

Carlton Black

DINO ROBINSON: [00:00:00] This is Dino Robinson, on Saturday, September 13, 2008, at 1:20pm at the home of Carlton Black, 1122 Garnet Place. OK, Carlton, if you can for me, let me know, tell me actually your full name and where you're from, and who your parents are.

CARLTON BLACK: My name is Carlton Alvin Black. And my parents were Warren Alvin Black. My mother was Mildred Minola Burnette, then became Black.

DR: And where is your mother from?

CB: My mother was born in Memphis, Tennessee.

DR: And your father?

CB: My father was born in Evanston.

DR: And when were you born?

CB: The date?

DR: The date you were born.

CB: I was born September 30, 1944.

DR: Your birthday's coming up soon. Happy early birthday.

CB: Thank you very much.

DR: Well, let's ask you some questions about your life growing up. Maybe a little bit about your parents, what you may, you know, recall from growing up, and...

CB: Well, my father was really sportsy. He was a high school graduate, and he had two scholarships to play, I think, basketball and football. He went to the service. He was in the Army and so forth, but he was very good at all sports and so forth. He boxed, also, a little bit that I know. And then my mother was a domestic worker and so forth, you know. That's about it. And that's all I can say about them. And she was high school also, and that's about it.

DR: OK. She was a domestic. Was she a domestic here in Evanston, or...?

CB: Yes, I think so. Yes.

DR: Was it like in Evanston or the suburbs?

CB: The suburbs, I suppose. Yes.

DR: So, what schools did you attend?

CB: I attended Foster School, Haven School, Evanston Township. That's about it.

DR: OK. While you were at the high school, did you get involved in any sports or anything?

CB: I was [active?] a little bit, and I played football. That's about it.

DR: Did you play any -- what that for the full season or just from time to time?

CB: It was just for first season. That's all, that's all.

DR: OK. So the nature of this, is we're really going to get into your music career. You had an extensive career in the music, and the rest of the requests after this will be geared toward that. When did you first get interested in music?

CB: When I first got interested in music? I can't recall, but hanging out with the fellows all the time, we always liked to sing and so forth. We'd sing on the corners, street corners. We'd go to somebody's house and sing in the hallways. Sometimes even at school, we'd sing in the hallways, you know. And there was always a challenge between our group and other groups and so forth. We'd see who could out-sing each other. We would write nice songs and so forth. You know, like competitions, so forth. And having some fun. And in the most places we liked to go to it is now Fleetwood Jourdain. I think back then it was just Fleetwood Center, or no, Foster Center. And then in the men's room, they had a great big shower back there. And it echoed all the time. So we'd go back there and sing in that, like we was in a studio somewhere. And other groups did the same thing. We used to also do it, and they came and did the same thing. And we had a lot of good singing groups in Evanston, and I was always part of a lot of them, so forth.

DR: What were some of the singing group names that you remember?

CB: Well, it seems we would have one (inaudible) we called The Velvet-Airs. We used to get all down in there. And the other groups were like The Hands of Time, with Barry Young and company. Let me see, we had the Naturals, the original Naturals, and we had -- let me think. Well, our rival group has always been the Renells. My cousin's in that group, too, also, the Renells. And we always used to go against them all the time. We'd be back and forth, having fun at reunions. The last reunion we had, I think was 1992, at Family Focus. And all I remember is we went there, so forth. My Bobby was not there, he couldn't make it. And it was just a comedy of errors. You know, we'd get together. We had the rehearsals, and then you know, we'd get there and stand and sing and so forth, messing up. And then we all had fun. And that's about it. And we brought our instruments out. I had my guitar, and my cousin, Donald Pryor, he had his bass. Our drummer, he didn't show up, either. He was busy doing something else. And I didn't know that one of the Renells named Don McCoy, he played saxophone. I didn't know that for years. So we was over there about two, three hours just having fun. But they also had, the main group was the Renells, our rival

group. And I think they lost about three of their members, so forth. They passed on. Want the names on them?

DR: Yeah.

CB: The Renells were named after Renell [Bowen?], Renell Bowen, and he passed on. The other member was Nathaniel [Borland?]. [00:05:00] We called him Nate. He passed. And also Alvin Douglas. He passed on. He was -- three of their members passed. And my cousin, Donald Pryor, the one who sings bass and played bass, he's recuperating in the hospital now after a long illness. He's still in the hospital. He's my first cousin, so forth. And getting back to my parents and so forth, I'd have to say this is a little (inaudible). Well, my parents separated when I was a young age, and our grandmother raised me and my four older cousins, which was Pryors. And three of them has passed on. There's Herman Pryor, Barbara Pryor, and Nancy Pryor, just lately she passed. And our grandmother, who we loved so much, her name was Esther Black. And she raised all of us, all five of us. Also, with the help of my aunties, which you put down, Ellen, E-L-L -- Ellen Black and Mildred Black. And at one time, a long time ago, when I was real young, we saw my auntie married. People would ask me because I said I have my mother's name, which was Mildred Black, and my auntie's name was Mildred Black.

They were asking, "Which one is your mother?" (laughs) She come out and got married, see.

DR: So in growing up, where did you guys lived when you were being raised by your -when you first...

CB: Well, we lived on -- I was young, I remember just living twice on Dodge, the 1700 block on Dodge. And the house that now my auntie and uncle are in is 2034 Dodge. It's (inaudible) Black.

DR: So those are the two houses you grew up in?

CB: Houses I can remember, yes. Might have been one more, but I forgot.

DR: So, going back to the musicians now. We were talking about different groups like The Velvet-Airs, The Hands of Time, the Naturals, the Renells. What other groups were kind of like in the mix that were like part of your competition in the area?

CB: I'm trying to remember who used to sing. There was a female group, too, but I forgot their names now. But I forgot their names. I know it was Anne Pope was one of the singers. Anne Pope was one. Gloria, Gloria. I forgot the names, it's been so long, you know. I'll get back to that if I can.

DR: OK, no problem.

CB: And let me think of some other singing groups. Well, you know, we were behind the Foster Brothers. They were before us in the gyms, you know, with the referees, and the late Reverend [Green Pettison?]. You know about him?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: OK. Those two groups, famous groups. I'm trying to think of some of the groups that were out there. Oh, my goodness.

DR: It was something that more young men did than young girls did?

CB: I think they -- as far as my knowledge, there were more men that I was aware of than women groups. There might have been just as many, but I don't think so. So because we was -- we wishes (inaudible) we had and so forth. And some groups out there, we just sang and didn't even have no names, so forth, you know. I don't know.

DR: So with these singing groups, and practice singing in the Foster shower because they had good acoustics in there.

CB: Yes, it was a big shower.

DR: Hallways...

CB: Hallways.

DR: Street corners...

CB: Street Corners.

DR: Were there like any dances or talent shows that you guys could compete in?

CB: Not too much of those. They didn't have talent shows. We just would go over to Foster somewhere or anyplace else. But not only go -- we had some competing teams, so we became as far as the DuVals and Naturals, we did a lot of record hops then, you know. That's when we recorded, so forth. There's some groups that I can't remember the names of them, though. I can't recall right now. Should be more prepared for this, but still. OK. That's about it I can remember.

DR: OK, so, with the singing groups that you did, did you take that a lot when you were in high school or in junior high school? Or after?

CB: I think it'd be figure on Foster somewhere. Maybe junior high school, something like that. Foster Junior High, I think.

DR: From your recollection, your earliest group that you were in, not the Naturals or DuVals, what were some of the names of that? Of the ones that you were in. I know you mentioned one of them already, I believe.

CB: The Velvet-Airs.

DR: The Velvet-Airs, right.

CB: And, let me see.

DR: Who else was in that group?

CB: It's possible he was with me. I think it was Richard Gibbons, I think was his name. Marty Lidell, myself, it might have been Donald Pryor, too, my cousin. That's all I can think of.

DR: OK. And The Hands of Time with was another group, was that a competitive group?

CB: Yes. The names was, I think, Barry Young, Leonard Perkins, Billie Giles, and Bobby Caldwell, who also worked where I worked at. He became a police officer, became a [conservative?], a police officer in Winnetka, Bobby Caldwell.

DR: OK.

CB: That's one was in that group, I remember, as far as we sing the Velvet-Airs. I forgot, the Velvet-Airs. Wellington Giles was in that group, too. Wellington Giles.

DR: OK. So Wellington Giles and Billie Giles, were they related? Were they brothers?

CB: I think they were brothers.

DR: They were in competing groups?

CB: Yeah, but at different times, I guess. I don't know for sure if it was at the same. I just remember their names, yeah. I remember singing with a group one time, with John Logan. He passed. He was an organ player. I get to him

with Steve [Gibbs?] so forth, but Jimmy Cricket. I forgot what the name was, but he sang with the five of us then, but I can't recall the names of the groups, though.

DR: OK. Good. So after Foster you went to Evanston Township. Took a number of classes there. You played football and basketball.

CB: That's about it. And just started working, that's all.

DR: You started working? So when you were in high school, what years were that at the high school?

CB: The class was 1962. Don't want to talk about that.

DR: OK. Leave that out. (laughs)

CB: Got it right, something over there.

