

Jimmy Daniels

The Jimmy Daniels Band

Michael Nobel Kline: Can you say, "My name is Jimmy Daniels?"

Jimmy Daniels: Sure.

MNK: Go ahead.

JD: You want me to start talking?

MNK: Yeah.

JD: Huh?

MNK: Yes.

JD: My name is Jim Daniels.

MNK: And--What, what was your date of birth?

JD: My date of birth was September 28, 1930.

MNK: And could you tell me just a little bit about your people and the place you were raised?

(006)

JD: I was raised in Center Wheeling. My people were Lebanese. My dad come from the old country. My mother was born in this country. Her mother come from the old country. We all gathered around Center Wheeling, most of the Lebanese people.

MNK: When you say your dad came from Lebanon, can, can you go into that just a little bit more?

(011)

JD: Sure, he, he come here, and he was just a teenage boy. And come back, and mother sent him back here to try to find work. At that time Lebanon was being overrun again like they are now. That country was down seven or eight times, and they keep coming back.

MNK: So he came here as a teenager?

JD: Yeah, my dad come over as a young man, seventeen, I think.

MNK: Tell me about what happened to him when he got here.

JD: Sir?

MNK: Tell me about what happened to him when he got here.

(017)

JD: Oh, he got here, and he started working odd jobs, and got in restaurant, Quick Meal Restaurant. And he got with Wheeling Steel. Worked Wheeling Steel for a lot of years before he passed away. ... '84.

MNK: Hmm. Tell me as much detail as you can about the steel mill where he worked.

JD: About what?

MNK: The steel mill where he worked.

(021)

JD: Steel mill. Worked at Wheeling Steel, used to be at East Wheeling Corrugating. And they was Benwood Mill. They were all over Wheeling. They used to have a lot of mills and factories. They had a lot of, had ... factories and Wheeling Machines. But today all the factories, ... the big work is gone. Everything is more historical, sight-seeing.

MNK: Uh huh. What--How did your parents meet anyway?

(027)

JD: Well, when my dad come to this country, he come to Nathan, West Virginia, and he had friends here in Wheeling. Met my mother here in Wheeling. She was born down here in Wheeling, Center Wheeling. My mother's still alive. She's eighty-six years old.

MNK: Does she ever talk about how they met?

(032)

JD: Not too much. They just met, you know. She got married as a young lady, fourteen years old when she got married. Had six kids, raised a nice family. My brother, my oldest brother was in the Second World War. I had a younger brother that was killed by a truck. And just, you know, life goes on. Yeah. 1995 now.

MNK: Yeah. Tell me about the--Which house did you grow up in, the address? Can you give me the address where you grew up?

(039)

JD: Well, I grew up mostly on 43 26th Street. And then we, we resided, my mother and dad resided at 55 26th Street. After that bought a home, lived there for about, they owned that over fifty years. Now I, I moved up here where I'm at after I got married and bought this house here, 2515 Eoff Street. But we've been in Center Wheeling all my life. I wouldn't leave Center Wheeling.

MNK: Why is that?

(044)

JD: Oh, I love it around here. I just--Everything's so handy and you got the markets and the post office. Easy to get to town. Shopping's easy. Just everything's convenient. Schools. We have everything around here.

MNK: Tell me about that street where you grew up.

(048)

JD: Twenty-sixth Street. It just a regular street. But now it's getting popular. It's got--Route 2, they built Route 2 up here. Got Jebbia's Market. They got the sewer system. They got--Just getting popular. A lot of traffic. A lot of one-way streets. Put a new bridge down here. Everybody is, seem to be building down this way. Center Wheeling is really building up, and it's going to get a lot better. They're talking about an outlet mall down this way, and we hope they get that in.

