

TED CASHER: Well, Fred, you know, I guess what you can say about life is that I can say at least about mine is that like Woody Allen said, ninety percent of life is showing up.

FRED Indeed, indeed. Yeah, you make it to class, you make it to the gig, you're there on time...

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Well, sometimes[Laughs]

FRED Yeah, well, and then sometimes they're ready for you and sometimes they aren't.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right. So hey, but ninety percent is showing up.

FRED When I did an interview with Phil Woods, a couple years ago: "What do you teach students?" Phil said, "I put

BOUCHARD: forty-five students in full gear in a bus with blackened windows, and we drive them around the parking lot for six hours, take them out, run them into set up, play one tune, break down, get back in the bus, and drive for six hours more." He says, "That's how you teach the music industry nowadays." That's a little cynical...

TED CASHER: Yeah, it is.

FRED But he believed in that, you know, they pay you to show up.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right, that's what it is, they pay you to show up.

FRED And here we are.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, we showed up, amazing!

FRED Happy New Year.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: And Happy New Year to you, it's '07.

FRED Yup, and this is by way of introduction this is the Berklee historical music Oral History Project, and we're kicking

BOUCHARD: off the new campaign with Ted Casher who is a former student and former teacher at Berklee College, and with a lot of stops in between with the [New England] Conservatory, Boston Conservatory, and many other places. You've been holding down teaching gigs consistently after picking up your master's in music and your education at Harvard, and you're probably one of the most prolific and around-town cats there is, one of the most in-demand people.

TED CASHER: Well, Fred, it's just covering a lot of bases. And it was not the way, actually, it was not the way I'd planned my original life script. By this age I was supposed to be in a place where, oh, I was supposed to have a DownBeat plaque on my wall and a bunch of recordings and tours. Well, say I would be in a place where Ken Peplowski is. But hey, it didn't happen. It's amazing, you know, there was a lot of music. I've seen it turn around several times. I came out of Skowhegan, I was still learning how to do big band. Played with Al Corey's big band up there. Al led a band up there for sixty years, he left us when he was 86. He played lead alto, he loved the integrity of a melody like no other. Playing lead alto and leading a band for him was the way he wanted his life script to go. And he did, he was a dear friend and that was an inspiration, and his lead alto sound is the one that I carry in my ears. But I don't play lead alto now more jazz tenor and clarinet.

FRED But he was an arch-melodist.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Sure was.

FRED Like Earl Warren, or you know...

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Marshall Royal.

FRED Jimmy Dorsey?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Well, yeah, Al's favorite alto players were, you know, he loved Lenny Hambro, who later became a friend of mine he led the Glenn Miller alto section under Ray McKinley. And he loved Ronnie Lang's playing with Les Brown. And he had a guy in his band named Glenn Robertson, who was a really excellent tenor player, and I wanted to work for both those guys. I was playing second alto, and I had one on one side of me and the other on the other. Between them I learned a lot.

FRED Wow, beautiful.

BOUCHARD:

But then I came down and I always wanted to go to Berklee. I was at Skowhegan, Maine, playing on Al's band, we played two or three nights a week. And I was driving a truck during the day. I made enough money to afford Berklee tuition by salting away every cent I could get my hands on, and then I came down to Berklee in the fall of '59 after doing the School of Jazz in Lenox with such luminaries as Ran Blake, John Bergamo, Herb Gardner, the 'bone player. Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, and Barry Swinson who is gone now, played bari[tone sax] with Stan Kenton, he came to the School of Jazz taking a hiatus from the Kenton Band and then came back on the band afterwards, and left us. Al Kiger and Don Stewart were over in Indiana...we got

FRED Was John Lewis out there?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yes, John Lewis was out there and Percy [Heath]. Gunther Schuller. The whole Modern Jazz Quartet was there. People came to visit. Max Roach was there, I used to play with Max almost every day. That was an experience, he'd start up a tempo, he couldn't jump off it. Jimmy Giuffre. Jimmy taught me quite a bit of stuff in two weeks about playing in the center of the pitch and watching the time.

FRED Yes, he certainly had a unique sound and style. I was always a big fan of his.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: You know, he was in the middle of his transition. It was right after Lenox that he started doing all this clarinet stuff with Steve Swallow and...

FRED Paul Bley.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Paul Bley, yeah. Paul Bley was up there, too; Jim Hall was up there, too. Connie Kay and I got very close. Later on I was doing the Newport [Jazz] Festival with the Rhode Island All-Star High School band. We were the opening act. I had my son Zach with me. Zach at the time was young, and he got to talk with Connie, and they talked about drums. The MJQ did their set, and he was so intently watching Connie do things. I was so glad that they got together.

FRED Connie did some amazing stuff with brushes and those little delicate bell-tones and tight rattamacues and all that stuff.

TED CASHER: The guy was a wonderful drummer and percussionist.

FRED I remember "The Golden Striker."

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Wow, what a beautiful what a piece! I caught Oscar [Peterson] doing it, too.

FRED Oh, is that right?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Oh, Oscar played it like hell, he was so fast. Stride piano, so fast. Good grief!

FRED So, those are your student days parallel to Berklee.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right before Berklee. Right before. And then Dizzy Sal and I were on the same ensemble with Connie Kay and Jim Hall as our facilitators then I found out that he was going to Berklee and I was going to Berklee, so we moved in together down at 290 Newbury Street. Berklee was 284. We had a basement apartment. 905 Boylston was across the street, the famous musicians' house, and I could roll out of bed and go to class.