DR: OK. I'll keep that out.

CB: Keep that out.

DR: So [facing the tide?] at school, you kind of wanted to work in the (inaudible)?

CB: I started working -- I don't know how many jobs did I have. [Willard Tillis?] and I worked one time helped delivering groceries a long time ago. For a guy by the name of David Lifhord, a long time, with a bunch of us. But he passed, David Lifhord.

DR: You don't know what store that was you delivered groceries?

CB: The stores? It was all down -- oh, my goodness.

DR: Was it in Chicago?

CB: In Evanston.

DR: An Evanston store.

CB: I can't recall the name of it now, so long ago.

DR: Do you know where they were located?

CB: Somewhere on Chicago Avenue, somewhere over on in that area. He had a few stores. I can't recall now. Might not be the same names anymore. And then -- where else did I work? Then I went to a -- I started working at the glass factory which was on Emerson Street. You remember that, don't you? Next to the Y that they tore down? And that's where I started writing songs. The glass factory, and it was on Emerson Street, and then it moved down to Chicago on Catalpa Avenue. And I was working there, so I said, [all right?], this is [all right?]. It's called {Suburban State?} They would put on glass, they would put -- where I'm trying to find that?

DR: Another protective film on it, something like that?

CB: They would decorate glass. They would put some emblems on it, put it in a hot oven, and bake it on there and so forth. I'm trying to find the word. You know what I'm talking about, right? Without trying to find the word for it. OK. I mean, a lot of difference would be, the come out of ovens and so forth after the ladies did, and we would stand on the end and pack them in the boxes. Inspect

them, and pack them in the boxes. So when it was taking so long to come out, I always had me a pen in one hand and a pad in the other. And I was writing songs. They're just coming to you like it's a gift or something, you know.

Wish I had the same pen and pad right now. (laughs) And I was writing songs all the time. In free time, you know, at home sometimes. But I never thought I'd write the songs, you know, that I didn't, so far I was just writing them. They was coming to me left and right back then.

DR: If you think about it, how many songs do you think you might have written?

CB: Altogether?

DR: Yeah.

CB: I threw some away. I probably couldn't say. I don't know. Maybe 100-some of more, or maybe a couple hundred. I don't know. Maybe a couple hundred more. I'm not sure.

DR: What was the first song you wrote?

CB: I can't recall that. I don't really know. It's long, it's 40-some years ago. I don't even have records of them anymore. I just kept records of them.

DR: Do you keep a lot of the songs that you've written, a lot of them do you keep at all?

CB: No. I have a list of them. I'd have to go look to find it and so forth.

DR: As you started writing songs, were you -- like you tend to write it for yourself or your groups or for other people? Or how did --

CB: [00:15:00] I was just writing songs just to -- something come up to me, I just write it and so forth. Maybe for some of the groups, or just for anyone, I guess. I did here, you know, I don't know. Just started writing songs. So, every time I finished one, a couple days later, here's another one pop up. Say, "Where'd this come from?" You know. [laughs] Never thought it'd be anything else. And sometimes I wrote some songs that would rhyme, sometimes, you know, like prose and poetry. But some time I wrote some that didn't rhyme. So and I didn't like that, throw it away. Just let them stack up and -- I got this here, I got to see it here, too. So...

DR: So tell me a bit about -- getting back into music now. Your first, I guess we'll call it the group that you're going somewhere with, like you starting to record with, and somebody discovered, or starting to go somewhere with it.

CB: With The DuVals? Well, when I got into The DuVals, I was the last member of the DuVals. Charles Perry Kelly, he was the one that came and got me to sing with them. I didn't want to sing anymore and so forth. Started me to sing with the group. I was the last one.

DR: The last one to join the group?

CB: To join the group, mm-hmm. And I remember, he was (inaudible). There was Charles Perry Kelly, Andrew Thomas, Arthur Cox, and Charles Joseph Woolridge, and myself. And he got The DuVals, because he said -- he was in the Air Force, Charles Perry Kelly. He sang with a group there in front of a lot of people on the base, don't where, something where, and the group was called The DuVals, but they never recorded. And so when we started singing, so he told us we was going to record, so he kept the same name, the DuVals. And then we recorded, Robert Robinson heard it, you know, from Boss label, and him and Donald -- what's his name -- Donald Clay, whatever. And Bobby, we called him Bobby, he wrote the song, "The Cotton." He said he wrote after my name, "Cotton," what you call it. The Cotton was the dance, which I didn't know. And I could --

DR: Who wrote that song? Who wrote that song?

CB: Bobby Kelly, Charles Perry Kelly. He wrote "The Cotton." It was on Boss label, and I wrote the flip side, "What Am I?" And in the meantime, they was going to see another group was going to record besides the group that we had, the DuVals, and right down on Church Street -- you know Bob Robinson down on Church Street. You know that, don't you?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: And down I the basement, they brought The Squires in, another group from Chicago, The Squires. And that's who -- something to that, we had to write another Squires for the tape, which was actually The El Dorados, we didn't know that. The El Dorados, Perry Clay Moses, and the El Dorados. And that was a shock to us. We didn't know who they were. And all the time we were buying the album, you know the albums a long time ago, The El Dorados, The Spaniels, you know, the Dells and all that a long time ago. We had the same basement, but The El Dorados just changed their name to the Squires. And they recorded us instead of them. We couldn't believe it. That's something. It was amazing and so forth. And so, that's how we got started that one (inaudible). "What Am I" and "The Cotton."

DR: So how did Bobby Robinson discover the DuVals? He heard you sing?

CB: As I said, he heard us singing someplace. Maybe over at Foster. I'm not too sure. And then, you know, we went over there at Central and Austin, and he was also writing - or not writing, but the guitar also, see. And then I was, too. So not Bobby Robinson, but I'm saying he knew. And maybe because somebody told him, I guess. Because I think he had recorded Rick Lee also, and some other groups. I think he did Rick Lee and [LeMon Cole?] he record them on

Boss label, I think. The late Richard Lee. And besides Ray Patterson, the Foster Brothers. He got them you sealed in, you know all about that. And my cousin, Jimmy Archer, tell you about him, he wrote the songs of [Valeria Mile?] a long time ago, on the same label, I think, Boss and [PDY?]. Valerie Mile, she was a teenager then. I haven't seen her since then.

DR: She wrote a song -- what songs did she sing? I cannot remember the name of that song.

CB: You know about her, too, right?

DR: Yeah. I think I heard her song. I can't remember the name of it right now. It's hard to find out what's in the compilation disk. I'm trying to get it right now, but I can't find it. It's "Ladies of Soul, Volume 1."

CB: Is she still singing?

DR: Not that I know of. But they had that song on there that... OK, so with "The Cotton," how did that go? I mean, not necessarily how the words went, but what kind of play did it get? What kind of range did it get? Did it get a lot of air play?

CB: I think it got a little bit, I guess, and so forth. They tried to make the dance out of it. We were going to sell a lot of record hops on that, "The Cotton," down in Chicago and someplace. We did a lot of record hops. The DuVals,

Naturals. I'd just say we were both names, but I liked to hear them as the Naturals instead of The DuVals. But still, it's both names, whatever. We were the DuVals then, so that's "The Cotton" song. A lot of record hops we went to and so forth. I can't remember all of them.

DR: Lots of them at high schools, [00:20:00] or something like that?

CB: High schools and yeah. High schools and colleges.

DR: Some colleges, too?

CB: Mm-hmm. One time we opened up for Marvin Gaye in Highland Park.

DR: Really?

CB: Yeah, singing. A record hop, I guess it was.

DR: What was it, like a club or outdoor theater, something like that?

CB: I think it was an indoor theater.

DR: What year was that? Like 1960...

CB: It was 1967. One thing I'd change about that boy, it wasn't me, it was just Bobby. Bobby had, what you call it? An elephant's memory. He knows everything.

DR: So when you're part of the DuVals, you're kind of doing a lot of the record hops. Did you meet a lot of famous singers, or singers that were famous then but are not famous now?

CB: Yeah. "The Hustle," the Dells, like the what she have in the bedroom. (Inaudible) the Fabulous Dells. We also did a record hop with Patty LaBelle and the Bluebells. And who else? We opened up for Marvin Gaye in Highland Park. It's like I can't think of them, so big we have to -- can't remember all of the now. It's 40-some years ago. Charles Perry Kelly, he knows it all still. He knows about all the groups that don't even -- you wouldn't know about it as far as -- all the members and all the groups. That's how his mind is you know.

DR: OK.

CB: He met all the Temptations. He can tell you all the Vibrations, everyone. What songs came out what year. That's his craft, you know.

DR: So on the flip side of "Cotton," you wrote "What Am I?" Was that something you pulled like out of your notes and stuff? Or something you kind of wrote on the spot? How was that --

CB: That might have been the first song I wrote. Might have been the first one. I think it is.

DR: I'm trying to picture you at the glass factory, as the glass is coming out, you've got the pen and paper and just kept on writing.

CB: Exactly. You got none on the floor, either. (laughter)

That was a long time ago. Forty-some years ago, oh, my.

DR: So were you kind of happy that your song was on the flip side of that record?

CB: Oh, yeah. Everybody wanted to just hear their voices and record. We didn't care what label we were on, we just wanted to record.