MNK: Can you describe the street where you grew up, the other kids and--

(056)

JD: Well, at the time I remember we had regular, you know, cobblestones and brick and streetcar tracks. And a lot of things has changed, you know, since then. But I remember that, the streetcars. And they

eliminated them and put buses in after they asphalted the streets. But we had schools here, Webster School and Center School and Our Lady of Mount Lebanon, that's the school I went to, Our Lady of Lebanon. But all the schools in Center Wheeling is about gone, all but down below. They have, down at Ritchie. And I think there's another one down there on 36th Street.

MNK: Tell me about Our Lady of Lebanon, going to that school.

(066)

JD: When we went to school, there was three rooms. We had three grades in each room. And it was amazing that we had, at that time we had, maybe 150 students up there. And--See, Our Lady of Mount Lebanon is a, is a Marinites out of Lebanon. The people that go there are Marinites. And then the school disappeared, and now you just have the church. But at that time we had nuns, back in the '40s, '50s. But I started school back in the late '30s. But ten, fifteen years after I got out, the school closed down. They just kept the church. The church was burnt down in 1930, '30 something, '30. Then we started having our picnics to revive, you know. The money went to the, rebuilt the church. We have a Lebanese picnic, what they call a mahrajan, in August out Oglebay Park, site one. And all the proceeds went to rebuilding the church. And they still have them. It's a big, big festival every year.

MNK: But that's when they started having that, when--

(081)

JD: Yeah, when the church burnt down. And they started, you know, making money on the picnics to revive the church. And the church come back strong. And it's still going on.

MNK: Wasn't there some kind of miracle about that fire?

(084)

JD: Yes. They, they have a picture up over the altar of lights, electric lights. And, and I think it was oil painting. And the fire was all around the church. And, and the hose, because they kept pouring water on it. The water turned back, I understood, my grandparents was telling me. And, and the picture still hangs in the church, and the church was burnt completely down.

MNK: What do you mean, the water turned back?

(089)

JD: Well, they was pouring water on it trying to save the, save, and it didn't even affect it. The picture just stood there and hung, the way I understood it. And it's still in the parish. They revived the--You know, they fixed it up after so many, many years. But the picture itself didn't burn. It had electrical lights all around it, and it still sits up over the altar in church, the way I understand.

MNK: When you were going to school at, at this--

(telephone rings.)

(097)

JD: ... hospital. And I was seventeen. And I come back and--

MNK: A blow to the head you say?

JD: Yeah, the blow--You probably heard it, the retina. Boxers usually get it from being--The retina detaches. The retina's in back of the cornea. And they operated on me three times in Pittsburgh. And

things got, you know--When I was younger I, before I lost my sight I used to like to tinkle the piano. I got away from it and started working the market for Jebbia's, the old Market House before they revived it, when Mr. Jebbia had it. Now they got a brother down here that has 26th Street market, Jebbia's. I work in there, then I--After I lost my sight, I went to the piano. Started picking it up by ear and playing solo. And formed my own band. Play for about twenty-eight years with a band, up and down Wheeling and the Ohio Valley.

MNK: That's amazing.

(111)

JD: And, and today I--I still--I enjoy music, but not the kind of music that I liked then, back in the '40s and early '50s. That was my favorite music. Today I, I try to understand it, it's just too hard. I, I like the blues and boogie and ballads and stuff like that.

MNK: Did you tell me that you sing some Lebanese songs as well?

(116)

JD: We did Arabic music. I played a lot of Arabic music. We had our own, own band on the side that played out of town for picnics and weddings.

MNK: Great.

JD: And I enjoyed all that. Like I say, Wheeling years ago, Mike--

MNK: Michael.

(121)

JD: Michael. Wheeling years ago, you, you can go and any night and maybe ten or fifteen clubs and, and enjoy good music. Every--And you had your choice to go out and, and enjoy music and dance, you know. But today, as far as music, you know, and nightclubs, there's very, very few, and it just happens on the weekend. Just on the weekend. And they're lucky to have a Friday or Saturday to entertain. Nothing in comparison to what it, Wheeling used to be. We had floor shows every week come in from out of town, New York and New Jersey and Vegas, come in to Wheeling and perform. See, I got my, my first break was--I don't know if you remember the *Horace Hite Show* years ago. It used to be televised and radio and theaters. And they come through Wheeling. And when they went to the Capitol Theater in Wheeling, I auditioned. Over a thousand auditioners auditioned that week or two. And I made it on the *Horace Hite Show*. And that's how I got my first break and started playing music out. I got, started getting a lot of jobs after that.

