

**FRED** Well, Mae, nice to have you visiting our studios here at Berklee College of Music. And it's been my pleasure to be  
**BOUCHARD:** your friend and associate of yours in the music world for quite a long while.

**MAE ARNETTE:** You can tell the truth. Almost forty years.

**FRED** Yeah. All of that.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** We go way back.

**FRED** And we've asked you to come up here today because of your long-standing prominence in the Boston  
**BOUCHARD:** entertainment community, and your long affiliation and friendship with a lot of the great professional players in town. And the fact that you've earned your spurs as Boston's first lady of song.

And we're really happy that you're with us today and can share some of your memories and some of your accomplishments in the Boston Music scene.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, Fred, you're very kind. Bless your heart. When you stop and think about going back in my history here, this whole area has changed. Downtown has changed. So much has changed since I first came to Boston.

When I first walked off that plane in 1952, I didn't know I was going to wind up spending the rest of my life in this town. But having done so, it's been-- I must say, it's been in education. And it's been a love in its own way. Because I fell in love with these old cobblestone streets downtown that I'd never seen growing up in Harlem.

The tenements and stuff and come and see these little tiny houses. I just fell in love with the town and wound up staying. And in doing so, got a heck of an education here.

**FRED** What was that occasion that you took that fifteen-dollar flight up from Manhattan to Boston.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, I'd just won the Harlem Amateur Hour in New York when my uncle called me. He was managing the old professional and Business Men's Club here on Mass Ave[nue] at the time. And he was also affiliated with the owners of the old Celebrity Club downtown, which Sabby Lewis was house band there. And they put on complete floor shows-- out of town floor shows because the *Larry Steele Show* was here at the time.

And I came up to replace Etta James, who was billed, but unfortunately she couldn't make the gig so they brought me up here to replace her. My first real professional nightclub gig, as far as that goes. And I mean, real professional because I was dealing with other show girls on the show and whatnot, and I was so green.

I tell you who on that show, too. Winnie and Willie, the dance team. A local team out of Boston. Terrific, terrific dance team. And thank goodness to Wendy. She took pity on the poor kid straight out of New York. Didn't even know how to dress for whatever.

And she took me down to her dressing room and put her makeup on me and sent me back up for the second show looking like a little China Doll. Oh, I was so pretty. I didn't know I could look that pretty. Yeah, that was one of my first experiences of actually dealing on my own without chaperone, and whatnot and starting to get the knots of what show business was all about.

**FRED** And there was plenty of show and show business back in those days.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Wardrobe, makeup, hair. It was beautiful.

**FRED** It wasn't just singing, but it was a little dancing.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** You had to do a little-- you had to almost be like an ingenue. Just fit in. That's what I started out as a tap dancer and I wound up singing by having to fill in a spot. And I've started singing ever since because, oh, you can sing. I didn't know that. I was more interested in my feet than my voice.

**FRED** Well, that comes from your being raised by your mother, a dancer.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah.

**FRED** And she got you tap shoes when you were a tiny tot.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah. Well, three years old, honey. I was just about three. She took me to Washington, D.C. To visit some relatives. And when we came out in Union Station, I had the little tap shoes on with the little grosgrain ribbon on them. And as I walked, I could just, clackity, clackity.

That sounded good to me. And I started tap dancing. The acoustics in Union Station was fantastic.

**FRED** Stone parquet floor.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I don't know what the hell they were. But they were great. You had acoustic sound all over the place. And when I looked around honey, the people had made a circle and was throwing money into the circle.

[LAUGHING]

I stopped to pick it up. My mom said, no, you go. Keep going. I'll talk it. Back then, boy, a quarter was a quarter. But that was my first remembrance of really enjoying the sound and vibration of tap dancing. That's why I guess I stayed into it ever since.

The singing came afterwards, mainly because I guess my stepdad-- he was a musician-- and my mother being a dancer, I went to a lot of the clubs. And I was around adults all my life. And dad would take me down to clubs on 52nd Street when he came downtown.

**FRED** What did he play?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** He drums. Yeah, he quit right after World War II. And when he came out of the service, he decided to give it up.

**FRED** Wow, were they dance gigs or swing band gigs or?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, he was working with trios and Buddy Walker. He'd hang out over at 132nd Street at the musician's club in the afternoon. And all the musicians would come and hang out there.

**FRED** What was his name?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Edgar McIlvain, but he called him-- they just called him "Little Jazz." Yeah, because back then when I turned about thirteen, fourteen years old, my mother would let me go over to the Savoy Ball. And they'd sneak me in.

**FRED** Fabulous.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Sneak me in. A friend of hers would sneak me in over there.

**FRED** I got to Roseland once or twice in the sixties and danced to some big band jazz. I thought I was on cloud nine.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Honey, you were. And I mean, I look at that Ken Burns thing. And that's just the way it was. In that Savoy Ballroom, boy, well, you dance-- I used to come out and my hair'd be standing out over my head from perspiration and swole up.

But honey, what a good time you had. And nothing but just dancing and challenging, dancing and challenging. Somebody would come up behind you. They'd know when they'd want your partner. They'd cut in and they'd take over for a while. You'd step back, let them have-- oh, it was something back then.

**FRED** It was a dancing jam session.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and then there was another club up the street from the Savoy Ballroom that became popular for a short while. And then they made it into a skating rink soon after. It lasted about a year or two. And then I guess after when they closed down the Savoy behind the prejudice and whatnot of coming in, whites were beginning to come uptown and hang out, dancing all night, and some were going home-- you know, that kind of thing, so they closed it down. And I almost thought of the name of the place. It was something of the gate, and it was a big huge ballroom.

**FRED** Palomar?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, no, no, it was something of the gate, I forgot-- something at the gate. But it was a nice, large, one story ballroom building, because for two years in a row they gave the ball there, the "gay ball." And they had a parade and everything. And God, I've never seen such gorgeous guys in all my life. And it was always on Labor Day and Labor Day night, a big, fabulous affair. Everybody would come out to see that and try to be there. And I've never seen such gorgeous guys in all my life. And the wardrobe and the hairstyle and the makeup-- they were fantastic.

**FRED** It's nice to see that that kind of-- the dance craze, for a big venue, is still happening in the Latino and Hispanic  
**BOUCHARD:** community. They still love to get out there and hoof it.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, well that's their nature. That's their thing. It always has been. But I noticed even here they've taken over Estelle's I understand.

**FRED** Is that right?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, but that's gone more or less Latino.

**FRED** That was one of the many rooms that you worked in--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, well that was one of Frank Williams' places, that and Slade's. So there's only two. And then you had Connolly's up the street a few blocks up Tremont Street. But like I said, they're all dwindling, the local areas and naturally Wally's. But that's basically mostly a younger crowd, you know.

**FRED** Right, so the Berklee kids flock over there and still have the jams.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** But that used to be like a neighborhood club, neighborhood bar, which was very nice at the time. But now all the locals have been-- basically they're too old for that, so they've moved on, those that are still around. [LAUGHS]

**FRED** You mentioned earlier talking about working the Business Men's Club with people like Alan Dawson and Billy  
**BOUCHARD:** Pierce.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, yeah, that was my uncle's place down here on Mass. Ave. That was quite a place. It was much more interesting after hours than during the regular hours, because a lot of the students would come down and try to get in. The college crowd would come afterwards. But a lot of the musicians came through there.