DR: So how did you get that on exact mention? Did you say, "Well, I have a song"? Or how did that come about?

CB: "What Am I"?

DR: Yeah.

CB: I think when Charles said he had written "The Cotton," and I said I had me one also, you know. So when they got by, and he said, "Check this out. Check this out." And so we recorded. Everybody in the group could write songs. And everybody in the group could sing lead. And the thing was, was all of us, mostly Charles would sing and I would sing. If you wrote your song, you'd be the one to sing it, see. That was it. Only two people in the group could sing bass, mostly with -- you would call it bass. Like you would sing with the Drew-vels, bass or baritone. But I'm not really a bass singer. But I got the range. Andrew Thomas and I could get high, couldn't get low, so forth, in our voices back then, see. And when I sing on lead and so forth, in

the songs, Andrew Thomas would sing the bass part. When Andrew Thomas sing lead, I would sing the deep parts, see. We'd switch off. Everybody would sing. "OK, you got to really do something for the detail." Bob Abraham said, "OK." He talked to Charles Perry Kelly, he said, "Yeah, I heard Carlton sing the bass, so let me." He said, "No. Carlton would sing the lead on that record, because he wrote that song. Andrew Thomas would sing the bass on that." All the songs I sing with the Naturals that I wrote I was singing lead. But only two songs, three songs, I sing with Patti Drew, it was "Tell Him" with the Drew-vels, I sing the bass part, and the bass part for "Tell Him" when Patti went single. And I sang the bass part on "Working on a Groovy thing." Then I sang between [Santela Bass?] and Jackie Ross in the back part, "Working on a Groovy Thing." Two parts in that song. I think we said, OK, the songs are out there is just as well. Then I heard people say, "Who wrote it?" They think, well "Working on a Groovy Thing" was a better song than "Tell Him." I said I didn't care, because I was singing on both of them. (laughter) I like both of them. Then it come back, I'd say, I would say one thing I would never brag about anything because I'm in there, I'm just having fun, because music is music, everybody loves music. I said, it's the one thing I would

say also, if we talk about that and so forth, because I love the way we would sing together, also. And that's one thing about it, also, I said, remember this here. "Working on a Groovy Thing" then take us to the (inaudible) of "Tell Him." (laughs) Right? OK.

DR: So with the DuVals, what songs did you write with the DuVals?

CB: Did I write for DuVals? Oh, let me see. I wrote "What Am I," when we changed the name. That's the only one.

DR: "Love Me True," and "What Am I"?

CB: [00:25:00] We were the Naturals, then.

DR: Oh, OK. "What Am I" was with the DuVals.

CB: Yeah.

DR: OK. And then "Love Me True," was the Naturals.

CB: We only recorded twice, two songs for the Boss label. Those were the only two.

DR: "What Am I" and "Cotton"?

CB: That was the only one. After that, we left and we changed our name.

DR: All right. So the DuVals really was a short-lived group. By the time you got to recording, you were DuVals before you started recording. And when you made those two recordings, after that, you stopped being the DuVals?

CB: We stopped being the DuVals, right. Because we thought we wasn't getting any money out of it, so for (inaudible) things were going kind of -- there was no money being made anyway back then. And so, we made it as far as Maurice Lathowers and met the two Drews and that's when they said they would record us, too, also, at the same time. And I insisted on it. (laughs) "You record us, too." So they was OK, so we changed our names to the Naturals, see. We wanted to be messed up on the Boss label with the same name going to another label, see.

DR: So the Naturals was formed in what year?

CB: What year?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: I couldn't tell you that. It's in the books around here. I wasn't prepared for this.

DR: It's all right. I'll double-check that. And the DuVals kind of lasted for about how many years did it last?

CB: Maybe a year or so, or two. I'm not sure. Maybe more than that, I'm not sure. I don't have the book with me, so... You're going to correct it, anyway, right?

DR: So, for the Naturals, and don't they sign you up for the Naturals as (inaudible).

CB: No. I wrote "Let Love Be True." I wrote "Three Banditos." "Hey, Little Girl." "Different Girls." "Hey, Fellas."

And I think there was some more. Let me see. I have the 45s over there.

DR: Which one of those -- do you have, like, your favorite that they like?

CB: Is it OK if I go over here?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: My favorite? Let me see. OK (inaudible). Yes, "Let Love Be True," "Three Banditos," "Different Girls," "Hey, Fellas," and "Hey, Little Girl."

DR: And who wrote "I'm the One?"

CB: Bobby Kelly wrote "I'm the One."

DR: Of those that you wrote, which one was your favorite? Yeah, some (b class?) any one was your favorite?

CB: You talking about songs with the Naturals?

DR: Yeah.

CB: My favorite one? The one, I guess, that [Herb Kit?] plays all the time, "Let Love Be True." Everybody talks about that one. "Let Love Be True." He plays Patti's "Tell Him" all the time on Sundays and "Let Love Be True." I forgot that I wrote "Different Girls," because the DJ send it to me. I forgot we recorded that song.

DR: One of my favorites, I actually like "Hey, Fellas."

CB: "Hey, Fellas"? Really? You like that one?

DR: I like that one. A little more upbeat and just has this like super attitude. (laughter)

CB: One of my favorites, I did "Three Banditos," because it came out before Eastwood came out. It was three banditos tore up the town.

DR: Actually, that was pretty good, too. I like that one. Tell me about some of these recording sessions that the Naturals -- you were telling me -- actually I might backtrack a little bit here. Or as a segue into -- because I know this starts involving the female group, the Drew-vels. How did you get involved with the Drew-vels as a background?

CB: Are you talking about one song?

DR: Yes.

CB: Well, sometimes when you record, you record together, sometimes. When we first started out we'd do. They would come out and have rehearsals out here in Skokie sometimes, you know, [Kay?] Studios, something like that. I think it was one was on Cicero Street, and one was on, I think, Main Street in Skokie. I think it was Kay Studios, sure. And there was Don [Perone?] I guess, as far as, he'd write with the band and so forth. It was a full orchestra, and was his band and so forth. And then we were there with the Naturals and the girls at the same time, you know, the

Drew-vels and us. And so I think we might have recorded "Let Love" and other things, if memory serves, we recorded "Let Love Be True" and "Tell Him," I think, we did the same day. I'm not for sure. [00:30:00] And so, actually, with "Tell Him," I wrote "Tell Him." It wasn't "Tell Him," it was "Tell Her." And we auditioned for Mr. Maurice Lathowers, because Patti's mother was doing work for him and so forth, and he wanted to hear her sisters, her daughters, excuse me. And so they had no material. And so I was rehearsing (inaudible), I think that's when they lived in the basement. And that was the first I knew they could sing and so forth. So I changed the words from "Tell Her" to "Tell Him" so they could record that song and so forth. And then while they were in the studio recording that, I think it was, they had not B side, so Patti has written "Just Because."

DR: OK. So Patti wrote "Just Because?"

CB: Right. That's the flip side of "Tell Him." And at the time we recorded that, I think it was the sisters and myself and Charles Perry Kelly. We sang the background on that song, "Just Because," beside that we were the Naturals, if I can remember.

DR: OK.

CB: That was the first time we sang together, you know, the three sisters and me and Bobby, the two Naturals in the background, "Just Because." It turned out pretty nice, I think.

DR: Mm-hmm. There was a song called "Chilly Kisses" by the DuVals.

CB: Flip side. We have it over there, yes. I wasn't with them on that.

DR: You weren't with them on that one?

CB: All the recordings I was with them on {Core?} label, I think. That was Pete {Rideout?} I was with them there.

DR: OK. So the Naturals recorded local? Tell me what record studio.

CB: Chess.

DR: Chess?

CB: Always Chess studio. Chess Studio, Michigan Avenue. They had about three or four studios, and they called it Michigan Row a long time ago. The (inaudible) was on, we were at Chess. We were going in one time, saw Etta James come out. One time we were going in, saw Gene Chandler come up. What amazed me far as -- can I say -- as far as the song, "Working on a Groovy Thing," what we put into the song, even though after we did it, the Fifth Dimension did it too, also, was, don't get me wrong, they're a fabulous

singing group, you know that. Wonderful singing group. But I say our rendition, and people say it was better than theirs, even though Neil Sedaka wrote the song, I didn't write that. But behind the song was also besides me singing along with Patti Drew and Santela Bass, and Jackie Ross in the background, wonderful singers, you know, so forth.

DR: Jackie Ross?

CB: Jackie Ross. And Santela Bass was in the background and myself, with Patti on "Working on a Groovy Thing." I led the song off, you know, with the bass line, and I dubbed my voice in between the two of the ladies singing second in the background. "Working on groovy thing, Baby," like that and so forth. And also, was amazing was the musicians. I think it was Phil [Wright's?] band at the time. The musicians was also awesome. You had on guitar, one guitar was Chicago's Phil Upchurch. And the other guitar was Pete [Cozy?].

DR: With a C?