FRED And you often did.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Often did.

FRED [Laughs] Were there a lot of all night jams going on back in those days?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: There was a lot of work, too! Work was easy to get, Fred. Paul Schmeling and I were a couple of the guys who worked all the time, you know? Always working the clubs you could have little trios in lounges. Gary McFarland was across the street he's gone too. He was from Lenox also, he was a very fine vibist and composer.

FRED Yeah, terrific. I remember those albums he made, How to Succeed in Business and all those wonderful film score

BOUCHARD: things he did for Verve, they were just tremendously well-written.

TED CASHER: Well, he came to Boston, you know, studied more orchestration with Herb, Herb Pomeroy, that is, who was on faculty. Herb had the big band at the School of Jazz. My, it was an exciting time to be living on Newbury Street and going to Berklee. And the school was a small school, obviously. I studied with Joe Viola, of the technique of saxophone. He wound up getting me of flugel[horn] later. Dick Johnson for Improvisation, Dick was teaching there. Everett was teaching writing, I learned a lot from him.

FRED Everett Skehan?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: No, Everett Longstreth.

FRED Longstreth.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Everett Skehan was...

FRED The journalist from Worcester.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: The journalist from Worcester, but he was a Brockton boy. And we all wound up working, yeah, we were working a gig that he had booked in Brockton. You know, we took a ride down to Brockton, worked this gig and, oh, it was a funny night. Such a funny and then I ran into Everett the journalist. And it's amazing how it progresses.

FRED When I had Jazz New England magazine back in the seventies, Everett wrote an article on Dave McKenna for us,

BOUCHARD: who was his boyhood buddy.

TED CASHER: Of course! Dave McKenna was a friend to all the Brockton guys. Worked with Dick Johnson so many times.

FRED So many times. And they made some pretty cool albums for Concord, at one point, through Al Julian.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right, it was fantastic. I got to play with Dave many late nights at the Merry Go Round.

FRED Oh, man, what a great club.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, now it's the Oak Room. I'm working there tonight.

FRED Are you?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, place is full of memories.

FRED Boy, I remember Clinton Creasey brought all these terrific cabaret singers Teddi King, and Mabel Mercer.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Oh, Teddi, what a sweetheart.

FRED You must have done some work with her.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Her, did some work with her and with her husband Josh Gerber. Teddi was a wonderful singer. It was funny, that was her real name, Theodora King, and she was a cutie. And oh, she could sing. She and Josh were together forever. There were late nights, talking about music with Manny Wise there. Ken's Delicatessen, Copley Square.

FRED Oh sure, yeah, that was a late night hang. Back in those days, that was in the mid- to late seventies, I was writing
BOUCHARD: for the Boston Herald, so I got to cover these people, and I was a regular down there with [manager] Clinton Creasey and the crowd there at the Merry Go Round.

TED CASHER: Oh, that was a fine place.

FRED Yeah. And of course the [Jazz] Workshop was right across the street. But that was still going, mid-seventies it was
BOUCHARD: before it shut down.

TED CASHER: Advantageous. Man, you know, the Stables was going full blast. Herb's band was a wonderful band. During my first couple semesters at Berklee we would go down to Stables all the time.

FRED I probably met you there, 'cause I was a freshman at BC [Boston Conservatory] in '59.
BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: BC, wow.

FRED Yep. And I had a fake ID actually it was a Maine license because it had this embossed stuff on it, and they didn't
BOUCHARD: know what the embossing was. I got a notary to give me a squeeze. And they didn't know what the hell it was, they never saw a Maine license. So I was eighteen and I was drinking down there watching Herb's quintet, octet, and big band on the right nights.

TED CASHER: Beautiful. [Both laugh] Yeah, these days there are so many, how do you say it, obstacles put in place to the aspiring youthful jazz artists' ears.

FRED More matinees, that's the answer.
BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, you remember George Wein did a thing out there the conversation came up: Teenage Jazz Club. Remember that?

FRED Absolutely. And he did it at Storyville by having the afternoon shows. Where there was no alcohol served, or
BOUCHARD: there was a peanut gallery where they would serve Kool-Aid and ginger ale but nothing hard. I went there.

TED CASHER: Of course. I was there by the time I got to Boston to be a regular in Storyville... yeah, good grief. Come to think of it, I spent, okay, I'm going into a very long and checkered academic career. As soon as I graduated from high school I went out to be a scholarship student at Aspen Institute and I was trying to play legit clarinet, but jazz always had a pull. I was working every night with a combination violin-pianist, playing a jazz duo at an Italian restaurant, Mario's. Fine food, ten bucks a night. I always worked. Amazing. So then I did two years at the University of Rochester Eastman School of Music, and it wasn't a good fit for a jazz-oriented person. See, jazz always did have a pull. But I studied there with Bill Osseck, who was a fine clarinet teacher, and he taught me an embouchure that I have used all my professional life. Chris Vadala has the same embouchure: it's a hole and [walkie talkie noise in the background] whatever you wish with it.

FRED Bill's last name was?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Osseck. O-S-S-E-C-K. He played first and then bass clarinet with the Rochester Phil[harmonic]. Very, very fine teacher, and then... But in Aspen I studied with Reginald Kell, which was a fine experience.