Billie Holiday, she came in one night. In fact, the night she was there, she was telling me that I should add some gospel to my repertoire after hearing me sing. You know, Mae, you need to throw a little gospel in. And after that, I did. In fact, one of the tunes that I started doing, Dick Creedon up on the North Shore, he was using it as his theme song and didn't know there was lyrics to it.

**FRED** Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, until one day I happened to go up to one of his sessions, Dick Creedon's sessions up on North Shore, and he was playing it and I was humming along. He says, oh, I love this song. I said, yes, it's a nice tune. He asked me where I got it. I said, this is-- well, it's a gospel tune. I grew up with it. He said, you know it? And I said, oh, sure. He said, there's words to it? I said, of course.

**FRED** What's the song?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** "Just a Closer Walk with Thee."

**FRED** Oh, sure, that's a sweet song.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and he played-- he used it as his theme song. And boy, after that he was in cloud 9 once he'd heard the lyrics to what he was already playing. It was nice, really nice.

Yeah, well, getting back to the Business Men's Club over here, oh, Sam Woodyard worked with me in there, Alan Vega, Alan Dawson, Floogie Williams. Floogie left and went I think to Illinois. He passed away since. But he played here and taught here for a while. And then he left and went out to Illinois. And he started teaching in Illinois and passed away, I guess about six years ago.

So that was an interesting incident with Floogie because he was working with me at the Business Men's Club at the time. And we had a lot of gangsters around here back then. It was just getting over the Brink's robbery and all of that crap was going on. And some of the gangsters was in the club at that particular night.

And they were talking loud while I was singing. [LAUGHS] Floogie asked them, you know, quiet, hush up. Don't you hear the girl sing? [LAUGHS] I was about to tell Floogie, you don't do that. [LAUGHS] You don't do that.

So when we came off, they asked us to have a seat at the table, because they're very polite and they sat down. So when they got to Floogie, the guy reached around and got him by the hips and sort of just pushed him around in the chair. So he's sitting there. He asked us if we want to drink. I said I refused, because I don't drink. And they offered Floogie one. In the meantime, they're sitting there with a gun on him under the table.

And when I noticed that I said, oh my goodness. I made some excuse and got Floogie up-- and lets go, we got to go speak to the owner. Like, we will be back-- and got him away from the table. I said, boy, that was-- Floogie, you don't mouth off at everybody. [LAUGHS] Please don't mouth off at everybody.

**FRED** Got to learn the etiquette. [LAUGHS]

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That's right. And we had a lot of folks come in. And Sam Woodyard, he worked with me in there for a little while when he was in town. Oh, so many have come through. Yeah, there was some nice ones round here. There, and when Freddie had the other place over on Boylston Street--

**FRED** The Jazz Workshop?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, the Jazz Workshop and one in the basement.

**FRED** Paul's Mall.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Paul's Mall.

**FRED** Yeah, Freddy Taylor.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, Marge-- in fact Marge, I was thinking about Paul's Mall, talking about Marge Dodson. I don't know if you remember her.

**FRED** I don't.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Singer. She was here for a while. She worked for him. In fact, I was the one that introduced her to Lennie's's. And Lennie had her up there for a couple of weeks. And I was talking to her the other day. And she was asking me about the different clubs that were still here. And I told her they no longer exist any longer. It's a whole new situation. It's a whole new situation.

**FRED** Shortly after you came to Boston, you said that you had teamed up for the first time with Sabby Lewis, the great  
**BOUCHARD:** pianist and composer and bandleader. He had a seven or eight piece band and sometimes expandable to larger groups.

**MAE ARNETTE:** He was house band though at the Celebrity Club when I came in. He was house band. But I'd worked with him over the years. I've done TV with him and in other gigs on-- you know, side gigs with Sabby. And I've had him at Steppin' Out when I was producing the shows for Steppin' Out.

**FRED** Sure, that was for the Dimock Hospital.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I did that for what, fourteen years. And I just got out of that two years ago.

**FRED** It's a lot of work.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, not really, not when you have professional folk. See, I just hey, here it is. You know what you do. And you know how to do it best. So just put them all together and let them do their thing. It's no-- so now the work comes in and letting people know about it and that kind of thing and making sure that the lights are right and that. But as far as the folks themselves, just hire the professionals and let them go for broke.

**FRED** What would a typical one of your Mae Arnette specials be like in terms of the way you'd set it up and organize  
**BOUCHARD:** everybody and have a tune, a set list and things like that?

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, no, honey. I do a lot of my work in bathtub. My thinking and whatnot comes to me when I'm in the bath, in a nice hot bath. I always carried my pad and pencil, my tape recorder with me, so as I get ideas, I'll jot them down and you know, I go from there.

But as far as putting a show together like when I was teaching over at the [New England] conservatory, I had months to do this, because I was working with students, like here, that had never done anything in show business. And that was the challenge, because they were all amateurs but go-getters. They were eager. They wanted to. They wanted to learn. They wanted to sing. They wanted to, but never had an opportunity to do these things.

So that was a job, because that way I had to actually teach them their parts, get them disciplined to remembering parts and knowing hey, you've only got x amount of time to come off the book, you know. And you're on your own. You're going to have to really do it by memory.

And in the meantime, I'm running around town trying to get stuff to make some kind of scenery-- you know, all down in Jordan Marsh, Filene's. I'm down there begging the different departments scraps and stuff. But it was fabulous when I finished. It was fabulous when I finished, because I got hold of Brother Blue.

**FRED** Oh, sure.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And we did "The Wiz," but my version of "The Wiz."

**FRED** At the [New England] conservatory?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah.

**FRED** Oh my, yeah.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And I used him as a narrator.

**FRED** Perfect.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Gave him a side spot all his own, backdrops, everything all his own. And he'd be bop, be bop, move that show all the way through to the end. And it was fabulous. And the kids was-- they were just ecstatic with themselves, because once we got into it as a class, the class became a diversified. So it was hard to put something to any one particular thing, because I had a couple of opera singers that came in. They were looking for one thing. I had another type of singer that came in. They were looking for something else.

And then I had some community people that I was dealing with. So naturally as soon as they found out what was going on, those that weren't interested in that, they went away. So what I had left was what I had left.

So I said, how am I going to do this? I can't give each one a song to sing all term, you know. So I had just gone-- I had just seen "The Wiz" like a month earlier. And I was very impressed with it.

**FRED** Was the Broadway production here?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** The Broadway production.

**FRED** Or you went to Broadway?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I went to Broadway to see the production and that type of thing. And I was very impressed with what I'd seen. So I bought the album. So this particular night, I brought the album to school. And I was trying to figure well, maybe I can give them a tune out of each one, tune off the album to sing as a lesson.