MNK: Uh huh.

(135)

JD: He really helped me.

MNK: Horace Hite?

JD: Horace Hite, yeah. He had his own orchestra and entertainment, and he'd go around looking for talent all over the country. And then when he come to Wheeling at the Capitol Theater back in '52, I believe it was. That's when we really, you know, it really give me a boost. I started getting a lot of work after that. I was working one, two jobs a day, you know, just starting up and playing. I formed my own band. And

that's, that's when I got really into music.

MNK: What was the name of the band?

(142)

JD: Jim Daniels Combo.

MNK: And who were the guys playing with you?

JD: At that time I had down on drums named Pat Murphy. And Don ... on sax. And I had three or four different guys play bass with me, different ... I played piano, and I had a organo at that time. They used to have a special attachment to the, to a piano and you play piano and organ at the same time. Now they have what they call a Casio, I got one sitting over there. Like they had that then, it, you know, it takes a lot of pressure off of you. Casios now, they got, you got one finger chords and everything on those, back-up drums. You can have your own band with a Casio.

MNK: But back at that time--

(154)

JD: Back, back at that time you worked. I mean everything was tubes and, and big--You lifted the organo up, and you had to put the bar across the keyboard. And it was a lot of work. But it was something different at, you know, back in the '40s and '50s. A lot of things has changed. Everything now has come out with computers. A lot of computer music instruments.

MNK: Synthesizers.

(159)

JD: Yeah. That, that's why everything sounds so--You get like these good entertainers back in the '40s and '50s, like, you know, like Sinatra and Cumo, and even Glenn Miller. If they had this kind of equipment then, they'd be a lot greater. They're going to be around after we're gone the way it is now. The music you hear today, in another twenty or thirty years, you ain't going to hear of them.

MNK: But the old greats will--

(164)

JD: Yeah, they'll stay. They'll stay, believe me. Nat King Cole and Layne, they were my favorites. Music with Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller. We had a lot of bands and good singers then. But today you can put them on your hand and count them.

MNK: Who was your vocalist in your band? Did you sing?

(168)

JD: I did most of my singing. I, I liked--I--At that time, now like I say, I liked Layne and, and Fats Domino and *Blueberry Hill* and stuff like that, you know. That, that's the music that was popular then back in the '40s and early '50s. That's what I catered to because all my music was by ear. Everything I played I had to listen to and do it. And that's what got me going. We had forty-five records then, little, little pie pans, pie pans. Today they got CDs, and everything's so different.

MNK: Did you do any recording?

(177)

JD: At, at--Just, you know, I did one for--They had an Arabic on Sunday, Sunday afternoon back in, I

believe it was the '50s. Mr. Tom Saad used to run a disc jockey show out of a Bellaire radio station. And he used my theme song, song for his theme song, an Arabic, played all Arabic records for about an hour. And they had Arabic music on Sunday afternoon. And I recorded a song called ..., and he used that for a theme song for a good while. And then, then they, you know, got off the air. But the regular music--We play Arabic music, dancers and entertainment out picnics and weddings.

MNK: Interesting.

(189)

JD: And we used to get a lot of calls, go to New Kensington, New Castle, Bridgeville, Zanesville, and play at weddings and picnics and--I enjoyed that then. You know, like I say, ... been a lot of years ..., but things has changed.

MNK: So you mostly played up and down the valley?