FRED Oh! I have some classical recordings of that guy playing Mozart and everything else. Extraordinary.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: The stuff's back on CD, I'm sending for the boxed set for my own purposes. But you know, just to remember. But then it was at Eastman that I did an abortive semester at Boston University, when something happened. George Wein was teaching History of Jazz, I took it. That's the first time I got to meet Dizzy Gillespie, I got to meet Don Wilson, who had done the Transition label, remember that label?

FRED Transition.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Transition. Dicky Wetmore did an album, Herb Pomeroy. Oh yeah, he was the first one to record Cecil Taylor.

FRED Right, and Ran Blake.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, and Fran Thorne.

FRED Fran Thorne. Yeah, I remember that guy too.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Guy from Yale who was trying to mix ragtime with contemporary.

FRED Yep. I've had those records for a while. It was a Black bass player.

BOUCHARD:

[Ted pauses]

FRED Nevermind.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Good grief.

FRED I'm losing it.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Me too.

FRED That's okay.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Long time. That record, Transition records, got burned when my parents' house burned up in Skowhegan. Well, I spent this abortive semester at BU and my mind got blown out by sitting in front of Miles and 'Trane in Storyville for a week. That was a good quartet that did the 'Round Midnight album. Philly Joe [Jones], Red Garland, and Paul Chambers. Good god, I was trying to figure out what Trane was doing. So you know about Thursday night I'm walking to Storyville again, George Wein says, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm trying to figure out what 'Trane's doing with that tenor." George says, "Me too. Go ahead." [Both laugh] I didn't pay the cover, I just bought drinks. And then, you know, it was about that transition period, I had bought a tenor for myself from a drummer. I had to carry it around in a doll case because I didn't have a case for it. And it was a big transition period for me 'cause I was playing clarinet in the BU symphony and on the other hand I was running around playing jazz. I left, went to Maine, went back to Skowhegan, Maine, to get my head into proper shape. But then I got a really good solid tenor and played with Al Corey's band and straightened my chops out, and straightened my life script out. And then I met Darlene in a jazz club in Skowhegan, Maine would you believe we had one?

FRED I wouldn't.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Okay. There are all these clubs, little clubs, around Maine and Rhode Island and New Hampshire, and these agents from Boston who would send down a troop of a stripper, a singer, and a comic. And they would send these little troops out and they would travel all through these places. For instance, we got to know Jackie Vernon before he made it. Norm Crosby traveled there before he made it. And so you know we got to know all those guys. 'Cause, you know, they came through and did little shows in between time and played jazz. Now Terry Keefe who used to have a horn repair depot underneath the old Union building...

FRED I remember Terry.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: You remember Terry, yeah, he's gone now.

FRED Used to work with Maggie [Scott] a lot.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right. Then he went down to Key West and he always played C melody sax and C soprano. I asked him why and he said he never wanted to play any reed instrument you could use in a big band ever again. [Both laugh] And well, so Terry Keefe was playing with two guys, Claude Noelle and George Tardiff. They came up from New York, they came back to Skowhegan with the idea in mind to play every day and drink every day, and they succeeded. [Fred laughs] Claude and George are both gone now, but those guys both had unbelievable time. Terry Keefe and I swapped the bass, he had one of those Chubby Jackson plywood basses with the dots on the side so you knew where to put your fingers, you didn't take lessons. We swapped the tenor around. Oh, so much fun, man.

FRED Yeah. And then you came to Berklee.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah. Got out, stopped driving the truck. I made enough money, got out from behind the wheel, then went to the School of Jazz, and then went to Berklee. Berklee was probably I will say that Berklee circa 1959-1961 was the best music education I had gotten, ever. I learned something at Berklee that I could use every day, I learned one new thing, at least, that I could use. Bob Share was teaching harmony, Everett Longstreth was teaching writing. I learned a lot from Everett. I always remember something Everett told us. He said at the beginning of an arranging class, "Always remember that the music that you write will, fifty percent of the time, be played by guys who are not legally able to operate an automobile in any of the fifty states." [Both laugh] The halcyon days of Vegas, man had Blinstrub's and the Copa, the Poconos, the Three Rivers in Syracuse, all those major clubs. It was the truth. Because between the first and second show you had forty minutes at least where you could drink and anybody who couldn't get a spoonful in forty minutes wasn't trying. [Laughs]

FRED Yeah, and in many cases you didn't even have to drive because you were gonna be located there for a week.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right. Didn't have to drive. And oh man, those were great days, man, the work, but...

FRED Who else did you take classes with?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I also took with Everett, I took with Bob Share, took with George Brambilla, took with Ray Santisi. Ray Santisi, good grief! I used to hear him practice, he was constantly practicing, it was marvelous. I took Recording Band with Herb.

FRED Who was in the band besides yourself?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Oh, good grief, first it was John Cieslak who was a writer I don't know how much playing he's doing. He was out of Detroit, he was, last I heard he was down in the South West trading with the Indians, the Native Americans, sorry, yeah, but he was trading and playing a little. Barry Ulman was the other tenor, he became a forest ranger, because his avocation was a birdwatcher. And he became a forest ranger, this hundred percent vocation for birdwatching.

FRED Probably brought his food up into the tower and serenaded the birds back.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Could have been, man. John Cieslak and Jackie Stevens. Jackie was one of the best of us. He's gone. And Dick Johnson became lead alto section coach afterward. And Bob Seastrong.