When I put the dag-gone thing on the album and turned it on, the reaction I got was immediate. Whoa! Because before they were like, oh, you know, I don't know if I will like this. But when I put that thing on, it struck a note. In other words, oh, this is going to be hip. It's not going to be staid and you know.

And then I just started coming in. They wanted to do it-- well, can we do it? Are we going to do this in costume? I hadn't thought about doing that. Well, are you willing to work and put it in the costume? Yeah. OK, well all right, you're willing to do it, fine. I'll go along with that.

That's how my "Wiz" came off. And when it went down after the-- the custodian over at the school, he was very-- a man, very standoffish and stern and whatnot. You were almost scared to speak to him about anything. And one particular day-- I shouldn't tell this, but I brought him a bottle. I realized that he drank. [LAUGHS]

So I came in to school and I gave him a bottle. I had carte blanche from there on, carte blanche. He took me all down under the stage and Jordan Hall, showed me where they put all the extra props and stuff from the different operas and things they had. He told me I could use what I needed.

And I didn't know in Brown Hall that that's a beautiful backstage back there. It's like Broadway. It's got a spiral staircase going up to an extra level up there with a dressing room, big dressing room in there. And that hall, beautiful. Over each doorway in the auditorium, that's the um-- that's my maestro's room.

**FRED** Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I said, whoa. I put my choir up in there. The music was coming out of the walls.

**FRED** [LAUGHS] Beautiful.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** It was fabulous. He gave me everything I needed that I didn't already have, because Norman, the same gentleman-- you were asking about the tap dancer-- he was my right arm. And in fact, Norman's in a nursing home right here.

**FRED** Norman Wallace?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Norman Wallace, the Wallace brothers. He was my right arm. And he made a couple of the sceneries for me. Somebody had thrown out a great big window shade in the hall. And he took that. He made me a frame and made me a big rainbow on one side and put it on wheels.

We used to take the wagons from the supermarkets, take two of them. And we put it on. And so we could spin it. And on the other side, he made a different type of scene on the other side.



And one of my students was blind, beautiful little girl. And I used her to open the show in front of this big rainbow setting. And she sang the original "Over the Rainbow."

**FRED** Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** But after that, it was no more of that. It was get on down, get on down the road from there on.

**FRED** Yeah, nice contrast.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and she was thrilled, thrilled to be in a production or whatnot. She got her bows at the end and it was great. It was really great. And like I said, a couple of my friends had dresses and whatnot. So they donated their time with the makeup for me and stuff.

My oldest son, he was my wizard, because my original wizard got killed just before we got into rehearsal good. He was killed on a highway. His car stalled or something in the middle of the highway or something. And he gets out of the car and gets hit.

So I had to scuffle around and get another wizard. And so I said, my son sings. And I'll ask him. And we did. We put him together. And he was gorgeous.

**FRED** There's a lot of synergy and resourcefulness it takes to-- so many different elements you've got to pull together  
**BOUCHARD:** for a show like that.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and Webster Lewis was my boss at the time. And he left me hanging high and dry, because he left and went to New York to deal with some of his own stuff. And I had no help that whole year with my production. So I had to do whatever I could to make sure it came out right, because I had no funds or anything, you know.

So but it came out. And then after we did it, they told, oh, you should have done it for a whole week. I said, you don't know what a hard time it was for us to get it for one night, because the opera was coming in that week. And so they like squeezed us in in April, you know.

Then after we did it, then the opera canceled anyway. I said, see, we could have had two or three nights. But they made-- they made beautiful money for what they thought they didn't have. People came out in droves. We had a packed house, packed house.

**FRED** Beautiful.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Packed house. Because I used John Ross. He conducted a choir for me. I brought them down from Elmer Lewis's.

**FRED** Yeah, he's quite a guy.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** We just lost him recently. It's a shame. We just lost John. And I did a lot of work with John, too. There's so many of them when I stop and think back. They're all gone. Mabel Robinson-- there were so many, the ones that kept the core of Boston together here and not just here at Berklee, but I mean the overall city. The musicians that worked around here, so many of them are gone.

I feel a little lonely when I go out now. I don't know a lot of these youngsters, you know. I just don't even go out to even know who they are anyway, so I can't blame them. It's just that I don't go out. It's like I used to, because you have to travel distances to get to any decent venues anyway now.

**FRED** Well, yeah, some people are still hanging in and doing their thing. Phil Wilson played a little concert with just a  
**BOUCHARD:** piano player last night at one of the rooms over here at Berklee.

**MAE ARNETTE:** And you see, I didn't know about that.

**FRED** You have a long track record with Phil.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** But yeah like I said, I don't hear about those things. So like I said, a lot of things going down, and I don't-- before I used to get invitations and updates and stuff like that. I don't get any of that anymore. So I don't know what's going on. And even within the organization I belong to, [inaudible], you know, I sort of drifted away from that as well. So I don't get the information I used to get.

**FRED** Well, there were plenty of good gigs and scenes when we were younger.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh yeah, well, you wrote about a lot of them, you know.

**FRED** Yeah, I wrote for *The Herald* from '78 to about '90. And I was often over at Lulu White's, caught a couple of your  
**BOUCHARD:** shows there.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Was that when Tony Cennamo was coming over there taping stuff?

**FRED** Yeah, he would do it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh no, Lulu White's. Now I'm thinking of the wrong place. I'm thinking of the girl that had the-- what's that big car sitting in front of--

**FRED** Oh, Bette's Rolls Royce.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Bette's Rolls Royce. That's where Tony used to come.

**FRED** Oh, yeah.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, down at Betty's.

**FRED** Yeah, that was down on the market. Lulu White's was--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I think I was down there with-- I think I was down there with Al.

**FRED** With Al Vega?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I think Al was-- we was on-- I'm saying, we were on that gig together.

**FRED** I remember some of the scenes there. Chef Willard Chandler in the back room with [big hat]--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, yeah.

**FRED** --feeding everybody his red beans and rice.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh yeah, Lulu's-- when I gave that after blizzard show--

**FRED** Oh yeah, tell us about that one.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, that was right after the blizzard of '78, boy, and everybody was housebound. And I was getting ready to do the show down there. And the guy tried to go flaky on me.

**FRED** Chester English, the manager?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, good, I'm glad you remembered his name, because I didn't. Yeah, Chester, yeah, at the last minute, there one of my dancers got a little close up in there and trying to control things and he almost lost his whole show that weekend, because I didn't know he had advertised to the point where he was getting reservations of nine, twelve people at a time-- reservations, now that's how desperate people were to get out to see something-- to the point where he had to rent chairs to put up in there extra.

And your boy that you were talking about, the cook, he was cooking there at the time.

**FRED** Willy Chandler.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, Mr. Chandler. And he had to know how to make up the difference in what we were paying me and what he wound up getting as far as an overflow that he did not anticipate. People were all around the corner. Colombo was even there, the fellow that played Colombo? He was even in the crowd. I got him in. [LAUGHS]

He was standing nicely, waiting to pay his way to come in. And I recognized him. I said, come on with me. That's the "celebrity" thing. What can I tell you? [LAUGHS]

**FRED** Peter Falk.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, Peter Falk Yeah, well he came and saw the show. And Chandler, in order to sort of take the hurt out of the big gap in finance, you know, Sally gave-- I had invited all the nuns from my kid's school to come. And they were there. So we fed them, you know. They thought that was a big thing.