CB: Yes. And on bass was Louis {Satcherfield?}. And he also played trombone, but he was on bass. And on drums, was Maurice White, who played with Ramsey Lewis, and then left and formed the great group Earth, Wind, and Fire. He was on drums. And then they brought in the violin section

another time, about four or five times through the song. That's why I like it so much. It's a nice song, beautiful song. I love that song, "Working on a Groovy Thing." But those musicians were fantastic. I'm serious.

DR: Nice recording studio? How was this, recording like different rooms for it? Or like different --

CB: It was Chess Studios, and they had two studios. Really, one was on Michigan, and I think one was around the corner. But all the studios were nice, oh yeah. A lot of people come through there. Chess studios, a lot of people come through there, yeah.

DR: Did you ever take any pictures of you in Chess Records?

CB: Not really.

DR: Had to ask that question.

CB: I know. (laughter) What I like most about the site for me, I never saw -- we'd go down every Sunday or the weekends, go down to the Regal Theater, the old Regal Theater, and see all those artists there, you know, singers and so forth. Jesters, I saw everybody. [00:35:00] Stevie Wonder. A lot of people there. When we went to see the Temptations, and they came after we went there and so forth. And we saw Jackie Wilson. Who else? Just everybody. I never thought one day that I would be singing on that stage. I never thought that at all. And I went

there with the Drew-vels. I said, "I don't believe this."
Scared to death. I had a little -- you know, back in, I
had this, you know, stage fright, too, also. I said, "I
don't believe this." The Regal Theater.

DR: How was that feeling when you were out there like getting
ready to go on, you're announced --

CB: I was scared to death. (laughter) Scared sick. The thing
about it is when you go out there on the stage, you can't
see nobody in the first four, five, six rows.

DR: It's all the lights coming down on you?

CB: You could see way out there and so forth. I got a little
relief then. (laughter)

DR: You really feel like a fish out of water.

CB: Yeah. I said, "I don't believe this. We're going to the
Regal Theater?" I couldn't believe it.

DR: So that first time on the stage there at the Regal Theater,
was that with the Drew-vels or was that for the Naturals?

CB: The Drew-vels. Only the Drew-vels. The Naturals never
went to the Regal, no. Just the Drew-vels, I was with
them.

DR: that was like the three sisters and you?

CB: And me, yeah. Actually, they was the Drew-vels. I was
with them.

DR: Right. How did they announce you? Like Drew-vels?

CB: Just Drew-vels.

DR: Just Drew-vels?

CB: Yeah.

DR: It wasn't like, Carlton Black and the Drew-vels?

CB: Drew-vels, yeah. So that time they did the last shows with Herbert [House?] I could be with his house with the men's groups, I was with the Naturals. We'd did a lot of record hops, oh, my goodness. I remember one time we did the record hop with the Drew-vels in Cicero. We didn't know what it was like, back then. And we were in one of those stages, not everybody -- some of the school supports, they threw spitballs at us. Yeah, we had to be escorted out of there. And some kids came up to me said, "Everybody in this town is not like that" so forth. We stayed [boss?] in Cicero, a long time ago.

DR: Was that at a school?

CB: It was a school, a school record hop there. I tried to name the (inaudible), the DJ a lot like Dick Biondi or somebody a long time ago, for this occasion and so forth. Yup. We did record hops all over. Oh, man.

DR: The record hops, how were those? Like during the weekends or during the weekdays?

CB: Mostly the weekends, most of the time, you know.

DR: Was that Friday, Saturday?

CB: Yeah, something like that.

DR: Sometimes a Sunday?

CB: Once in a while. Maybe Sunday, yeah. I can't remember all the places we went to for...

DR: Give me an idea. Like dozens of them? Hundreds of them?

CB: There was a lot. I bet in the hundreds, but it was still about a hundred some more. There was a lot of them.

DR: So you said you did mention that some of the school hops, some of them were at college campuses?

CB: Mostly college campuses. I even believe where I work at now, service over there, P.W. of Winnetka, New Trier over there several times, New Trier High School. That's where I'm working at, you know, Winnetka. So, New Trier.

DR: ETHS?

CB: Did we do -- yes we -- our band played over there.

DR: Naturals did?

CB: Naturals band, yeah, that's a singing group. And then we played the -- let's see. Record hops, there was only one up in New Trier we did. It was for the Drew-vels.

DR: But most of them were in Chicago?

CB: Chicago, and Chicago -- some of them north, I think. But getting to the band ought to, wait till you get to us.

(laughs)

DR: Actually, I'll get to that next. So the Naturals, the singing group, the Naturals, that's from about how many years?

CB: I should look in the book. Four or five years, maybe more. I'm not sure. I should be more prepared for this, but I wasn't.

DR: So the Naturals kind of stand like after the DuVals and Patti Drew took off?

CB: We just standed, yes. And there's a time of -- then I think I was -- I was married, so I was married twice back then. Bring it up, but still. So we started, myself and my cousin, his name was Jimmy Archer. My cousin, me and my cousins, Jimmy Archer, he's a drummer, so forth. And my apartment was on 1500 Darrow in Evanston, and we always said D as in David, apartment D. We started a group over there. Just he and I started off first, and because Bobby would come over sometimes and leave his guitar and amp over there. And so I said, let me try this hear one time. And we had another guy, when we had the Naturals come over sometimes and play his guitar behind us. His name was Bobby Williams. He would play behind us when we practiced sometimes. [00:40:00] Bobby Williams. He's one of that really enthused me about guitar. Bobby Williams. And Bobby would leave his guitar, so I finally said, "OK." I

picked it up sometime and I started messing around with the guitar. No lessons, anything, so, you know, so forth. So he said he'd lend me some money, so forth. He said he would buy me one. So I went and bought a guitar. So for what he -- I don't know, he's got a suit about this still. And then I went to a -- long time ago -- it was [Current's?] Music Store. It was on Church Street in Evanston. And across the street was [inaudible] of, I don't know, food mart, grocery store called [Coke's]. And at Current's, in the downstairs they would sell instruments, where I bought mine and so forth, and upstairs they would teach lessons. So I decided, OK, I'm going to take me some guitar lessons. So I did, upstairs. Back then, I think it was three-fifty dollars for a half an hour. And the person who was teaching, his name was John [Barnick?]. So I took lessons for a little bit, you know, so forth, like most people say they did long time ago. You get bored because, you know, it's the same thing over and over again, and half an hour was about all that I could sit. So I started studying on my own. I got books. I learned the fundamentals of guitar, what keys were, what notes were, you know. And just studied the books, so forth, I just started to learn on my own after that, which I'm not through, because I'm not really accomplished

playing guitar the way I want to. You know, I'm getting older, but they say you're not too old to do anything, right? So when I got lessons from him, and I just got lessons for me to start playing. Then I and Jimmy Archer, and John, my cousin. Then we decided we need a bass player, so we found a person by the name of Danny [Marino?], and he became our bass player. So the three of us used to practice, and along came a -- from my apartment, not too far away, he heard about us practicing -- and before long came in Arthur Taylor. You know [Creep?] don't you? Creep, put his name in their as Creep. I'm going to get this phone call. (pause) OK. So Creep came along.

DR: What did Creep play?

CB: He was on the saxophone. Played sax. So we started rehearsing in my apartment, because I was about to move out of it anyway, you know, so forth. And so we had to go, myself, I was on guitar. Jimmy was on the drums. Danny Marino, bass. Creep, Arthur Taylor was on sax. We were rehearsing all the time in my apartment. And we saw people dropping by, and the police would drop by all the time. "You're making noise." (laughs) So were just neighbors and everything. When you starting up, you think you're playing something, and you're making noise. I remember one night, so forth, this old lady came to the door, and said, "Hey,"

place already (inaudible). We knew the police anyway, way back then, so forth. "OK, that's telling you. Next time you make a sound, you're all going to jail." So we're like, "OK." Close the door. And so we're sitting just conversing and so forth, said we better wait till some other time, so forth. And Jimmy was about getting ready to hit the drums. I was like at the back room, there was five squads out there. (laughs) So we did not more of that, we'd get in trouble for sure. They went on and left. Don't forget that night. So then we started -- then I moved from there. Then I moved to another place, and we rehearsed always in somebody's basement all the time, while they back, you know, till some members of the band found some places for us to rehearse. And then we started doing shows, I think. Arthur found -- I think it was the Davidson Agency in Evanston, who used to book us all the time. I mean, we played every club in Evanston. We played as far as the one on Emerson Street and Chicago, though. What we called it, a subway? That's the Masonic, right?

DR: The Masonic? Yeah.

CB: We played their clubs. We played, let me see. We played down on -- what's that one on Sherman by Maple, by the police station? We played at -- they called it Swedish Hall. That was on Sherman a long time. The Swedish hall,

we played there. We were the Naturals, the Naturals band, then. We kept the same name as the singing group. And then we played at peoples' houses, and we played as far as Casey Hall.

DR: Is that Casey like C-A-C-R-R? Or is it K. C.?