FRED What was the material like?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Good god, trying to think. We had charts from Benny Golson, we had an immense amount of charts of Benny sent us because we had recorded some things. But that's where I had to learn to read because I needed to read better. I would get a book memorized but the first two times I played something was a joke. I knew I needed some way to sharpen up my sight reading. When Herb Pomeroy told me about the imaginary barline, the one that separates one and two from three and four, it was like, "This was what I needed." But there were two of us, Steve Marcus, we were together. We had such a good time, oh my god, speaking of, you know, degrees of synchronicity. There was a bass player who played with Dizzy Sal and I, and Dan Crow was the drummer and there was Sue Freeman, she was a student also with the School of Jazz the year before I was there, as was the late Don Terkowsky. And, oh dear, we had a solfège class with Jimmy Progris who was not only a great teacher but became a dear friend. He went down to Florida, and became in charge of Miami University's grad division and went to [become] executive director of National Recording Arts and Sciences. I forgot the acronym.

FRED NARAS? No.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: NARAS, yeah, it became that one. Jimmy, fine guy. Now he was working six nights a week too, he and Lennie DiMuzio from the cymbals...

FRED Zildjian.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Zildjian. Now Sabian, we're not going to go into the ramifications, okay, 'cause I understand Craigie's on the Board of Trustees. We're not going to go into all the ramifications. Bill Street was playing tenor and I used to take Bill's nights off for him, while I was in a transition period.

FRED And that transition period was one where you decided to get your degree.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: No, that was a later transition period. [Laughs] Man, so many transitions. Okay. By the time I was doing two semesters, I got married and Dee and I had our first daughter, the baby Dena, who's now a lawyer down in Sanford Street. She was on the way, so I had to get myself into some work fast. It was funny, Billy Kroner, whom Bob Winter had mentioned in his interview, called up Joe Viola during an exceptionally busy period and said, "In that school full of goddamn jazzers, you have anybody who can play a tune?" And Joe says, "Yeah, I have one." He sent me over there. [Both laugh]. Because I needed work, so I broke in with them. Amazing, they gave me the business. I knew all the tunes, but I didn't know all the keys. All right, then I found out they found out I could play all the tunes in any key they gave me so they didn't mind giving me the keys after that. Guys like Frank Levine, Jack Levine, wound up doing Sam Marcus' and Carl Rand's nights off with the Sammy Dale Orchestra at the Statler [Hotel]. Marvelous. There always seemed to be work. Little clubs, and then Billy Kroner sent me first to the new Ocean House with John Slater, he's gone, [inaudible] Lombardi was up in Bar Harbor, Maine, teaching bass and playing. And after the convention season had ceased at the Ocean House, I went to the Salisbury Beach Frolic with Dave Lester's band. Oh my god, that was my first time playing major acts. It was a great time, then I figured, oh man, I gotta learn woodwind doubling. Summer ended, the job ended too.

FRED Who did you back?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Back? Oh my god, starting with the first one: Andy Williams, then Johnny Mathis, Liberace, Erroll Garner was there, Ella Fitzgerald. It was a wonderful summer. Ella, we didn't back, we played opposite her. They had other acts so I was part of a three- or four-sax section.

FRED It was a big band.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, Dave Lester had a big band. Okay, his name was Dave Lester. He always said, "Be surprised at the money I made in the music business." Went to Loewe's Orpheum for two weeks, stayed twenty-two years, played the original score to What Price Glory, Birth of a Nation, and [inaudible].

FRED Damn.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah. That's the early

FRED Birth of a Nation!

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah!

FRED Isn't that 1919 or something?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I don't know...

FRED That was D. W. Griffith's silent movie.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, he played for silent movies, Dave Lester. Well, his real name was Lesburg. Jack Lesburg, bass player with the world's greatest jazz band, didn't change his name. Dave Lester changed his for the marquee, L-E-S-T-E-R, six letters for the marquee.

FRED You had to double. They were writing things that would call for flute?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Flute and clarinet, oh yeah. Clarinet was never a problem. But flute, then I had to learn flute. God, I was going through some... Joe Viola was a big help. I taught myself flute and, you know, anybody who tries to teach himself an instrument, you got an idiot for a teacher sometimes. [Fred laughs]. Tried to kill the flute, man. Then Joe was having me work on playing it easy.

So I got married, Dee and I got married, kids started coming, I got to find work, I went down to the Combat Zone. This is funny. Steve Marcus got the nod to go out with Stan Kenton. He needed to get rid of his rock and roll job. So he sold me his two shaw-collared coats and a western suit for ten bucks, and he went off with Stan Kenton. He managed to get his hands on the book, John LaPorta taught him the book out of hand. Steve's reading was also a school joke. He and I, oh boy, Mel Rakov, I skipped over that story. Well, was with Jim Progris class, got a class with Sue Freeman. Now Sue Freeman was a petite young lady and she played bass, but she heard everything down at the bass so she would start solfege-ing, "do, re, me, fa..." Steve Marcus and I would start laughing, we'd be on the floor, we disrupted the class we were made to pay extra money to take solfege privately with Jimmy Progris because we were disruptive students. Couldn't help it, all Sue had to do was open her mouth and sing two bars. [Both laugh] We'd start laughing. And there was a third student, Mel Rakov, who played trombone, he was similar to us. Steve had woolly hair but I was losing mine, Mel was losing his, and we were all chubby, we liked to eat. And we would, you know, we would fall on the floor when Sue started singing. But that was another thing we had

FRED BOUCHARD: At some point you had to get flute lessons seriously. You had exhausted your own resources, so Joe sent you to the Boston Conservatory.