(193)

JD: Yeah, yeah. Mostly Elks and, and Club Diamond Musical Lounge, ETC, Hickory House, Eagles. Just different, you know, clubs they had up and down Wheeling. And I, I enjoyed all of that. Like I say, that's what really kept me going, passed my time, and I enjoyed it.

MNK: What was Wheeling like back in the '40s and '50s?

(199)

JD: Great. Really great. After the Second World War, it, it really boomed, and there was a lot of work, a lot of entertainment. You can go, like I say, you can go any, any day of the week and go through town or go around the area and dancing and, you know, enjoy yourself. There was a lot of mills, a lot of work. Coal mines, steel mills. But, you know, everything has just left here. Now everything's in surrounding areas, what they have ... And most of the bigger plants are gone. Everything now is more historical.

MNK: Um hmm. Was Wheeling kind of a, a wide-open town?

(207)

JD: Yeah, it was wide open. They had a lot of gambling. We had a Greek fellow run the town, run it, you know, wide open, named Big Bill Lias. And racetracks, horse racing. There was prostitution, but, you know, that's something that's been here a long time. I think something that's going to stay for a long time all over the world. But it, it was a lot of entertainment, a lot of nightclubs, a lot of floor shows, a lot of music. We used to have bands come to the Capitol Theater, big bands. And now they got the Civic Center, I think they have music come to the Civic Center in Wheeling, but Capitol still has Jamboree and different music. They have the Wheeling Symphony, and they have a lot of bands come for entertainment. But all and all--The same way with theaters. We had a lot of theaters in Wheeling, but they're all gone. Now they're over the malls and, you know. But we had maybe eight, ten theaters in town of Wheeling. But there's, there's, I don't think there's any left other than the Capitol. We had the Court, the Rex, Vic, State, Colonial. We had the Southern, Marsh, Virginia. They're not around today.

MNK: Yeah, those were great years, weren't they?

(230)

JD: But, like I say, in the '40s and the '50s, it was great. Wheeling was--They called it Little Chicago one

time.

MNK: Really?

JD: Yeah, there were probably over 60,000 people in the valley at that time. And now it's about half.

MNK: What did they mean, Chicago?

(233)

JD: Little Chicago. Well, there was a lot of gambling and, and prostitution and, and, you know, entertainment. You know, Chicago where Al Capone was. They had it wide open. Wheeling was wide open. People come from Pittsburgh and Cleveland and everything just to come to Wheeling. On the weekends, you'd be up in the town and they, they'd come through here like an army, you know, from out of town. Just entertainment and gambling.

MNK: Were you ever, were you ever afraid of that or--

(241)

JD: No, no. I, I'll tell you, it was better then. Michael, it was better then than it is today. Everything was wide open. You could leave your doors and windows open, nobody'd bother you. Nobody'd bother you. All night long you could walk the streets and enjoy yourself, nobody'd bother you. Now when, before dark comes everybody locks up, dead bolts and all. Neighbors was neighbors then. You know, you enjoyed each other then. But today, it's nothing like that. And this was every day of the week. You can, you can walk--That's what we did then, we walked up and down town up from, you know, up from where Center Wheeling to town and back, and nobody ever bothered you. But today you can't do that.

MNK: In the--I wanted to ask you, in that school--

(254)

JD: Our Lady of Lebanon?

MNK: Yes. Did they--What was the language you said they spoke?

JD: Oh, it was--They spoke--It was a Lebanese church, Maronite church, but they, the teaching was nuns. They was English.

MNK: Did they teach the Maronite language?

(258)

JD: No, it was all, all--We had nuns in England and different parts of the country. Just all, it's all in English. What we had, religion every morning, you know, and, and the--Father, Monsignor Abraham spoke a lot. He spoke, I don't know how, a lot of different languages in the mass. But as far as in the teaching in the school, it was all English.

MNK: Okay, well, getting, getting back to downtown and, and the music then. What were some of the places around town? Did you ever play at Zeller's?