CB: K.C., I think it was. Yeah, I forgot what street that was. We played there. We played everywhere in Evanston, and we played for all the Northwestern campuses. We got sororities, all of those. Everywhere, the four of us, the four. [00:45:00] And then we played also -- the main clubs we played was the 1623 Club. At the time, Archie Simmons was the owner. Archie Simmons, you know that. And the person who hired us sometimes was Edgar Web, would hire us. So we kept down there, so forth. Edgar Web. Guess they played also down in -- and the main place we played at was another cousin of mine, mention his name, too, Bobby Jones' club down on Emerson Street. And you remember, we went to the (inaudible). I mean, he would have a place for you to go on the weekends, and we had a ball. I mean, he would have nice DJs in there. And besides that he kept us working, also with Patti Drew, and he would have bands come from all over playing there, Evanston and Chicago. Which his name Bobby Jones, and everybody -- he kept us working. He kept a lot of people working in his club.

DR: Yeah, I know Bobby Jones.

CB: The 1634 Club, to (inaudible). He was a cousin of mine.
And then -- are we talking about me and the Naturals now?

DR: Yeah.

CB: OK, then, we had -- then we played with different groups, different members. So we had different bass players. But it was always me and Jimmy together. And then we also played bass with us after Marino left the group, Danny Marino, and we had the late Freddy Hunter as our bass player, (inaudible). Freddy Hunter was our bass player. Then after that, we had my cousin, Donald Pryor. He was our bass player. And what's his name? He was a [collar?] from the Mob. One time we had Danny [McGilly?], he was a bass player with us. I can't remember his name, I believe it was... and also, we had also keyboards with us, his name was Peter Gibbs on keyboards at one time. Peter Gibbs. OK, the bass player, I was forgetting his name was Eric Collins. Eric Collins. We broke up. so, when left the group, he went to California and played in a group called the Mob, I think. But when we were mostly playing band with Patti, we would have -- sometimes the four of us would be myself, Jimmy, he was always on drums, I was guitar. And a bass player, so forth, was Eric Collins. And we had Peter Gibbs on keyboards behind Patti Drew. And then

sometimes Creep and Billy [Gentry?] would come and play his trumpet. He was the horn section with us, so forth, playing our (inaudible). And we changed our names one time from the Naturals, with a different bass player. Then we went to one time with my cousin, Donald Pryor, my cousin. And Jimmy Archer's on the drums, and Jimmy Archer is my cousin. We called ourselves the Cousins Plus. With Peter Gibbs on keyboard, but he wasn't a cousin. That's on another. And then we changed our name again to Front Line. That's the last time we played with Patti Drew, who was out in front of us. We were always going and singing and play, then we'd bring Patti on for the grand finale and so forth. She was just always with her own thing, with us. One time we played over a horse barn, I swear to God. Horse barn.

CB: When the Naturals band was formed, what years were that?

DR: Had to be about 1966-67. Had to be around that area. I think it was.

CB: Nineteen sixty-six through....

DR: We played a long time.

CB: Like in the early '70s?

DR: Yeah. Eighties, maybe and so forth. I remember I played in the band over 20 years with different players.

CB: Yeah. So 20 years, the Naturals?

DR: Different names, different things in the groups, yeah.

CB: Also, the Cousins Plus, though, when did that form up?

DR: Huh?

CB: When did the Cousins Plus form?

DR: OK, we first started the Naturals, it was the four of us, me, Jimmy, Dan Marino and Arthur Taylor. Then Freddy Hunter came in as a bass player, and we were still the Naturals. And after that, Eric Collins was still with the Naturals? I think so. Then Donald Pryor -- the Cousins Plus came in when we were -- it was Donald Pryor, Jimmy Archer, myself, and the plus was Petie Gibbs, he played keyboard. He wasn't a cousin. And after Donald Pryor was gone, [00:50:00] then we got Eric Collins as a bass player. It was myself, Jimmy Archer, Eric Collins, and Peter Gibbs on keyboard. Then we called ourselves Front Line.

DR: What year was that, about? Was that in the '80s?

CB: It had to be in the '80s. Damn close to the '80s, yeah.

DR: And Cousins Plus was somewhere in the '70s?

CB: Probably something late '70s somewhere.

DR: Late '70s?

CB: Yeah.

DR: So the Cousins Plus and the Naturals were pretty much playing at the same time, just different mix of the group?

CB: Yeah. Mostly bass players. Mostly bass player. And every time we needed horn parts, we had Tom Creep. You know Billy Gentry don't you?

DR: Yeah.

CB: He was on trumpet, yeah. And we played in places all over Evanston, all over Evanston. Chicago, we played at the Green Bunny, the Parkway Ballroom. We played at the Cheetah in Chicago, long time ago.

DR: The Cheetah?

CB: It was a club before they changed it to something else. The Cheetah, and then they changed it back. It was called the Cheetah. That's one we played everywhere. We ran across a girl who was down there one time. A girl band, and they sounded real good, too. And the Cheetah, the wasn't -- the Cheetah was it -- the Checkmate. The Parkway Ballroom, the Green Bunny. What else? [Peyton?] Place.

DR: Painter's Place?

CB: I think they called it Peyton Place. I think we played there, yeah. We played one time, from the days that we played at the -- used to call the Merchandise Mart. The Kennedy Zone. We played there.

DR: It was called Kennedy's Zone?

CB: Mm-hmm. Kennedy's Zone. I think they owned it a long time ago. Merchandise Mart. We played a lot of clubs. We

played the Notre Dame High School. We played the Northshore Country Day School in Winnetka. We played in Wisconsin. We played at the high school one time for the prom. We were the Naturals then, high school.

DR: What year was that?

CB: I can't recall that. That was some time ago.

DR: Seventies or sixties?

CB: Has to be back in the '60s, I think it was, or early '70s, yeah. And where else did we play? Let me think. We played lots of Foster Center also, Fleetwood Jourdain. We played over there. And...

DR: How about at the Foster School?

CB: At the Foster School?

DR: Did you play at the Foster School at all?

CB: At the Foster School? Let me think? I don't think we did. We just played the Foster Center, Fleetwood Jourdain. And where else do I think we played at?

DR: So when was the last time you played as a band within your group? Was it in the '80s and '90s?

CB: Had to be when I first -- let me see. It might have been when I started my job. Let me think when I took a job. Had to be in the '80s, I think, yeah. See, I started my job in '69, I was still playing in it and so forth. But I think about (inaudible). We would play Friday, Saturday,

and Sunday, sometime on a Sunday down to three o'clock in the morning, and go home and change clothes, and go to work. And I was working at the Village of Winnetka, and I Arthur Taylor, he was working at the post office. That was rough back then. You just got tired of playing. Yes. I mean, you're doing a job, a city job, and you know, every weekend we're playing every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We had an agency booking us all the time.

DR: What was the name of the agency that was booking you?

CB: I think it was the Davidson Agency.

DR: Davidson?

CB: I think so. And after work hours, that's Arthur Taylor, you can correct me on that.

DR: Do you have any business cards or anything like that from the Davidson Agency?

CB: I haven't seen them. I might have some. I'm not sure. So long ago. We played all the time. We played -- man.

DR: So how did that go? Davidson Agency would book you. But they get a cut and you get a cut?

CB: They get part of it, I guess, part of a cut, yeah. To be honest, we played band always we played some places, the time was always for 45 or 15 down. Some nights, three shows, something like that. We played one time at the IIT, Institute of Technology in Chicago, and one floor, one

stage -- we were on one floor playing, and the second floor was Baby Huey and the Babysitters. And the third floor, I think, was Skitch Henderson, at also IIT in Chicago. I'm trying to figure out someplace else we played that was nice. Let me think. One time, remember Mrs. [Palmer?]?

DR: [00:55:00] I'm familiar with the name.

CB: OK. She worked for us at the education system here in Evanston. And so they had a fashion show down here on Ridge in Evanston, at a church down there. And they brought a group out, so we had [congas?], it was about four pieces. And so then she said she wanted somebody to do something for the fashion show, there was a little balcony in the church. So she hired just myself, a guitar, figuring (inaudible) could be heard OK. And Jimmy Archer, and he brought a couple of his couple drum sets. Not the whole set, a couple of his drums. I don't know if it was a tom-tom or what. And we did the fashion show, just two pieces. Yeah, and they said it sounded nice. Guitar and him, he and I only. Yup.

DR: Jimmy Archer was on the drums?

CB: On drums, yeah. He's my cousin.

DR: And you're on...

CB: Guitar.

DR: Guitar?

CB: Yeah. And thinking back then, so our group was so different that (inaudible). All the groups we played against a long time ago, not (inaudible) enough. They were all fantastic. All of them nice. But the only thing about our group and so forth, they never was nobody else in the group. Other groups always had what, rhythm and the lead guitar and the bass and whatever, and drums. There was only one guitar, me. Don't you want to get somebody else? Nope. So I had to jump back from lead to rhythm all the time for certain songs we played. It fit in nicely. We were the only one group who had it. All the groups have five, six, seven pieces. We only had four. Sometimes there'd be an extra horn some nights, and we got Peter Gibbs later one, and he was on keyboards. Peter Gibb's mother's name was Elizabeth Gibbs. She's still (inaudible) alive, and she plays organ at the church down on Elmwood. And she also taught Peter Gibb's cousin, John Logan, how to play organ, and he was a jazz organist in Chicago. John Logan. And he was there, Richard was the (inaudible), and he played all the places in Chicago. He lived in Chicago until he passed. And John Logan used to help me sometimes. I was living on East Railroad, to bring my guitar over I had nowhere to park. So I have a dolly on my amp, and my guitar. I would roll it down in the street all the way to

Dodge, and he'd show me some chords on guitar and organ.