TED CASHER: No.

FRED BOUCHARD: He didn't.

TED CASHER: No, Joe was teaching me. I had to go to Boston Conservatory to get a music ed[ucation] degree because the conventional wisdom at that time was that you got a music ed degree to fall back upon, but the rest of the time your life script you would be playing. You'd be surprised at the number of guys who are still teaching who were trying to follow that paradigm. I know that's what happened with me, 'cause whether I knew it or not, well, kids are coming, had to make some money.

So I went to this rock and roll band, stayed there nine months, then went with Manny Wise band at the Surf, otherwise known as Manny Denise back then, it was half a Latin band. And it was Chris Greco who went to New York later he was a boy from Chelsea, on piano first, and then Bobby Leeman was gone, also, who was the son of Cliff Leeman, and his mother was Selma Romanow, who was a lady. She had married Doctor Romanow, and was living in Winthrop. But when she was singing with Gene Krupa, she was better known as Anita Bradley. And her hit record was "Can't Get Out of this Mood."

FRED BOUCHARD: Okay.

TED CASHER: So she was a vibrant lady, she was Bobby's mother, and she was living the more, how can I say it, stable life of a matron married to a doctor living in Winthrop, Mass. But Bobby, well, he became a fine piano player, a really good piano player, but he died on the coast, a flu bug took him. And talk about degrees of synchronicity showing up later, his son Gregory came to me as a student, shortly after Bob died, came to Dean Junior. College while I was a professor of music there. Now this kid, that was a kid that I'd held and changed when he was a baby. And it was like Bobby had come from the other side, telling me, "Man, take care of my boy." It was amazing. But you know, you talk about showing up.

Well, let's see, where was I? I was at the Salisbury Beach Frolic, and then

FRED You went to the Conservatory and got your degree...

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I was working, yeah, I was going to the Conservatory. The Surf gig dried up during January, so I started doing some GB with the [Ted] Bernard office, and then I jumped into Blinstrub's later on it was my senior year at the Conservatory and I jumped on that band. Kenny Winslow and Buddy Cisco got me on the band.

FRED How big an ensemble was that? Full force?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah. Most of the time we had five saxes, four trumpets, three 'bones.

FRED Wow, yeah, I went there once or twice.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: You did?

FRED Yeah.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Big club.

FRED Big club.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, well, first week I went in working with Connie Francis, the second week Tony Bennett, and then it closed for the summer, and went back. Johnny Mathis showed up again, Tony Bennett showed up many times, Nat King Cole we wound up playing the last East Coast club engagement that Nat Cole ever did. But we didn't know the conductor told us the last day of it that he had been going, went first to MGH, the Farber Center, then the Lahey Clinic, getting three opinions. They all told him the same thing: you have lung cancer, you are terminal, go back to the coast, wind your affairs up. It was incurable and inoperable, too far gone.

FRED This is sixty...

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: This is '63. Yeah, late '63. Nat Cole smoked two packs of unfiltered Camels during a two-hour rehearsal so it gives you an idea of what

FRED What was he like to work with?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: He was a wonderful man. Easygoing, singing, happy. Played only a little piano. If he had stayed with the piano he would have been more of a force in jazz, per se.

FRED For sure. I remember even on his TV shows, he only would lick a couple of keys, on a rare occasion when he'd

BOUCHARD: bring the trio out, but not much.

TED CASHER: Right. They told him, keep singing. He had that sound, but he went out to the coast after that, that was his last East Coast engagement. He played some in Vegas, you know, and he made a movie with Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. He made a dumb cowboy movie. But he beat 'em for a year.

FRED Yeah. Hung close to home.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah. His conductor at that time was Joe Zito, who now is known better as the father of Barry Zito, the pitcher who just switched over to the Giants for many millions.

FRED Any relation to Tory Zito?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I don't know if they were brothers or cousins, but he's part of that family.

FRED Tell us about Johnny Mathis.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Johnny Mathis? Oh my god. What did we do to Johnny Mathis? Well, I'm gonna straighten the story out because there are versions of it going around this town was that the band, Mike Gaillard's band, I think was around Thanksgiving time, and we had a twi-nighter. So our afternoon show

There was two big moments, Fred. Jackie Leonard was working the Monticello, he came down to hear Johnny Mathis, he came down to town. At that point I was busy, somehow resembling Jackie Leonard: rotund, lost most of my hair, had big black glasses, and no beard. So he came backstage, looked at me, he said, "Hey, fat boy," I said, "Yeah, fat Jack." We started doing shtick, he did him and I did him. We did shtick on each other for ten minutes, it was a great moment. Afterward, the band went to Giro's Restaurant in the North End, and I was there, and I wanted to eat fettuccine alfredo, and then jumped it down I paid all that money for a dish that my grandmother had made all my life, with less garlic. It was a luchen kugel that my grandmother, only in our family they call it tegatz for some reason. What it was was a baked fettuccine alfredo. "What's that? My grandmother made that, but less garlic". Oh boy.