(267)

JD: I didn't play. I was too young for Zeller's at that time. Zeller's was open, but after that I played in places called--I played in the Cork and Bottle. I played in the Red Bull, Casablanca, Carrousel, Club Henry. Plus the Eagles and Moose and Elks, places like that. I played in the Jai Alai, Diamond Musical Lounge, a lot of places I even forgot.

MNK: Um hmm.

(274)

JD: But up and down the valley. Whatever nightclubs there was, I finally got into them in time after I grew up. But I remember Zeller's. Bill Lias owned it, the one I was just telling you about.

MNK: He did?

JD: Bill Lias, yeah, Big Bill owned that. I, I never played in it, but he owned that place. And I was just a young kid when that opened up. But--

MNK: Did you know Bill at all?

(281)

JD: I knew him to speak to him, you know. He had a place called the Pirate Cafe on 21st and Main Street. And when I'd go in there, he'd be sitting in there and I'd speak to him. He was a Greek in descent. And I spoke to him a couple times. But he knew my dad real well, you know, was friends with my dad. But as far as knowing him personally, no. I just, I knew who he was, and I spoke to him and he spoke, you know, just nodded and spoke hello. But personally, no, I didn't know him.

MNK: Well, I wonder if we could get you to play a little bit, some of those songs you played back in the '40s and '50s.

(292)

(piano playing)

(telephone ringing)

MNK: Okay, hit it.

(piano playing, *Blueberry Hill*)

(305)

JD: That was *Blueberry Hill*.

MNK: Can you sing a little of it?

JD: Well, I can sing a little of it, but I was going to do *In the Mood* for you.

MNK: Okay, yeah. Or, yeah, do *In the Mood*. That'd be great.

(308)

(piano playing, *In the Mood*.)

(321)

JD: That's just a little, you know, *In the Mood*. Now, what'd you want, a little singing?

MNK: Yeah. ...

JD: (singing) 'I found my thrill--'

MNK: Start again, please.

(325)

JD: (singing and piano playing) 'I found my thrill, on Blueberry Hill. On Blueberry Hill, yeah, when I found you. I ... the moon stood still on Blueberry Hill. Yeah, we lingered until, on Blueberry Hill.'

How's that?

MNK: Beautiful.

JD: Huh?

MNK: Beautiful.

JD: Thank you.

MNK: That's great.

(338)

JD: See, my music, Mike, is mostly, like I say, back in the '40s and '50s. I don't know if you remember boogie or not.

MNK: Yeah.

JD: Remember boogie?

MNK: Yeah.

(piano playing)

(350)

JD: That, that was my music.

MNK: That's great.

JD: I like stuff like that. But the stuff today, like I say, I don't understand it.

MNK: Can you play a piece called *It's a Sin to Tell a Lie*?

JD: Boy, that's an oldie, Michael, it's been a long time. Can you--

(piano playing)

JD: I don't--I can't place it. I heard it before. I think it was the Ink Spots or something that did that, ...

MNK: Um hmm.

(356)

JD: (singing) 'Be sure it's true.' Something like that. I ain't heard it for years. Years!

MNK: What's an example of some--

JD: (piano playing) Do you remember Tchaikovsky concerto?

MNK: Yeah, play some of that.

JD: Huh? Do you remember that. (piano playing) ... a lot of them are going back, ain't they?

(375)

MNK: That's great. That's great.

???: They want you to play some Arabic music, Jim.

JD: (piano playing)

(395)

MNK: Nice.

???: Do, do the one I like.

JD: No.

???: Yeah, play us one, Jim, because that's what he wants to hear.

JD: Not all of it, I can't play all of it.

???: Oh, sure, come on.

JD: I'll be here all night, all day.

???: This is my favorite one.

MNK: Well, let's hear her favorite.

(400)

JD: (piano playing) That's just part of them, but I, I--It takes all, all day to play them, play them.

???: Play adupkee for them.

JD: You know, clear through it would take you all day.

???: Jimmy, play adupkee for them. It's their dance that they do.