Yeah. That's a long time ago. (inaudible).

DR: And this is Mrs. Gibbs?

CB: Huh?

DR: This is Elizabeth Gibbs?

CB: That's Peter Gibbs' mother. He played keyboard with us in a band. That's his mother. And she's also, I think, taught John Logan. I sing with him in a singing group, too, also. John Logan. Then he became a solo organist. He played with all the greats, like Gene (inaudible) and all that down in the clubs in Chicago. The other place at 76th and King Drive. And he passed on from cancer, I think it was. John Logan. I used to roll my amps down Emerson Street (laughs) all the way down from East Railroad. He'd say, "Come on over," and he'd teach me some things on the organ that I can put on guitar. Some chords.

DR: You do what you have to do, right?

CB: Yeah. See, actually, my mother was piano. I always wanted to be a jazz pianist. I told you that, right?

DR: Yeah. No.

CB: Yeah. Every time you go to Foster Center, and they'd be playing basketball, I would play basketball sometimes. But behind one trip in there, and the lights were out, I just walked back there, there was a piano back there. I was

getting in all the time to play. John Logan had taught me a few chords. And I always wanted to be a jazz pianist. Yeah. I didn't want play no guitar at the time, then, so forth. Until later on, and we were singing, and brother this is the time when Barbara (inaudible) came over and practiced behind us. I said, "OK, I like this here." I never had a piano. You can't carry that around with you, you know. So when I started with piano, guitar. I had a guitar. And I heard about the (inaudible), I started listening to jazz when I was real young. I loved jazz.

DR: Is that what helped got you like motivated to music?
Hearing jazz?

CB: I mean, I love rock'n'roll, too, also, as a kid, you know, a long time ago, yeah. Used to listen to the Spaniels all the time, me and Jimmy Cricket, and they had records. And the famous place we used to go to was Mrs. Powell's Record Shop on Church Street. Mrs. Powell's Record Shop on Church Street. And she had a record shop, and everybody go and get their records from there. When we recorded, she had our records there. And she used to have all the -- anybody -- I used to go the Regal Theater, she had all the posters there. I can remember -- I was -- this place in mind a long time ago, when we were at the Regal Theater, I could see everybody who was on there at the Regal Theater. It

was Gene Chandler, Clay [Traxton?] was the comedian. It was the Tams, the Five Bluetones, and what's his name? Gene Chandler and Major Lance, "Monkey Time." Those were the artists at the time. And it was the Dew-vels there with them. And the band was real solid as a band. Not family, but solid. We appeared a long time ago. And Mrs. Powell's was a record shop always on Church Street. We'd go to her, and she had a sister had a record too, also, on Emerson Street, but I forgot her name. Mrs. Powell's sister had a shop on Emerson Street. And...

DR: You used to go there, and take your records over there, and would she play them in the store?

CB: She played them for everyone before they bought them, you know, 45s and all the albums, mm-hmm. [01:00:00] So, those 45s, you'd buy them in there and so forth, yeah. Mrs. Geneva Powell was her name, Mrs. Powell. Powell's Record Shop. She was the best record on Church Street.

DR: What was the exact address? Was that Church -- I know it's about midway down the block.

CB: Down the block, yeah.

DR: Dodge. Between Dodge and Darrow.

CB: Mm-hmm. I don't know what the address is. Is that the 1700 block? With Dodge, it might be the 1700s, that's

true. Could be. Somewhere around there. And that was the record shop, right there.

DR: The Naturals, the band, it was pretty much all instrumental, right?

CB: Instrumental. All of us in the Naturals, I would say, I don't know how to put this, but I would call everybody SSM, songwriters, singers, and musicians. Because everybody in the band, everybody that I was affiliated with and so forth, everybody could sing. I wouldn't say everybody could play an instrument, but I'm talking about singing, But everybody could write some music or play something, you know. We had a lot of fun. Let's see, that's about it. And then when we played behind Patti, all of us would sing in the background, and then we'd bring Patti on, and sometimes we'd sing a few backgrounds for her, was the singing -- the band did, you know. And so forth. But she was the star out front, see.

DR: So Patti would sing some of the songs she sang on Capitol Records?

CB: Sometimes. Maybe very few, but sometimes. She'd sing other songs.

DR: Other peoples' songs? OK.

CB: Sometimes she'd sing some of her songs, but very rarely. We had her out front all the time. And here come Patti

Drew, here come the crowds. They loved her. They loved her. When she came back from California, and so forth, you know. She straightened herself up after California and all that. Soon as her thing came on her, I mean, mention it and so forth, they'd be right away. She got herself an organ, we just -- actually, she got herself singing back again, we'd be -- we helped her, too, see. The band when she came back. So we got her around and sing, and she was singing up front.

DR: OK. You mentioned that you said, "I'm working for the village of Winnetka"?

CB: Yeah, 1969. November 3, 1969. And how that happened, I was working at another place, wasn't making too much money over there and so forth so...

DR: Was that the glass place we were talking about or...

CB: No, I was working for Evanston Auto. It was Evanston Auto over on Dodge. And I was working, you know, delivering part and so forth. So I also worked at a village Express, but that folded up a long time ago. It went out of business with REA Express. The job I had before I went to Winnetka was, it was called Evanston Auto Parts. Evanston Auto. And so one day I was off, and I had my car and I was driving around looking for a job. And I saw this gentleman I know, he was standing on the corner waiting for the bus.

I want you to write his name down. His name was Calloway, last name was Calloway. And so I asked him, I said, "Where is your car at?" Because he was always dressed nice all the time, drove a Buick. And he said his car was getting some warranty work on it, and he wanted if I'd give him a ride to work. So I said, "OK. Where you going?" He said, "I'm going to Glencoe." And I find out he was working in Glencoe. And he was a supervisor up there, he was working on the street, before the Public Works Department, and he was a supervisor. So on the way, he stopped on Green Bay Road, said while you're out there on Green Bay Road, and up in there. And got a person in there he introduced me to person by the name of Ray Chaippi, C-H-A-I-P-P-I. Something like that, Ray Chaippi's name. And Gordon Smith. And he said, "OK, this car needs to have some black people looking for a job." And I filled out the application, and about two weeks later I was hired. So I've been there ever since, thanks to him. And I asked him one time, you know he just passed on not too long ago, cause he is -- and I said, "You know, Calloway," I said, "I never did know -- thanks for the job you got me." I said, "I never did know your last name." And he told me his last name (inaudible) his name was Calloway Boyle. I said, "Well, it's Calloway Boyle." I said, "I can't use your last name now, because I

have an artist that I've been looking for a long time as one of my favorite jazz guitarists, is Ken Boyle." He said, "OK. All right."

DR: Used it ever since.

CB: And ever since. I went there in 1969, going on 40 years. Worked in the Winnetka Public Works Department. Had that now I can't go back to work. (laughs) But I had that done.

DR: That's great.

CB: I still write some songs, too, you know. There's one song I never did finish, but I finally finished. It's called "Mr. Sunshine." Everybody said, "We heard you practicing that song years ago." He said back yards from the practice. "Did you ever finish that song?" I said, "I finally finish it." Last year it was.

DR: You finished it last year?

CB: Mm-hmm.

DR: That's it?

CB: That's all it needed. "Mr. Sunshine."

DR: When did you start writing it?

CB: About 30 years ago. (laughter) About 30-some years ago. And then the first time I wrote it, the first time I wrote a blues song. It's called "Alone Too Long." First time I ever wrote a blues song. I was trying to find somebody to

give that to. Maybe somebody like Buddy Guy might sing it,
I don't know.

DR: Are you going to record "Mr. Sunshine"?

CB: I'm never sure.

DR: You're not sure?

CB: I'm not sure about that. I was thinking about if I'm
retired, hopefully, I might go back into music again. I
don't know what part I would be in music, but I would try
something. Might try to form a band. One thing I'm going
to say also, you know, I've never actually played the
guitar the way I want to, so I might go back to music
theory. Get back and get really accomplished playing the
guitar. I want to, because it's always been a part-time
thing, see. I want to make it a full-time thing. Getting
ready to buy two more guitars. Maybe mostly one famous
one. I'm buying some and sit...

DR: The guitar that you're holding in there, is that -- how
long have you had that guitar?

CB: Since 1967. Almost 47 years. I have other guitars, also,
you know, but --

DR: That's your favorite?

CB: That one there is (inaudible).

DR: Do you have a favorite?

CB: Huh?

DR: Did you give it a name?

CB: I call it Sweet Cheeks.

DR: Sweet Cheeks?

CB: (laughs) Sweet Cheeks.

DR: I think it was most of you (inaudible). Do you usually play that one?

CB: I play that one there. This one there. Probably I'm going to get something new now, probably a little quicker action and so forth, you know. But I love the guitar. But I'm going to get something I want besides a Fender Strat. It's a hollow body, that's what I had. It'll be expensive. It's probably going to be my last one anyway, you know that. (laughs) I'll make sure it's going to be a good one, see.

DR: What brand is that? What is that?