Anyway, I'd been taking a medicine for a lung condition, and we went back to the club and we were going to play for the Johnny Mathis show for the second time that day. Feeling all this gas building up inside the tummy. And, oh my god. We're playing a tune called "Maria," and I'm playing second alto. Sil Dobrano's playing first alto. And "Maria," that was a big hit for Johnny Mathis, from West Side Story where they're singing, the whole string section's going "Maria" with string tremolo, "Say it loud and there's music playing," hold the note. Take a breath, then it goes, "Say it soft, and it's almost like praying." At that point, Sil, on lead alto, had to put down his clarinet, pick up the flute and go "E, E, A." Anyway, I let out this big blast of methane gas while we're going "Say it loud" and there's string tremolo and then "Say it soft." Sil puts down the clarinet and picks up the flute, takes a breath and [Gags] Starts choking! He could not get out that high E any more than anything. So Johnny Mathis, out on the floor, doesn't hear "E, E, A," so he fades back with the microphone, and starts looking around. By this time, the effluvium has gone over the strings section, and he takes a couple of whiffs and immediately knows what happened and he starts laughing, cannot finish the song. He's going[laughs]back and forth with the mic, he was completely breaking up. Over in the rhythm section Jack Fearman, the piano conductor, has to go "One, six, six, two, five; one, six, two five" to get him into the next tune, while he's standing on the stage laughing.

FRED It wasn't "Roses de Picardie," was it?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: [Laughs] Wonderful, wonderful. You know that one. [Sings melody] Big hit for Johnny. So Jack's getting him into the next tone, so after the show Jack Fearman comes over and says, "What happened?" Now, Jack Fearman and Kenny Wenzel and I played for Tony Pastor in the sextet for a limited engagement at the Surf Club, which then was another degree of synchronicity won't go into that but Jack says, "What happened?" And I told him no secrets with Jack, he was a fine trumpet player as well as a conductor I told him what happened. Oh, my god. That's what happened.

FRED Well, you heard here, folks, this is the authorized but not fumigated version.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right! [both laugh] That's going in my book.

FRED Okay, tell us about the book.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: We're gonna write the book, it's called, I Showed Up.

FRED That's a good title.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yes and I'm beginning to think it's more and more important to show up. Berklee trained me to show up.

FRED Is that what you imparted to your students first when you were on the podium here as a teacher?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I hadn't worked it out in my own head. I came back from New York and been working with when I was working here oh, first I was teaching. That's a great story: I was teaching fundamental piano after I graduated from the Conservatory on a part-time basis. That's when I had some piano chops. And so I was teaching people fundamental piano. One of my students became a dear friend many years later, Frankie Figueroa. First call lead trumpet player in New York. And he's the first guy with Peter Nugent. And he substituted Radio City Music Hall, and freelances all over New York. But that was in '64. I graduated with a music ed degree from Boston Conservatory, decided to start taking classes for a master's, because I was in the neighborhood, we were living on Queensbury Street up there and I was still there. So I started the classes, teaching piano and Frank Figueroa, he remembers me with some hair and no beard, and I remember him as a skinny kid. And when I see him on a Peter Nugent gig, and get to play with that really great musician that's, like, happening. Showing up, I showed up with Newman, I learned how to play these society gigs.

FRED Ruby Newman.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Ruby Newman. Yeah, Billy Kroner, and then Ted Bernard, was so much fun. Ted Bernard was, oh man, now, is very seriously the sponsor of the Cutler Theater. His name is Theodore Cutler, he uses his real name now, he's a multi-millionaire but he's still the same guy. Even though he lives in the Ritz, not out in Newton anymore. But his society office was probably the most fun society office that ever was.

FRED Why is that?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Had another rhythm section, Marty Carras on drums, David Fagen on piano and Joe Palomino on bass, and Sparky Thomas played guitar and those guys were so prankish that it was fun. The band played with a "what the hell?" attitude. And the other leader, Jerry Bernard, Jerry Blum, he's gone now. They all played, the band played with that attitude. A "what the hell?" attitude. Everything was fun.

FRED Isn't music supposed to be fun?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah.

FRED It isn't always, but it could be.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, it was fun. And it was a wonderful office. But then I went from Teddy's band to Blinstrub's. And Blinstrub's was good, had a couple years of Blinstrub's. Al Tobias was playing lead trumpet he's in a nursing home out in Dedham, had a stroke, but the guy had some chops. Buddy Cisco was also [inaudible] Buddy would play screech, he's down in Texas. Kenny Winslow and Tak Takvourian still played lead alto. Al Pacines went between jazz tenor and Pat Principe, the late Pat Principe was on bari and bass clarinet, and he's gone. Mile Gaillard had a marvelous speaking voice. He always played bottom tenor 'cause he had a Ruby Newman-type sound. Like that. He always played bottom tenor, but he could transpose anything to anything. Something he learned in his society training. And I jumped on jazz alto or jazz tenor, whatever chair needed, whatever chair had the most woodwind doubling, I grabbed. And Jimmy Derba played with the band.

FRED Love Jimmy!

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Loved that man, sweet James. He was so good. And then the rhythm section was something. Bill Nordstrom, he was a big guy with a big bass. He was one of the first guys to have an electric. Russ Adams played the drums, man, they had an easier time of it. Nelson Hall, he's gone, was on piano, Bob Kiley took the chair over, good player. After he left the Sammy Dale band, Bob [inaudible] was playing...