**FRED** Nice.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** You know, and that food he had given out was delicious.

**FRED** Fabulous.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, so it was about fifteen or twenty of them. So I told him, you feed them. That'll deduct from what you should be giving me for pay. You got the show pretty reasonable.

**FRED** Tell us about the show itself, I mean, who was involved.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, I had Phil Wilson. He was on-- Alan Dawson was on drums, myself, Wallace brothers. I had Willie Spencer, Tina Pratt. They were--

**FRED** Yeah, I remember her.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Tina Pratt, and Willie Spencer, Buddy-- there was four dancers. And then I had this kid that played guitar, played here. And he worked with me for awhile in my trio. He lives here in the piano building, too. Oh God, what was that kid's name? He's out of Louisiana. But anyway--

**FRED** It's OK.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, the names-- I'm getting at that age now, where--

**FRED** Believe me--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** If I don't write them down--

**FRED** I know what you're talking about. That happens to me.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** If I don't write them down, I can forget them. I mean, I can see them in my eyes, which reminds me, I got to go and put names on a lot of those photos, so I'll start remembering them. [LAUGHS] Yeah, that was a hell of a show.

**FRED** What were some of the tunes that you like to work with? What are some of your go-to tunes that were always on

**BOUCHARD:** your set-list, your favorites?

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, "Bye, Bye Blackbird" was one, "Masquerade is Over" was one, and Duke Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" is one of my staples. And then after that I like obscure tunes, tunes that everybody's not doing, like "The Wee Small Hours of the Morning."

**FRED** Good one.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Things like that, "Sophisticated Lady," tunes that everybody can't do well.

**FRED** You definitely have a way with a ballad.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, that's my thing. I guess I've always--

**FRED** Real silky.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I've always been in love. [LAUGHS] What can I tell you? I'm in love with love. [LAUGHS] And then too, a lot of it was interpretation, because I used to love to watch opera singers, especially Lawrence Melchior.

**FRED** Lawrence Melchior? Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah. I used to love to watch him, how he used to phrase and enunciate his words, till I started practicing that. And it made me aware of enunciation, because nothing bugs me more than saying I don't know what you're saying. I'm sitting there-- because there's a story to be told. And if you can't understand the story, how can you enjoy it? And the simpler the story, the deeper it hits you.

And that's what I used to work on was elocution and meaning. What am I trying to say? What would I feel in this phrase or what is this phrase saying to me? What is it asking me to feel? And then if it can come out like that-- it's being sincere, for another thing. And I understand that they're so busy into their thing and you know, I'm beautiful, or I'm so hip or whatever, that they lose what's really up under there.

**FRED** Yep. We don't need the image. We need the message.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, exactly, because people are going to build their own images.

**FRED** That's right.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Believe me when I tell you, because I know I do.

**FRED** Did you do vocal coaching and teaching through the years?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yes.

**FRED** You did it at the [New England] Conservatory. One-on-one lessons also?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I did privately. Yeah, Karen Parker was one of mine. And who else? Kid-- Herbie's wife. She left him and went--

**FRED** Semanya McCord.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Semanya was one of mine. I've had several floating around out there, several young ladies that came to me for help.

**FRED** Great, great.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And I'm glad to say that a lot of them listened. And some have their own thing. And you know, no matter what you tell them, they hear something else. So what can you do?

But I don't really enjoy teaching per se. I rather just sit and communicate. And I think I get more across by just communicating with them than saying, oh, you should do this or breathe like this, because everybody's going to be different. I don't how they claim that you got a method and all this foolishness. Everybody's going to breathe different.

**FRED** Yeah, you'd prefer to let them observe the finished product and then try to figure it out.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Than break it down. Yeah, because like I taught, when I do teach, they come to me and want to learn tunes and stuff like that. First thing I tell them, where did you learn it? Oh, I learned it off the record. I said, put that record away and don't listen to it no more. Get to that piano and learn it as it is written. Get that piano sheet. See how it was written.

**FRED** That's right.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Learn it from the ground. And then you can go anywhere with it you want after that. But get that basic, what that man wrote or what that woman wrote, what they were interpreting when they wrote it. When you get that, then you can add your own flares and whatever you want to it then. But without the bass, you can't keep nothing together.

**FRED** Some of the best singers were the ones who could accompany themselves a little bit. Sarah Vaughan.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Sarah.

**FRED** Carmen McRae.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Carmen. All of them, because they had had it here. They had it here. Yep. Yep. And poor Billie, I was after her "Strange Fruit" arrangement. And she was going to give it to me, but she passed that Friday that I was supposed to go down to New York. And she passed away that day.

So I never went, because when she was here I was telling her how much I enjoyed that song. She said, oh, I'm really glad. And I'd love to have it. Oh, she said, you can have mine. You can it have it. I got some copies there.

So when I called that day, I'm sorry, I couldn't get through. And you know, had one speak to this one. And then that's when the news came out. I said, no wonder I can't get through to nobody. Lady's already gone. I said, well, that was one missed opportunity, which I've had quite a few. [LAUGHS]

Like when Khrushchev came to town, I was all set, honey, to go to Russia.

**FRED** You made some records with Russian record labels?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah. And shoot, they had me all geared to go to Russia. Khrushchev came here, and nyet, nyet, nyet, started banging on the table with the damn show. That killed everything.

**FRED** That iced the Cold War.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That did everything. Victor had an album out. They put out an album called "On Common Ground." It had a picture of Eisenhower on one side and Khrushchev on the other, split picture, "On Common Ground." They pulled that back, I tell you, just snatched that one back. All my stuff, that went by the wayside. Interviews went by the wayside. And I said boy, oh, boy, wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have done it.

**FRED** It's a shame the way politics gets in the way of good music.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** It's not only politics. It's the business in itself. It was just like when I first got started with Bigtop Label. They-- I was working at the Apollo bar at the time when this gentleman heard me, this preacher from Chicago. He was in the music thing out there. And he got me an appointment with this record label downtown.

And sure enough, oh man, I went in and red carpet, opening the door, you know. So I'm going up Broadway one night and one of the gentlemen that was involved in the situation asked me what my plans were and did I mind leaving my family and to go on the road and all of this kind of stuff. So I told him, no, I don't think I'm ready for all of that now. When I went back to the office the next day, I couldn't get past the receptionist.

**FRED** Oh, really? Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I wasn't eager enough. I wasn't ready to give up my life and all of this. And so I wasn't-- I was a bad choice. I had the chops, but I didn't have the kind of go get it that I guess they wanted. But I said, no, I can't see myself giving my family and going on the road and do all of this, for what? You know? I didn't have that kind of ambition. But it just goes to show you how quickly the door could close. I said, isn't that something? I couldn't get past the receptionist after that!

