry: That's right.

Brower: You also did a record at one time called *Cats Versus Chicks*.

Terry: Yeah. Leonard Feather cooked that up. I'll never forget that date. We had a little girl – Leonard Feather had put together a group of swinging chicks. The little girl trumpet player, her name was Norma Carson. I'll never forget her. She was very shy and very timid. She came on like, "Oh, I'm so frightened. I don't know what to . . ." So I'm trying to calm her. I said, "Don't worry about it, baby. Everything – everything will be all right. Don't worry." So, it comes time for her to play, and she stood up there and said [Terry sings a forceful jazz melody]. I said, "Why you little rascal." I wanted to slap her. She was playing possum on me. She was a great little player.

They had Mary Osborne on guitar, and – what's the girl? Boo. Boo on piano. Used to play with Dinah Washington. Great piano player. Boo. I can't think of Boo's last name

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

[Boo Pleasant]. I think Bonnie Wetzel was on bass, Ray Wetzel's wife. She was a great bass – I think that's who was on bass. But they had a great group. They really – the theme was [Terry sings], "Anything you can do, I can do better." That was one of the themes, one of the themes of the record.

Brower: So the record was structured where they would play a tune – the ladies would play a tune, the guys would play a tune, and they would . . . ?

Terry: Yeah, but not necessarily the same tune. I don't recall if we played the same tune all through the whole record or not, but the chicks would play and then the cats would play. Cats versus chicks. It was a nice concept. It was one of Leonard's brainstorm.

The other band, the all-girls band – I was pretty much responsible for helping to keep the Wichita Jazz Festival alive. It was losing money, going down the drain. I knew the people who were in charge. As a matter of fact, one of the ladies who was in charge, [her] son was a drummer, and he played in my band for a while. He went to Africa with us. Not too many African-American bands go to Africa with a caucasian drummer, but we did that on the State Department tour. He was actually teaching the African drummers how to play jazz drums, and he was learning some conga and . . .


Brower: Traditional drums?

Terry: . . . talking drum things, licks from them. They were swapping intelligence. It was very good.

Brower: You were – can you go into a little bit more about the all-girl band?

Terry: Yeah. I was with – I was about to say, the purpose of my saying – I was with the festival, and I suggested to them something that – first of all, I saved it by having a group of my friends come out, name people, and doing the festival for very little money to get it back on track. That worked, so then the next year I told them, said, "Let's try an all-girls band." They said, "Oh yeah? Sure." We had good charts. I had the people there to agree to take in two or three girls for 10 days while we rehearsed and performed.

The girls – being in jazz education, I knew where all of the bodies were, people that could play. I chose all these ladies from different universities, colleges, high schools, and so forth. We sent them all tickets, and they all came in to Wichita. The families were there, to take them in as their families. We rehearsed for a few days, three or four days, and then we performed. It was a great experience. A lot of those contacts that were made in those days, people still are in touch with those girls. Every now and then I see one of them. One of them was Jimmie Rowles's daughter, Stacey Rowles. She's a great little flugelhorn player now. I don't know where most of them are now, but we

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 20  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

had a little lead trumpet player. She was very stocky built, and a short neck. She could shake on a high G [Terry imitates the sound]. We had a drummer from a university in Michigan. Some – I don't know what the name of the university was, but she had long red hair, and she played with her hair hanging down over her face. It looked like just a glob of red hair playing. She would shake her hair and play, but you never could see – part the hair to see her face. She was a marvelous little drummer. Then the bass player was the girl who eventually married Jim Galloway up in Toronto. Can't think of her name, either.

There were so many beautiful little players in that group. It never got off the ground. We thought perhaps – we never even got much publicity. I'm sure that had there been Doc or Al Hirt or somebody like that, it would have been all sorts of publicity, but because I did it, it just went dah, down the drain.

Brower: I want to bring this to a close by you talking about some of your current projects, some things that you'd like to see happen, any kind of parting shots that you want to leave us with.


Terry: I'd like to leave a thought with the students who are getting involved, to impress upon them the fact that you have to really approach what you believe in diligently enough to work hard at it, because nothing comes easy. It like, you only take out what you put in. We always help kids understand that if you go to the bank, say, "I want to draw \$100," the teller might look at you and laugh, say, "You have \$3.12 left in your account." You can't take out what ain't in there. And you can only take out what you put in. If you put in enough, you'll even get dividends. The same thing happens with application to your instrument.

We find that there are situations where people start doing pretty good in the business, and then they become overwhelmed with – not with the business. With their careers. They become overwhelmed, and they just let it go by the wayside, because that comes under the title of satisfaction. Satisfaction can be dangerous. As soon as a person becomes satisfied, that's where they're going to find him, 20 years hence. He got happy right there. He got satisfied. He ain't looking for nothing else. He's not trying to get better.

We used to sum that up by saying, the only difference – that's what we call grooving. When you reach the point where you're grooving, it's very dangerous to a lot of people, because they say, "This is it." We find that the only difference between a groove and a grave are the dimensions.

Brower: What can I do with that but leave it alone?

Any current projects or efforts that you're doing that you want to leave us with?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [i.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Terry: I'd like to get more involved with youths. If I had no debts, and everything I was working for – was working toward was covered and paid for, I would just get a whole bunch of kids everywhere and just try to impart the knowledge of jazz to them for free, just to keep the perpetuation of the craft alive. I would like to be remembered as somebody who worked hard in that direction, toward keeping the perpetuation of jazz craft alive.

There's some jazz educators who – or so-called jazz educators, but they're not really into it from the standpoint of their hearts. Of course we all have to make a living. But there's some guys who play beautifully, and they're involved in jazz education, but they're not – they're doing a great injustice to the profession and to the kids. I had one – I remember one particular occasion where we were critiquing a band. The idea is to motivate the kids, not to [?], step on them. This particular person said of the little girl who played her instrument and sang – he says, as far as this little girl is concerned – this is on his Lavalier mic and on his critique sheet – he said, "As far as this little girl is concerned, tell her, 'Go home, get married, and have babies, and forget it'." That's not very nice. We've had some . . .

Brower: It's cruel.

Terry: Huh?

Brower: It's cruel.


Terry: That's very cruel, very cruel. We've had some situations where one cat – we had a little routine teaching, and one cat – we had at this point five little girls in the trumpet section. 12, 15, 13, and maybe the oldest about 17. This cat was trying to get them to give more of themselves and dig in a little more, and he came up with a connotation – it was a term that was very derogatory. It was – first of all, it was a risqué bit of terminology that you just don't use with young kids, particularly girls. It started out with the letter "B" and ended with a "S." He said, "Come on. Ain't y'all got none back there."

Brower: Playing like . . .

Terry: Yeah, yeah. The little girls looked and said, what's that?, what's that? What little 12-year-old . . . But I'll tell you the word a little bit later on.

Brower: I think I got it.

Terry: Yeah.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](http://www.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center



Brower: I want to – We'll stop now. I can't thank you enough. You've been extremely generous. I know it's been very taxing for you to spend this many hours doing this, but it's been very good for me personally.

Terry: Thank you.


Brower: I really enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

Terry: Thank you so much. If you need anything else added from time to time, just call me up and come on back and we'll do some more.

Brower: Thank you.

Terry: Okay.

[Transcribed by Barry Kernfeld from digital copies of the original tapes.]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202-633-1000  Smithsonian
National Museum of American History [si.edu](https://americanhistory.si.edu)
Kenneth E. Behring Center