FRED You've kept your finger on the pulse of all your old bandmates. You know where everybody is and what they're doing. This is a career of relationships.

TED CASHER: Yes, it is. You have to know lots of people.

FRED Yep, and the cast of characters changes nightly.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: And you have to, well, that's what it is. You subscribe to a common body of knowledge. That's what the Berklee students don't know about. You know, they get bands and they rehearse, they rehearse, and rehearse, don't know what it is to be a freelancer. And I taught my son how to do that maybe to his death for it. Because when he was going to school here, you know, he went to Mass Ave. and he lived over in the South End. When he was going to school, he didn't rehearse with little bands, he was a freelancer. You know that line of Harry Chapin's, "My boy was just like me, grew up just like me?" That's what it is. Now he's committed to a couple of bands, cover bands, [inaudible]. And Julian Kasper, who teaches here at Berklee.

FRED Hey, Teddy, these are the men they will become, right?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: The men they will become, oh my god. That's Eli's book, man. We talked about that.

FRED Yeah. What did you impart in the classroom here?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: What did I impart in the classroom?

FRED Besides showing up.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I had a class, a repertory class, I taught my repertory how to do a wedding. One of the tests on the final was "name the component parts of a tuxedo."

FRED Whoa! And make sure you've got them in your pocket before you leave the house.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right!

FRED [Laughs] Now, did you talk about setlists for Jewish weddings? Italian weddings?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: All of the above, man.

FRED That's very useful.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, we talk about all those things. Especially we played what was hot and what was not. Some of my students...

FRED What if the hokey pokey is what it's all about? [Ted laughs] Somebody showed me that on a pin the other day.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Right. What if it was, you know? You're right, could have been. You don't know.

FRED It was [Jon] Damian.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Damian. It was amazing to be at Berklee in 1970, it was a good time. Suddenly we thought the rock music was changing into music. We had things like Ten Wheel Drive, Blood Sweat and Tears, Chicago...

FRED "Spinning Wheel."

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: All those bands were hot.

FRED I'm writing liner notes for a solo Jaki Byard album and he does an outrageous version of "Spinning Wheel."

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Man, Jaki was the best. I wound up playing in his band, right before I left Boston. Right before I was, say, went into exile, was a period between '56 and '59. Rather, it was '57 and '59, I was in exile, back home, driving that truck. Playing in Jaki's band was a hell of an experience. Wonderful guy.

FRED And talk about switching gears mid-set, mid-chorus, mid-phrase. He could really whip it all out.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I'd love to hear that album.

FRED I'll cut you a copy. It's Sunshine of My Soul, it's a reissue. But listen, back to what you were saying about the music transitioning, how were you guys coping with that transition in the classroom. Were you incorporating some of the better rock music in your lessons?

TED CASHER: [Nods] It was about that time. Larry, of course, God rest his soul, he was cognizant of that stuff. And John LaPorta also. And they had us making all these rock bands in which the trombones played an ossia part. You got to add them or leave them off, as it were. Because the school was getting a shortage of 'bones in even then, shortage of trombones coming in. The guitar was building up. So it was an exciting time to be at the school, teaching at the school. I was teaching, I had a course in rock writing. Would you believe Greg Abate was the best writer?

FRED Cool.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: He was the best writer of all of them. It was right after that he went to the coast to go with Ray Charles. And so the rock writing course and the repertory classes and ensembles. George Garzone was in one of my ensembles, man, he was playing then, wow. George Garzone also could do anything. I heard him do an Italian wedding back in that period with his uncle, Joe Spada. And he could do that, George could do anything.

FRED When you say do that, you mean, back to Sorrento, tarantella?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, tarantella, play the regular dancing, come back to school, play jazz like he invented it. He could do anything. But there were a lot of guys there. Jeff Stout was teaching, he could do it all. Who was...

FRED Paul Fontaine.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Paul Fontaine was here, yes, Muzzy was still there. John LaPorta, John LaPorta did a great job as an educator, as a person.

FRED Yeah, he sure did. Played great, and was lucid in the classroom, from everything I've heard.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: And Lennie Johnson was here too. Don't forget Lennie as a trumpet instructor and an ensemble instructor. And Herb was here, wonderful guys. Wonderful wonderful guys. And I stayed a couple years...

FRED You got restless.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, I did, okay. I was one of the Indians in that at that point the chiefs looked too healthy. A guy named Charles Austin and another student who had graduated, Hal Crook, were starting up a music school called the Rhode Island School of Music. I got down there because I became department chair 'cause I had more degrees than the rest of them. By that time I had grabbed my master's degree from Boston Conservatory. And so I went down there, the school lasted a couple years, then went belly-up. It was the height of the Nixonian epic and there was nobody around, so I became for a couple of years composer-in-residence for the state of Rhode Island Council on the Arts.

FRED Is that when you were working with the Philharmonic?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, that too. But my duties weren't so much compositional as, how can I say it, building fences between the music ed community and the Council on the Arts, as it were.

FRED Building fences or mending them?

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Building relationships. Not mending fences. See, the music eds were all scared that the Council on the Arts would put a school and suck away all the talent from their bands and orchestras and choruses. There was a school once in Providence called the Arts Center, and some really good people, Nancy Paolino Krokawa, who's from Newport, married Matt Krokawa?