**FRED** That's a decision that people make. Berklee was founded on the breakup of the big bands and guys who either  
**BOUCHARD:** couldn't get any more road gigs or didn't want to go on the road. And people that we've known throughout the music industry, who decided they wanted-- they opt for family over travel.

Alan Dawson is a prime example. He could have gone be-bopping around the country with everybody. But he wanted to stay with Flossy and Winchester. What can you say? That's a decision to make.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Same with me. That's why I haven't done a lot of things which was expected of me. But I had a family. I couldn't just jump up and go and all the time, because as far as I was, basically I always felt that I was sort of pushed into show business anyway.

**FRED** Well, that's from your upbringing and being raised over at Luckey Roberts's studio or apartment.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, that was expected of me. Or you been doing that-- I don't want to do it. I want to-- I enjoy working in an office. Do you mind, you know? I like paperwork. I like that kind of thing.

That's why in my business I was able to keep up, because my mother started me young with that type of thinking. She taught me how to type very young. I was-- like any kid get onto a piano, she put me to a typewriter. So by the time I was ten, eleven years old, honey, I was just as good as any typist. And naturally when I got out of school, I could walk in on a job and hold that down.

But like I say, the job started coming easy. I said, well, hell, if I can make more money doing this, I might as well. Like I said, I already went-- just in one amateur hour. I was getting ready to do that and what else, something else call me. I'd pack up and come up here. And it's been that way.

Once I got here, work started coming from everywhere. And then my name started getting around. I wasn't here looking for that. But it started happening. And so I said, well, I might as well make the most of it, you know what I mean, since I'm here. I don't want to go to work per se if I don't have to. And it's something that's easy to do. I'm enjoying it. While I'm doing it, I'm enjoying it.

But when it gets to the point where I don't enjoy it anymore, I don't, because I stopped for about ten years to raise my kid. You know? Just didn't do that, just going to take them to doing the mother thing and the PTA and all that stuff. I did that for ten years. Because I didn't-- wasn't interested.

And in the meantime, the music started changing. The rhythm and blues started coming in and the Beatles started coming in. And the Sinatras and the Tony Bennetts and all of them, they had to find somewhere else to be for a while.

**FRED** That's right.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And that made me lose out too, because I wasn't changing over. I had to make my own thing. So I just went into producing. That kept my fingers in stuff. Like now, I have a jazz studio, a gallery, photo gallery, and bread [bed] and breakfast. That way it keeps me in tune to the musicians and whatnot, at least a little abreast of what's going on without being completely in the dark.

**FRED** Yeah, that's good. It's just a matter of getting the word out and keeping the thing going.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah. We had the opening in October. But I want to do some things first before I really open it up. It's like you say, it's getting the word out, which I haven't done yet, because I want to make sure everything is in its place when I do.

**FRED** Let's back up a little bit and tell our listeners about some of your memories of Berklee before it was Berklee. I

**BOUCHARD:** mean, you shocked me when you told me that you remembered the old Schillinger House that Larry Berk started over on--

**MAE ARNETTE:** On Shawmut Ave, yeah.



**FRED** --Shawmut Avenue. Roughly where is that at?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** It's-- well, around Sterling Street. Well, Sterling's not there any longer. It's just past Hammond Street--

**FRED** Where you lived.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Before you get-- where I used to live. Before you get-- there's somewhere where they built the highway coming through and this. It's either just before where the Mandela House-- not the Mandela. Is that the Mandela House there? Well, anyway, right there in that-- was in that vicinity. And they tore it down.

And that was new to me, because I was new to Boston then. I didn't know the importance of the Schillinger House and whatnot at that time. But I know a lot of the guys who came out the service went there, started working that started there.

**FRED** You mentioned a couple of guys--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Eddy [inaudible]. I keep almost calling--

**FRED** Eddy the bass player and Malcolm Jarvis.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And Malcolm Jarvis, yeah. In fact, Malcolm wrote a book on Malcolm X.

**FRED** He did?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, you should be able to find that in the library somewhere. And who else? As far as the Schillinger House, after that I started on the road myself and was out-- in and out of town a lot. So as the music scene grew here, I was coming in and going in and out like that, because--

**FRED** You would travel to New York and back and--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And all over. I was going all over the map back then.

**FRED** Who were you-- who were you on the road with during those years?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, at the time I was with Red Garland. And he was a traveler with Miles Davis at the time. So I'd go along with them and hang out with them.

**FRED** And Red Garland, did you spend some time in Boston?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, he spent a little time here, not too long. But only a few months.

**FRED** Great player.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** He came here with Coleman Hawkins at the Hi-Hat and stayed.

**FRED** I saw Coleman Hawkins at Connolly's in the sixties a couple of times with Ray Santisi and Jaki Byard and a few  
**BOUCHARD:** other pianists there. Oof--

**MAE ARNETTE:** No kidding.

**FRED** He was wonderful.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And so and then after that, I didn't-- I got into the-- that was later when I got into the cruise situation for about ten years. I went and did that. But in the fifties, it was basically in Boston working around and you know--

**FRED** So let's talk about some of the places that you worked. You said you-- Eddie Levine's used to be next door to  
**BOUCHARD:** Wally's. And Dean Earl and his trio, you worked with them there.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Dean Earl, Walter Radcliffe-- not Walter Radcliffe, Walter Cisco[?] on bass. Peanuts-- I almost said-- not Peanuts Hucko. Oh, God. But anyway, a little fellow named Peanuts. I can't think of his last name now on drums. Cute little fella. He had the nicest little personality. And in fact, I think that Peanuts is connected to the museum. Was that the--

**FRED** African Heritage Museum?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** African Heritage Museum up on Walnut Ave.

**FRED** On Walnut, OK.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I think he's connected with that now. He does something for them, at least he did a few years back. I hope he's still alive, because like I said, a lot of these people I'm talking about, I'm sure-- I wonder if they are still with us. I haven't seen them. I don't go out.

And I doubt if they go out like they used to. So a lot of people stay home now with all their creature comforts. We've got TV and iPods and everything else going, so it isn't-- really, you don't go out to do anything. If they are still around, historically there's a lot of interest in there-- mental interest about this city, those few that are still hanging in there.

Yeah, because like Mr. Kirk-- what was it, Creighton, the artist? He's very elderly, last I heard. And I wonder if he's still even around. He's in the history of Boston, too.

**FRED** I don't know the guy.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, he's an artist. Yeah, it is-- this place is to me is just-- it's almost new, it's different. The atmosphere is not like I used to know it. It's a whole new generation of things now.

**FRED** Yeah, people have different interests.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, very much. And I look at the young people are coming out of Berklee now, I said before, twenty years ago, they were older guys going to the Berklee. Now they're teenagers.

**FRED** That's true.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** When you stop and think back, the guys were twenty, their thirties, you know what I mean. Well, that was soon after the war, too. And they were trying to get themselves back into living again I guess and getting back into the swing of things. And music was one good way of doing it.

But it's unusual. It's funny though, because my dad, he stopped playing right after the war.

**FRED** Who's that?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** My stepfather. He stopped playing right after the war. He's a drummer. Yeah, for some reason he just stopped. It's nice, it's unusual, you know. And he was good at what he did. He'd jam with Fletcher Henderson and people like that.