CB: It's a Gibson.

DR: It's a Gibson?

CB: Yeah. I got Gibsons, I got Fenders.

DR: What model Gibson is that?

CB: It's an ES-355.

DR: ES-P55.

CB: It's a stereo. They don't make those anymore.

DR: Stereo?

CB: Mm-hmm.

DR: Gibson ES-P55 stereo.

CB: Three fifty-five.

DR: Three fifty-five. It's red, right?

CB: Mm-hmm. Burgundy red (inaudible).

DR: Nice.

CB: When I first saw that in the case -- I bought another. I bought the 335, but I didn't like that one too much. But those are more famous than the one I've got in there. So I sold that to somebody else, so forth. And before that, I had a Gibson GS Standard before that. And I sold that to a guy named Johnny [Nash?]. You know him. I sold that guitar to him a long time ago.

DR: Johnny Nash was part of the group called Urban Crisis.

CB: That's right. I put their names down. I forgot the name of the band, too, the band name, beside the other ones. And I used to hang around (inaudible) another person who was a famous drummer, too, also. Used to go with a guy named Andy Potter's house over on Asbury. And Potter, you know, he's white, and he played "Cotton" a long time ago. And he'd be up there sometimes, would also be Frankie Donaldson, who had lots of his groups, went solo, last people stash right here. And we used to hang out together. I had my guitar up there, and {Dudley Fair?] put that

little thing on there, too. He (inaudible) thing on it.

And Dudley Fair would be there.

DR: Dudley Fair's still around.

CB: Huh?

DR: Dudley Fair's around.

CB: Yeah.

DR: I talked to him one time on the phone about a year ago.

CB: Yeah, you know. He come up here a lot of times. Used to live here.

DR: I had the music and flipped over at a bank, I think about a year and a half ago, and he saw it in there. And he called me, and he was just telling (inaudible) I'd like to ask him questions, but it never happened.

CB: Are you putting him in the book, too?

DR: Yeah. I have all these names.

CB: Don't tell me you're going to put him on the cover?

DR: No, no. (laughter) You're on the cover.

CB: I mean, will he ever get on the cover, so what? I'm just kidding. Whatever.

DR: Who knows?

CB: You need to tell him about that.

DR: Who knows? So, you're still playing, though, right?

CB: I'm practicing at home, yeah.

DR: Practicing at home? So this is practicing?

CB: You know, there's a word for that. You know the word does, but it (inaudible). You don't know?

DR: You're out shedding.

CB: Yeah. You got it. That word came a long time ago. I guess, I guess I was (inaudible) school a long time. They used to go back a long time ago. "Well, I'm going into the woodshed." But it means practicing. People always said, "Well, I'm going home to the woodshed." Say I like the woodshed, yeah.

DR: How often do you shed every week?

CB: Maybe twice.

DR: Twice a week?

CB: Twice a week. Something like that. Pick it up, play it a little bit. But now I'm getting back to the picking again, because I've been lazy just using my thumb all the time, you know. [01:10:00] Then I go like what's (inaudible) thumb time to go. So for me, I like to pick now, because, you know, I'm not playing in a band. I'm still in the union since 1967. In the musicians' union, and not playing anywhere. I'm the only one around here. Used to be Billy Dickinson, he's in the book. Bobby Robinson, you know he's not here anymore. Right there.

DR: That's the union. It's upside down.

CB: See this? Since 1967. How many years is that? Is it 41 years?

DR: Wow. Do you have any old cards, your union cards? Are they giving you a renewal every year?

CB: I throw them away.

DR: You should keep them, man.

CB: You want the old one.

DR: Both kinds. (laughs) It's all right.

CB: (inaudible)

DR: So it says it's the [survivors'] union, right? Is it -- what kind of union is it?

CB: It's the musicians' union.

DR: Musicians' union?

CB: Get your contract when you get your jobs, and always paid them --

DR: Is there a name for it or...

CB: No. Just Chicago Federation of Local or -- what's the local on here? When I play here. What's the local on here? Anybody say 10, or what's that?

DR: Chicago Federation of Musicians.

CB: What's the local? The local, what's the local, too?

DR: The local. Local 10-208, ASM.

CB: Yeah, see, that's the local. Yep. Jimmy Archer, my cousins, was just his brothers and thing, nickname, they

called him Jimmy Star. Star Jimmy. We started that with the Naturals band. Started on Darrow, apartment D, as in Davis. (laughs) And then we came along, you know, different members. And also, I have to mention as far as I played behind three -- I'd just use the book, too, if you don't mind. I played behind three women, so forth. I played behind them, also. Patti was one, Patti Drew. Josephine Taylor. You remember here, don't you?

DR: Yeah.

CB: Also, I played behind Brenda Starr. Brenda Starr, S-T-A-R-R, two R's. Yeah. Those three.

DR: Brenda Starr?

CB: Yeah. I played behind some of the other ladies, too, also. Those are the most ones I know. Patti Drew, Josephine Taylor. She's in California now.

DR: Yes, she is.

CB: And Brenda Starr. Brenda's a nice singer, too. You put that in for me?

DR: Well, what town did Brenda Starr play?

CB: I forgot now. You'll put her name in it, for real?

DR: Yeah.

CB: OK.

DR: I have a couple Josephine Taylor records. But I don't have anything from Brenda Starr.

CB: I don't know if she recorded or not. I'm not sure.

DR: Performed...

CB: Performed.

DR: A lot of people have not recorded. They performed, but --

CB: Not recorded?

DR: Yeah. They don't have anything. And like {T.S. Moons?}, played a lot.

CB: Never recorded. Ain't that something? On the sax, ain't the something? I seen him one time. I seen him with Dave Rockingham and (inaudible), too, also. I think he's paralyzed.

DR: (inaudible)

CB: I think so. Some time ago. I think he's -- he was doing some work on the roof and fell off. Nobody talks about it. Even Bobby Robinson don't talk about it. But I think that's what happened. You know, my sister (inaudible) and Jimmy Archer used to play with -- you have it down that we played with -- we used to play with Rockingham before, too.

DR: He did?

CB: Me and Jimmy Archer played with Rockingham on Howard Street, and we played with him, I think it was North Chicago, Waukegan. I sat in with him, with Jimmy. Jimmy was living up there one time. And I sat in with Jimmy Archer, my cousin, and David Rockingham. And also, we

played with various other people, also. I'm going to tell you this in a minute. Jimmy Archer also did a few gigs with Curtis Mayfield. One of the greatest SSM singer-songwriter musician, Curtis Mayfield. Jimmy played with him several times. And there was a couple of cases that said it all. So far as -- on TV, I think it was, also. Curtis Mayfield. He has pictures at home of him with Curtis Mayfield.

DR: Well, I think that's the end of our interview here.

CB: It will save some sentiments for somebody not trying to forget.

DR: But the younger generation who's into music now. There's a few people that I know that are musicians that are (inaudible) my age or younger who are doing things. One of them's Chris Green. He plays saxophone. I know you used to go by Chris Green in New Perspective. But he goes by a different name now. And there's a few other people, too, that are my generation that are doing some -- David Young. He's a trumpeter. He's probably into this (inaudible). The man just made 30 now. See, I wouldn't be surprised if he's still in his late twenties. No, he would be in his 20s still. Look at the newer generation that's coming up, looking to get into the music industry, and based on your

experience, what kind of advice would you give to new musicians?

CB: Musicians with advice? [01:15:00] Take your music seriously and so forth. Write good and always learn how to read. Read music, number one. Read. If you're doing any kind of represents, to your (inaudible). Do the books, and learn how to read. And also, saying live music is the best music, you know. Leave drugs alone. Nothing with drugs. (laughs) We did a long time ago, so what, we drank. As far as drugs, nothing. None of us did drugs.

DR: Any regrets?

CB: Any regrets? Let me see. I wish I had started playing guitar a little earlier in life. I love instruments. I love all instruments, all of them. I could play everything a little bit, except a horn. I can play a bass. I can play drums, a little bit of piano. I can't learn a horn. Must say, I really tried, but I can't play a horn.

DR: OK. When did start playing guitar?

CB: I was about, let's see, 22, 23, something like that. Wish I'd taken it up earlier, when I was about 15 or something like that, earlier. And still haven't accomplished it yet, like I say, I got time, so I can do it.

DR: Also, I see that big picture right there on the table. Are you in that picture?

CB: Yeah, I'm learning some lessons. One on the side, right here? (laughter)

DR: Is that at (inaudible) Ebenezer?

CB: Yes. I never did this in church. Yeah, I talked to (inaudible), in particular I as -- my aunties, going back to my family, I had two aunties who sang in the choir in Ebenezer. And you'll never believe this here. I was an altar boy at Ebenezer when I was young. I want you to remember that, put it down for us. I was an altar boy at Ebenezer church. Oh, and one thing I want, also, read about --

DR: Wrote songs for Ebenezer, right?

CB: Huh?

DR: So if your aunt says --

CB: That's our church, Ebenezer.

DR: Ellen and Mildred?