FRED Yes, the pianist.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: And she has her own band, she was a student there, Nancy was. And David Mansicelli was a fine player and he became an illustrator. Larry Taft was teaching, playing piano and teaching environmental sciences at the Alton Jones Campus at URI, we sure had some good students at that place, but then... Oh, okay, my appointment expired so I went to Dean Junior College, it was, back then, stayed for thirteen years, till '86 there, their music and art components. A bean-counter came in and told them they weren't cost effective. [Fred laughs] We were just beginning to get numbers, and we did that by chasing guidance counselors rather than music educators. The guidance counselors had all the guitar, bass, drum wonders who didn't want to be in the band and march with a uniform on. And so when we started getting guitar people, guidance counselors, we started getting numbers. We would get them into shape. My worst task, the first semester at Dean, would be to convince these kids that music was a discipline to be studied rather than an excuse to break away from discipline of study. Get them into a learning mode rather than the garage band. And then we would send lots of them to Berklee. We had an ongoing relationship with Steve Whitman, who was a dear friend of ours teaching here. And we sent many many people to this school, some of them even graduated.

FRED Very likely. So you've kind of run the gamut, here.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Okay, so, now I got away from bebop and playing the shows, I played downtown, I played all over the place

FRED But I mean student, teacher, and referee...

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: All of the above.

FRED Next thing it will be board of directors.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: I wouldn't participate on any board who would have me as a member.

FRED [Laughs] Thank you, Groucho.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yes. But no, I really wouldn't. My buddy Eli Newberger's on the board of directors.

I got back into dixieland. How'd it come about, I don't know. I like playing my clarinet again. And I always liked dixieland I could do it, so I did it. And I liked playing Klezmer, because in playing Klezmer I could play every note on my clarinet. I liked dixieland and Klezmer so I got started playing with Eli and Jimmy, replaced Joe Muranyi on their trio. So I get to play with them regularly. Besides, Eli is such a dear friend, he's a great musician and a great friend and a wonderful tuba player. Nobody plays tuba like him.

FRED The soul of wit and a charming conversationalist. Tell us about Bill Clinton before we have to wrap it here.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Oh, Bill Clinton, oh my god. Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton when he was the governor of Arkansas came to Boston to be with Hillary for her ten-year reunion from Wellesley College. Bo Winiker had a gig down at the Rotunda and told me to play the chair that had tenor and the alto, so I brought both the axes. And we're standing there playing stone bebop, we're playing things like "Sippin' at Belles" and "Half Nelson." P-p-p. Bo says, "You can play anything you want, just soft." [Fred laughs] So we played bebop! Bob Bachelder was playing [piano], Bruce Gertz on the bass, Tony Angelaco on drums.

FRED They weren't trying to dance to it, you guys were window dressing. Or oral dressing.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: Yeah, we were just ear candy, man. There were all these girls were talking, yada yada, Wellesley College. And I noticed this good-looking tall guy, standing over there in the corner, listening to the band. So we take a break, Bo's playing trumpet, Bob Hores playing tenor, I got the alto and tenor. The guy comes up to me and says, "Oh, is that the new Dukoff mouthpiece? I've heard about it. What kind of reeds are you using on it?" We start talking about it, I says the usual questions. "Are you playing?" He says, "No, kind of busy. As the governor of Arkansas, I don't have much time to practice." Bang! A light goes off in my head: "Photo-op." I say, "You want to play?" "Sure!"

I go over to Bo, says, "Hey, man, I've got a tenor guy here. The governor of Arkansas, he'd like to sit in with the band." Bo says, "Yeah, we'll go for it." So I grabbed my alto, I gave Bill my tenor, I gave him a spare strap out of the case. I strap on my alto, we played a set. "Perdido," "Take the A Train," and some blues. Bill had spent time with the instrument. He could solo credibly, he knew the out-chorus to "Take the A Train," he knew the out-chorus to "Perdido," and he could solo credibly.

By that time Bill's playing, we're playing a little louder a crowd gathered around. Up comes a girl wearing a plaid skirt, tights, and a sweater, with curly brunette hair and octagon goo-goo goggles. I mean, thick glasses. Pretty girl comes up to Bill and says, "Oh, you sounded so marvelous, dear." It was Hillary! And so that's how we met Bill Clinton.

Later on we got to play for his inauguration. Went down, Aretha Franklin sang with us, and Bernard Purdie came in on drums. It was a wonderful time. First time I ever knew a president up close and personal.

FRED It might be a while before you care to know another.

BOUCHARD:

TED CASHER: You're right, yes. [Laughs] Yeah, he was Bill was the best. Yeah but, wow, it actually has been a good time, man, looking at life. Dee and I had four kids, three daughters and one son. My son's in the industry playing drums, and my daughters all have straight jobs. We have one who is a lawyer and one who manages a law office in Providence. And our third daughter is a cardiac care nurse in Mercy Hospital in Maine. And all that time that I spent practicing and playing in bands and driving a truck and sitting in, in order to get out of Maine, one of my kids went back there. Oh boy. [Fred laughs] But hey. We got the house paid for, we got the kids educated, and I'm now teaching at Bonnegansett, because it's more of like I said, it's a state of obligation. If I don't put back into the industry, the kids are not gonna be able to, you know, they won't know what jazz is about.