He was working. Used to work with Fletcher Henderson up at the-- up at the-- what was that, the Renaissance ball. He used to do a lot of dances up there and use a lot of the musicians for those. Those are some of the places I cut my teeth on, [LAUGHS] Cut my teeth on.

**FRED** Some great arrangers.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, like the World's Fair in 1939. He did a show for that. Yeah, I was about eight years old, I guess.

**FRED** You with your folks?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, my mother and two of my aunts were in the show. They were dancers in the show. And they made a spot for me, because in rehearsal they found out I knew all the routines. I stood off on the side and learned everything. [LAUGHS] And they thought it was cute. So they went and got me a police permit and put me in the show. Back then a kid had to have a permit, couldn't just get on a show like they do now. You had to have very much a permit for everything in New York.

**FRED** Let's talk about some of the other places that you worked in Boston. I mean, I just made a short list. I got

**BOUCHARD:** Estelle's, Merry-Go-Round room, Lennie's.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Lennie's on the Turnpike, Connolly's, oh, Lord.

**FRED** Let's just pick one of those places, I mean.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Hi-Hat.

**FRED** Hi-Hat, yeah. Do you remember any particular formats or the band lineup or what the scene was like at--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, now in the Business Men's Club, I had Al Vega. I had Sam Woodyard on drums. I had a-- I don't remember the bass player's name. Oh yeah, what was that boy's name? He went and-- o God, Bill-- last I heard-- I can't think of his name now. But the last I heard, he had sort of gone mental or something. And he was in a mental institution.

**FRED** Were you-- was it a late night scene? Would you go to 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning there or?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** What? In Boston?

**FRED** At the Business Men's Club.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, no. No, no, no, no. No, the after hours was just after hours. But I worked regular hours, 7:00 to midnight or 7:00 to 1:00. I could hang if I wanted to after that, but I-- that's what kept me in Boston, the fact that I could get home at midnight. I don't believe it. When in New York, I was leaving my house to go to work at midnight and getting back home at 5:00, 6:00 in the morning. This was ideal for me. When I came here, that's what made me fall in love with this town.

**FRED** Yeah, it's a little more normal hours.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I said, "My Lord, you go to work at 7:00 and you're home at 12:00?" Oh, that-- I couldn't get here fast enough.

**FRED** Yeah.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, boy, because New York was a late night town. Like I say, you sleep all till 11:00 and then you get up and go to work at night. Here I was in my bed by twelve-thirty, quarter to one. I said, "Oh, I like this."

**FRED** What was the scene like at that club?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Busy. What, at that--

**FRED** At that place. At the Business Men's Club.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Busy. Busy. You might see anybody in there. The sporting life people would come up from New York and party here and leave and get back to New York in time for their after hours in New York.

**FRED** Is that a fact?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That's right.

**FRED** A four hour drive, five hour drive.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** At night, honey, believe me, it wasn't-- it was about four hours, well, three hours and thirty-five, forty minutes [laughs], because I used to leave here at midnight and go down to New York.

**FRED** So it was a mix of locals and--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, they'd come up on weekends. And see, and that was before Driscoll put a stop to the sporting life coming in and out. They put a blackout on everything in the clubs then.

**FRED** Mayor Driscoll?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, she was head of the liquor board there, this woman, Driscoll.

**FRED** You mean they'd turn off the sauce at midnight or something?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, they started cracking down the sporting life--- prostitutes, stuff like that. So they were running them out here on the rail.

**FRED** Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Because it was quick when we run up here and enjoy themselves and then go right back and still have some nightlife going back in New York when you got back, because I used to leave here at midnight. I'd get there by 4:30, a quarter til five, and had another hour or two to listen to good music in one of the after hour places or something, because everybody'd get off work. That's where they would go to jam. That was their relaxation, the musicians.

**FRED** Yeah, I remember you said that you kept two apartments for--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, for a long time.

**FRED** A long-- down through the fifties.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, because like I'd go down there and I'd-- Red and I, we would go down to one of the after hour clubs and hook up with Charlie Parker, come out in the sunshine, bright sunshine. You just can hardly see, because you've been down in the dark in some dingy places so long. You know, you were blinded.

Same here when the Pioneer Club was the same thing. Yeah, it was fabulous. Everybody got off work, went to the Pioneer. After you go and eat at Christmas's on Tremont Street or you went to Slade's to eat or Estelle's to eat. And then you'd go to the Pioneer Club. And you'd see anybody. Hell, I hung out with Sarah in there. I hung out with Carmen McRae in there. Erroll Garner, he'd come and we'd jam.

And Mabel, she was the house pianist. She just passed away a year and a half ago.

**FRED** Mabel? What was her last name?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Robinson.

**FRED** Oh yes, yes, I remember seeing her at Steppin' Out.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, Mabel, she was the house accompanist there. And everybody came in, jam with her, because they kept like brushes, drummers' brushes. And you'd take a tin tray, one of the Budweiser trays. I'm turning them upside down and--

**FRED** You play after hours without disturbing the neighbors.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** They'd be brushing away and usually be in there cooking. Sometime one of the horn players would pull out his horn. It was nice. And you'd see anybody in there. You never know who-- I ran into-- what was the hillbilly fella with Opie?

**FRED** Opie?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, little boy Opie. Ron Howard, the show he was on-- Sheriff Mayberry.

**FRED** Oh, whew.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, you know what I'm talking about. Don Knotts and the other one.

**FRED** The one who's got the bacon, the sausage company named after him.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, no, that's a-- no, I'm talking about--

**FRED** The hayseed guy.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and then he played a detective for a while, too. What's his name? You know the program I'm talking about. Yeah, well the sheriff. I saw him in there one day. He was a very nice man. Yeah, he was in the Pioneer Club one morning. And we danced and whatnot, had a good time. He was in town for some show.

**FRED** Eddie? No

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, you talking about Eddie-- Eddie Albert. No. No

**FRED** No, no.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Not Eddie Albert. That's the one the-- the farm. He bought the farm.

**FRED** We're losing it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** [LAUGHS] Yeah, we're getting on TV shows now.

[LAUGHING]

**FRED** Anyway, there was a good, lively scene. And it went on--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, heck yeah.

**FRED** Especially on the weekends.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, it was nice. It was real nice.

**FRED** Talk about Lennie's a little bit.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, Lennie's. Oh, that was-- now that was a club. That was a club. When I first went up to Lennie's back in the early sixties-- in fact, Freddie Taylor introduced me to that place. He was my little booking agent at the time. He was trying to break in back then. And he had me and Joe Bucci.

**FRED** Yeah, B3, Hammond B3.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and Joe Riddick. We were his three acts. And he took me up to Lennie's at that time. And Lennie was selling these beautiful sandwiches, boy, I mean, thick roast beef. You can make a dinner. Eat what you want and take the rest home.