CB: Yeah. But then (inaudible) Willie was in the same choir, see Willie? And Mildred sang with the choir. Lula May. And also, I played in some of the bands there, because I was with my cousin Jimmy Archer, so forth, you know. And I played with a trio one time was with Danny McGinley, and also one of my best friends who passed on, Terry Dickerson. Me and Terry Dickerson played in several bands together. I'd like to put that down, also, before he formed Flash

Back Chicago. And needless to say, you remember Flash Back Chicago, right?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: My daddy's on that. I wrote their theme song.

DR: Really?

CB: I wrote Flash Back Chicago's theme song. He put in the papers for a long time, said a friend wrote the theme song, Carlton Black. And he has a wonderful wife, Yvonne, and daughter, Danielle. Put that down for each other, want that in the book.

DR: His wife is -- and Danielle's the daughter?

CB: Right. His wife was Yvonne. And what I miss about Terry as far as being the person that he is, was, that they invited us always over to their hour, and we watched the boxing matches, he and his wife and his daughter. A lot of us, you know, the musicians over there. And also, we and a lot of guys get a (inaudible). We always get our bikes and go bike riding. My own bike's a 10-speed. We'd all go bike riding, about six or seven of us. Always go bike riding. I miss him a lot. He was one of my buddies. Terry Dickerson. Put that down. He formed Flash Back Chicago and other groups. We crossed paths a lot of times playing together. Anybody else I want to mention?

DR: I think you mentioned like the whole music industry.

(laughter) It's a wonderful experience that you had here. I'm really inspired to hear that -- these little stories like this, and then your experience (inaudible) is motivating.

CB: And one thing also. We played one club, I think it was called The Beer Joint in Chicago. It was [red?], I think. I hope I'm right. And we always wondered where everybody's recording. We didn't know it was right upstairs, Universal Artists.

DR: Really?

CB: And one time we went down there -- and this in the books -- down there, so forth. Bobby Robinson, something happened with his amp. So he used my amp to play on the recording with Billy Preston's "You Always Hurt Me." And we were sitting in the -- while they were recording, we were out there sitting in the booth while they were recording that song of Preston's. Universal Artists. And I seen Donnie [Payton?] was the musical director. [01:20:00] Donnie Payton. Bobby Robinson's out there playing the guitar. I think [Phillips?] just went to the service, and Bobby Robinson was taking his part and playing the rhythm parts in the background. Bobby Robinson. He used my amp that time. My Fender Super Reverb amp when they were recording.

And I think I heard that some of the guys got to go back to where they came from. I think the driver of the van went to sleep, and I think a few of them drowned, it's bad.

Phillip was from the band when it started out. I remember him saying something like that.

DR: What song was it that Bobby Robinson played using your amp?

CB: I think it was the Impressions' "You always hurt me, da-da." "You Always" -- let me see. I think it was "You Always Hurt Me." Dada-da-da-da-dada. I think it was "You Always Hurt Me." I think it is, yes. And while we're sitting there, so they went on cutting their tracks as far as the Impressions. See, when we were a singing group and so forth, they said that the song I wrote, "Love Is True" sounded somewhat like the Impressions. But see, we sing like the Impressions, but we weren't copying them and so forth. We would sound like them, too, also. So my favorite groups a long time ago, but we loved Impressions, the Drifters, the Spaniels, the El Dorados, the Chi-Lights, the Bandoliers. We loved all the Chicago groups, singing groups. And the people singing groups, too, also, the Shirelles, the solo artists. We loved all those singing groups. And sometimes we would try to sing like, you know, some of their songs, most of the time, you know. That's

how you got anyway, somebody sing the record, you got to sing like them. You make up your own songs.

DR: Yeah. It's funny because I had them in my car, the mix tape, and I have, like, songs from you, Patti Drew, all old stuff that was from Evanston. And when I hear "Hey, Fella," I crank that up. (laughs)

CB: OK. I show the people that did "Tell Him." I didn't know people did "Tell Him" as far as -- I was always getting (inaudible) with "Tell Him" sometimes, and it would be "Tell Her." But see, I didn't know who it was for. I sometimes --

DR: Yeah, yeah.

CB: So you don't need that, do you?

DR: No. I don't need that. I don't need that.

CB: Five (inaudible). I didn't know that. My goodness.

DR: So for the tone, "Tell Him" and "Tell Her" were the names of those groups who were singing it?

CB: Those groups had to bring it out.

DR: OK.

CB: One was called, let me see. They was from Philadelphia. Let's see, the names were... Let me see right here. Under D, most of them up. Steve [Starlets?]. I remember her. Bloodstone. Bloodstone was there. And here... what is... this is all kind of. Destinations. That was Paradise from

Philadelphia. And then called Destinations did "Tell Her." Should be another thing here. So it's in the '60s and they hit. Mostly with "Tell Her." So that song is more famous than (inaudible). And I forgot who's on this here. See, a friend of mine on the job, he did all this for me, all these computer files here. Patti don't even know I have this here, this thing was here. I'm going to get all her albums and things so she won't lose them. This is... Now how many she know "Working on a Groovy Thing"? (laughter) Right?

DR: Yeah.

CB: I'm not bragging on it. I'm going to call Mr. Sedaka and asked him about this. (laughs) I love that song, though, "Working on a Groovy Thing." When we sang that, oh man. After we recorded, I heard it -- and we played it. That's a pretty song. Mostly the guitar parts... [01:25:00]

DR: This is nice.

CB: You see the names on here was --

DR: Yeah, I got the (inaudible). The (inaudible) or whatever.

CB: How many people beside us did it?

DR: One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five.

CB: Five?

DR: Yeah.

DR: Goodness. That's the side used to go over here? I looked at all these and I didn't even lock them up.

DR: Yeah. I was trying to see what date this was, and for these, and this one, but I can't see what the date is.

CB: So, you're putting that in the book, too?

DR: I was trying to get the names of the people who sang that. So it did well. I thought it was good.

CB: Get the royalties on it. It's been in the way. I wish -- we should get some royalties up, there's a new one out here. I'm trying to figure out what's Pat -- I'm going to call people when I get home. OK? Mostly Patti, I'm saying. Because she's been getting beat out of royalties, maybe. I like to find someone to do something for her. That's kind of sad, isn't it?

DR: It is. It's very sad.

CB: So Barbara told me as far as (inaudible) she told me, "I met him one time." You know, Bobby [Cranshaw?]. You know about Cranshaw?

DR: Yeah.

CB: The bass? They say he does that stuff for people who are not getting their royalties. He's like getting in New York, anyway, so he an (inaudible). So am I supposed to be doing something on Bobby {Woolman?}. Did you hear about that?

DR: Mm-hmm.

CB: songwriter. Was with Patti, but I mean, and it's not silly. I mean, not saying it's that famous, though, that is you -- "Working on a Groovy Thing" -- but that's Patti's due. She gets something, you know?

DR: Yeah. She should get something.

CB: I think Pete [Ratcliff?] is a crooked son of a bitch a long time ago. I think if he'd write some of this stuff, Pete {Rad?} on Madison. That's what I think. I don't know what she did a long time ago. I don't know if she signed herself away, but she still should get money for the songs that she wrote. She's a songwriter. And performing rights, too. So I'm likely go over here after next week. I'll be on the phone. She love the phone because she's, "I got one." I'll use mine. (laughs) She might not have money to get a lawyer, but I have. We'll see. I'll get some money.

DR: She needs it. The whole family needs it. The whole family needs it. Well, Carlton, I want to thank you so much --

CB: (inaudible) done anything else.

DR: I don't know. If I have some questions, I'd definitely want to call you. Because I've got to draft an article and everything, so I can get it all in order and everything.

And before it gets published, I want to send you a copy so you read it first before.

CB: Tape over --

DR: No, but I'm going to turn it off right now. I just want to sit there and thank you for your time and your office, and it's been a pleasure all these years, knowing you and getting to know more about you.

CB: And also, I've known you a long time. I think you're a wonderful person. And if I had a magazine, I'd put you on the cover, too. (laughs) I'm serious. Ever since I know you, you've been a nice person, yeah.

DR: Well, thank you very much, and --

CB: It's been my pleasure, and thank you very much for having me at this interview for me and so forth, everything you've done for me. And also for Patti. Both groups thank you. And even for Evanston.

DR: It takes a neighborhood to do this.

CB: Yeah. And Evanston, too, also. Thank you.

DR: Beautiful. Saved.

END OF AUDIO FILE

DR: Revisit the same interview with Carlton Black. We have some new information, family stuff. Go ahead.

CB: I have a brother named Charles, who lives in Chicago. And I have a sister named Diane, who lives in Chicago. And I have brother named Anthony, we call him Tony, he lives in Ohio, Troy, Ohio. He and his wife, Betty. And I have a lot of cousins, and I'd like to mention their names if I could. We know Donald Pryor, also told you he's in the hospital recuperating from an illness, who was our bass player one time, and also the bass singer for our rival group, the Renells. And then I have my cousin Carlton Pryor, and I have Pat Pryor. And real close to me, I have Cynthia Pryor, Tony Pryor, Anthony, [Takisha?], Deborah, David, Asia. That is everybody.

DR: So you're a family man.

CB: OK, that's it.

DR: OK.

CB: I missed my children, but that's all right. (laughter) Get it out.

END OF AUDIO FILE