**FRED** I do remember.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, he was making delicious sandwiches. And he hired me up there for one night or something like that. And like we heard what-- so one day, I was on-- I had my book on the piano. And Lennie was up on the piano going through my book. You know this person, you know this song, you know them-- Yeah. I said, well, oh, you know how to get in touch with him? I said, yeah. So I gave him a list of all the musicians and were all down in New York and--

**FRED** Which friends of yours did he hire to come up from--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** God only knows how many of them he had. I can't even think now. But it started him out.

**FRED** Is that a fact?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I started him off. And he'll tell you that today, you know. Yeah, and you know all of these songs? I had about four pages of tunes, you know. Oh, yes, of course I know them all. Wouldn't have them in there if I didn't.

He was good to me, because even when I was in the hospital he would bring whoever the act was that week. He would bring them up to the hospital to perform.

**FRED** Oh, there was--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Once a week.

**FRED** This is where?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That's up in the Boston sanitarium. Yeah, up in--

**FRED** You had a long recuperation.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and so he started bringing the musicians over there, oh. They were calling it "Jazz at the Sand" after a while, because I had everybody up there. [LAUGHS] Oh, it beat going to the OT shop all the time or going to the movies. And to have a good jam session there, man, and them patients came out, drug out in their beds and wheelchairs, everything. They enjoyed it. But most of them was ambulatory, anyway. But it was really nice that Lennie did that.

**FRED** Of course. Who was some of the people that you worked Lucky's with?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Milt Buckner.

**FRED** Milt Buckner, yeah. With or without-- when he was with Illinois Jacquet or by himself?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, but with the two of them. I worked with John Hendricks.

**FRED** John Hendricks, what a blast.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, in fact, I think I got one of Lennie's throwaways--

**FRED** The playlist--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** The playlist, the--

**FRED** The show card there.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, that he mails out, mailing.



**FRED** Now, if you worked with John Hendricks, did he get you into scat singing? He's-- I saw him last year at Harvard  
**BOUCHARD:** with his daughter.

**MAE ARNETTE:** He wrote something, one of those articles about how much he enjoyed our impromptu session. We worked impromptu for two weeks.

**FRED** I can believe it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** We just pull a tune. And you take a piece, I'll take a piece. And we go for it. And it was fun. And it was fun. I enjoyed working with John.

**FRED** What an amazing performer.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I enjoyed working with him. In fact, somebody told me recently that my name came up and he asked about me. I said, that's nice of him to even remember me, you know.

**FRED** He's a great guy.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And John Hendricks and then Houston Person. God, I worked with so many of them up there. Oh, I've worked with so many of them up there.

And then even after he left there, I sat in with a lot of them, because I knew them. And they would always invite me up to sing for Father Himes[?] or... Buddy Hackett. I worked with him.

**FRED** Bobby Hackett.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Bobby Hackett, yeah, Bobby Hackett.

**FRED** Great sound.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I'd work with him. We used to hang out. I used to go over to his house all the time.

**FRED** I saw Bobby Hackett a couple of times up at that Scotch and Sirloin. He used to play that room with the Drootin

**BOUCHARD:** Brothers.

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I got pictures of that in there. Yeah, you know, I worked with him and Vic Dickenson.

**FRED** Oh, yeah, what a great front line.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I've had some great musicians to work with. I really must say, when I think about my own history, I'm very proud of what I did. I worked with Dizzy, worked with Dizzy. Duke-- I had a chance to swing with him, too.

**FRED** Who?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Duke Ellington.

**FRED** Oh, Duke.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I worked with him in the park when Elma Lewis was had to had the jazz in the park.

**FRED** Oh my.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I met him. I didn't work with him, but I did meet-- what's the kid, the reggae boy? The kid that play reggae?

**FRED** Bob Marley?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Bob Marley, yeah. We had him here. In fact, they had him here in that park right here on West Newton street. Yeah, they had a big jam. See, I was with the city at the time. I was the mayor's jazz liaison. And--

**FRED** Okay, Kevin White?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and then when he was doing the summer thing, so I was doing a lot of his booking for that. So I met Bob Marley down there, nice guy, quiet, you know, gentlemen of course. There's so many of them have come through.

**FRED** Yeah, we talked about a handful of the pianists that you worked with fairly regularly. And Sammy Price came up.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Sammy Price, yeah.

**FRED** Sir Charles Thompson.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Sir Charles, Red Garland

**FRED** Dean Earl, of course. Teddy Wilson?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Teddy Wilson. Junior Mance.

**FRED** Oh, that's right. You were on a play bill with Junior's trio up at Lenox.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Lulu's.

**FRED** Lulu, that's right.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Lulu White's, I work with him. Man, I've been to a lot of them.

**FRED** And there was one picture in here of you with a the Berklee Bandstand. You were on stage at Berklee.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That was with Phil Wilson, Phil Wilson's big band.

**FRED** And you recorded with Phil? You made a record with Phil.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, we made a record, yeah, on Outrageous label.

**FRED** Outrageous.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** [LAUGHS] On Outrageous label, honey. And it sounds good. It was-- not only did we have-- it was me. We had Ray Santisi, Alan Dawson.

**FRED** Andy McGee?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Andy McGee, Brother Blue--

**FRED** Oh, yeah, nice.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and myself. Yeah, and it was a nice album, nice album.

**FRED** Well Mae, this has been a blast. I think we're probably coming into the homestretch here. Aren't we, fellows?

**BOUCHARD:** They usually--

**MAE ARNETTE:** I hope then I didn't get too bored.

**FRED** Oh, I don't think so. I think we hit a lot of high notes.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** There's so many other clubs, too. Like the Vendome had jazz going at one time before it burned. And the Mechanics Hall here on Huntington Avenue-- and over to-- the Raymore Playmore--

**FRED** Oh, sure.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** --was over-- the drum shop there on Huntington Avenue.

**FRED** Right.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And right across the street here they had the theater, state theater. That's first place I ever saw-- what's that girl that sang, "Guess who I saw today, my dear? I went to town [VOCALIZING]. Who sang that? [SINGING MELODY]

**FRED** I remember seeing Carmen sing it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, not Carmen. Oh, she was here-- she was here at Scholars about a couple of years ago.

**FRED** Scholars?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, she was at Scholars.

**FRED** Dakota State?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No. That was another thing, Dakota-- Alan and them turned on the board Dakota State for insulting me. [LAUGHS]  
Down at Lulu's-- yeah, she came and--

**FRED** Gloria Lynne?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, not my girl Gloria. She's-- she had her own show, too, for a while.

**FRED** On TV?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah.

**FRED** I can't-- oh, Nancy Wilson?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Nancy, thank you.

**FRED** Oh my.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Thank you.

**FRED** Oh yeah.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Nancy.

**FRED** Oh yeah, she's still hitting it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I don't blame her.

**FRED** She's something else.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I don't blame her.

**FRED** She just come out with a jazz album that was fabulous.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** The first time I ever saw Nancy was right here at the state across the street where they went in and build all that new housing over there. And she came out and she did this, "Guess who I saw today?" Well, I said, oh, you go girl.

[LAUGHING]

You go, girl. Yeah, baby, there was a lot of happenings around here. And too, this was a sailor's town when I first came here. Yes ma'am, because the Baltimore was docked here for a couple of years.

**FRED** You see them little spiffy navy and white outfits with their bell bottoms and their little white hats.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That's right, honey.

**FRED** My daddy was one of those guys.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** He was?

**FRED** [LAUGHS]

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Shoot, boy, those-- the sailors were something else.

**FRED** My mother said I'd get on the bus and see a sailor and I'd go up and say, "Are you my daddy?"

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** You're kidding.

**FRED** Talk about embarrassing.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, you're kidding. Shoot, yeah, honey, the boys would come and get me. I had about six or seven sailors would come up to the club at night on the first and 15th and give me their money. They'd take so much, go out and party with, and leave the rest with me. I was keeping books. That's how bad it got, because when they'd go out, the girls would roll them and things like that. So they would leave me. And they gave me a percentage. So I was doing quite well. [LAUGHS]

**FRED** Wow, imagine that, just being a banker.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, and it'd save them from getting all their money took, see. So they'd take x amount out with them. And then if they ran out, they'd come back and get some more.

**FRED** Wow.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, they'd go over to Roll Away. You remember the Roll Away ballroom over in Revere?

**FRED** Not me, before my time.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh, I'm really dating myself.

**FRED** I remember Wonderland.

**BOUCHARD:**

[LAUGHING]

**MAE ARNETTE:** I'm really dating myself.

**FRED** What's the one at the-- what's the one at Revere now that Latinos still dance there?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** God only-- oh, I don't know.

**FRED** The Wonderland ballroom at Revere.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, well that-- yeah, but then they had Roll Away out there years ago. It was a big old ballroom. That's where a lot of the big bands came in. James Brown and whatnot, they'd come to the Roll Away.

**FRED** And then the Surf at Nantasket and then the one out there in Newton next to the turnpike-- what was that, the

**BOUCHARD:** one that burned?

**MAE ARNETTE:** Oh yeah, oh, that's-- oh God, that was a long time ago. Yeah, that one.

**FRED** I was in college then.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, they'd take the streetcar to go out for that one. And we didn't go out there too much. We didn't go out there.

**FRED** Yeah, well that's another story. The color lines in Boston is another--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** That's a whole 'nother--

**FRED** We'll have to save that for volume two, Mae.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, that's another whole megillah. [LAUGHS]

**FRED** The 9 and the 5, 235, the two unions and all that stuff.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, that's a whole other piece of history.

**FRED** We'll have to have a session on that someday.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, because there's a few of them still around that can discuss it.

**FRED** Yeah, Al Natale.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, there's a few of them still around that can still discuss it before it's too late, because you need this history. You need this history.

**FRED** Anyway, we've done a fair chunk of it today. We deserve credit.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I hope I was able to give you some information.

**FRED** We fueled with coffee and donuts.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** And I even worked the club in the annex over here, that hotel you got over here in the-- what's the building you got, Berklee building back here.

**FRED** Oh yeah, that's another hotel.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, well see before, they had a nightclub in there.

**FRED** Yes, that's right. Al Vega mentioned that.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I used to work in there, too.

**FRED** You probably working with Al Vega?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I probably-- honey, everything that opened up here up through the seventies, you might as well say I worked in it. After that then-- I thought--

**FRED** You got it still mapped out in your mind. You know where everything is and what it--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, sure, yeah, it was-- the sad part is it's not there anymore. So I really have to think about it, because like where the stables was and the stable--

**FRED** You could go around putting up plaques. This is--

**BOUCHARD:**

[LAUGHING]

**MAE ARNETTE:** Well, some places are thin air, because I think the highway comes in there where the stable used to be. So that's gone, completely gone.

**FRED** And Connolly's, they've mowed that one down.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, poor thing, yeah. But there's a couple of little storefronts that are still up down Tremont across from the college-- what's that, the col-- not the Coliseum, what's--

**FRED** The round thing.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** The Rama-- something--

**FRED** Cyclorama.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Cyclorama. Across from there there used to be a couple of bars in there that had jazz music. Walter Radcliffe used to play in one of them. I used to work in there with him. And there was another one across in that vicinity within that block, I think, that I worked with another group. So there used to be a lot of little small storefront places that were around here.

**FRED** Now it's all websites.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Like Handy's, like the Handy Grill. That's gone. Now it's a library on that corner now on down Tremont Street.

**FRED** The Handy Grill?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, on there, on West-- I think it's the West Concord Street and Tremont. There's a public library there now. But that was Handy Grill back then, see. That's the building that used to be there.

**FRED** Did you did you help Richard Vacca put that map together?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** No, but I told him a lot of places. What he did, I don't know if he used my information or not. I can't say that. But I did-- you know, like talking-- I gave him--

**FRED** But anyway, we got to pull the plug on this, Mae. [LAUGHS] They're going to give us the hook.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, because like the Playboy, I ain't even tell you about Playboy Club.

**FRED** Oh my God, yeah, I saw Bob Winter there a couple of times. .

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I was-- worked down there.

**FRED** Maybe you worked with Bob Winter there?

**BOUCHARD:**



**MAE ARNETTE:** I think I did. Yeah, I think I did, because that's how I started working with Bob, because Bob started hiring me I think after that. And it was another... something about the saddle, the Spur and Saddle Club? It was a hillbilly club.

**FRED** Oh, yeah.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** The Hillbilly Ranch.

**FRED** Hillbilly Ranch.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Hillbilly Ranch. [LAUGHS]

**FRED** Yeah, there was a weird little Swedish restaurant across the street from there.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** [LAUGHS] I'm totally there. There's so-- when you going back memory lane, this is really beginning to open up--

**FRED** Did you ever sing country and Western? Did you ever put-- did you ever put--

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** (SINGING) Have you ever been lonely? Have you ever been blue?

**FRED** You get some cowgirl boots to go with those?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, I got two pair, in fact. [LAUGHS]

**FRED** And you get you a little buckskin fringe and a ten gallon hat?

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I got a leather fringe jacket and I got a ten gallon hat.

**FRED** Damn.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I sure do. I certainly do.

**FRED** You're a country girl.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** [LAUGHS] I have made the rounds, baby, as far as this business. Believe me when I tell you. I have had a good time, a good education.

**FRED** We'll have to do a round two of this, Mae. We'll do it. We'll pull together for another round. We'll get our notes

**BOUCHARD:** together and jog those memory--

**MAE ARNETTE:** Yeah, jog those memories--

**FRED** --cells again.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** --before it gets too late, because it's getting fuzzier by the day.

**FRED** I know, I know.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** I must admit, it's getting fuzzier by the day. And it's noon.

**FRED** Thanks, babe.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** [LAUGHS] Thanks, Fred.

**FRED** Catch you later, dear.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** They just like old friends, baby.

**FRED** Nothing like it.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Nothing like old friends.

**FRED** Okay, fellas, thanks.

**BOUCHARD:**

**MAE ARNETTE:** Did we bore you too much?

**CAMERAMAN:** Not at all.

**FRED** I think we got through it.

**BOUCHARD:**