JD: Oh, that's a dance right there.

???: Yeah, but play adupkee like ...

(414)

JD: They, they use that for adupkee, that song I just played. That's called the *Wheat Song*, the one I just played. They use that for adupkee. Adupkee is a line dance. People get in line and hold arms and they go around in circle, adupkee. And then we had what they call a solo, solo dance. This is time and a half and a slow beat, just all different variations. You know, single, they dance single, the women and the men. And adupkee is a line dance, they all get together, maybe thirty, forty, fifty people. Just, just go around.

MNK: Play the one she's talking about.

(424)

JD: That's the one I just did. It's called the--Well, it, use it for the *Wheat Song*, and then they can-- (piano playing) ... go on and on with the same beat. Just go around in circles and pick it up, the tempo. Start out slow and then just go out fast. It's on the same, you know, on the same order.

MNK: Do some more that you like to sing from the--

JD: Oh.

MNK: Forties and '50s. You're a great singer.

(442)

JD: Back in-- (piano playing) I don't remember-- (piano playing and singing) 'How's the ... I'll be waiting all for heaven. Counting every mile of railroad track. It takes me back. I can't stop loving you. I said I made up my mind. Living memory ... time. Well, I can't stop wanting you. I said it's useless to say. Baby, I'll just live my life in dream of yesterday.' That's ... Do you remember any of them songs?

(483)

MNK: Great.

JD: But it's, it's been a while since I've done them. I, I ain't played for ...

MNK: You're a fine, fine singer. I could sit here and listen to you all all day.

JD: But, like I say, I like the music back in the '40s and '50s. A lot of people don't, you know.

MNK: Did you ever sing that song, *I'll be Stealing Back to Wheeling*?

JD: What is it?

MNK: *I'll be Stealing Back to Wheeling*?

JD: I never heard of it. What, what--How long has that been out?

MNK: Oh, back--

???: Jimmy--

(492)

MNK: That was way back before my time.

???: ...

JD: ... that song. I forgot all about that. They used to be at the Capitol, Wheeling Steel. Then, then they was on the radio. And they come live off of the Capitol Theater, weren't they? Wheeling Steel.

???: Yeah.

JD: But it's been so long, I, I forgot all about that.

???: Wasn't that the song that Florene Pace's husband wrote?

JD: I don't think so. No, Harry--The song she was talking about, Harry, Harry didn't make that song. Harry didn't write that. He was a friend of mine. He had, I don't know if you ever heard of him. His name was Harry Pace. He had his own trio. And he had--When he was a kid he jumped on a horse and buggy and tore his leg off, when he was eight years old. And he had, he had a combo up and down Wheeling for years. And he used to write music, you know, songs and sing and do. That's who she was talking about.

???: But I was talking about the song that Florene Pace's husband wrote, ...

(509)

JD: That's Charlie Pace, Charlie Pace.

???: Charlie.

JD: Oh, I don't remember. I don't remember what he did.

MNK: Play, play one more before you quit, one more that you like to sing.

(513)

JD: (piano playing and singing) 'I ... two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. ... one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. I gonna take my baby where we can have a good, good time. I said yes, yes. I said yes, yes. I said yes, yes. I said yes, yes. I said, yes, yes, yes. Oh, yeah, my baby knows.'

That's work, Mike, that's work. My breath comes in short pants.

(543)

???: Down at the Wilson Lodge, what's the name of the room out there you played in?

JD: Oh, the--

???: Elenfeld Room, and also he's worked in the Glassworks out there.

JD: I can't remember all the places.

???: I know. And these were taken at the Wilson Lodge also, these pictures. The friend he was talking about is this gentleman right here who has ... leg off.

(549)

JD: We walked to Weirton together. Nineteen sixty-three. I don't know if you remember that, Kennedy Physical Fitness. He has one leg, and me and him walked up to Weirton. It took us eleven hours. To the community center from Wheeling. We left the Fort Henry Bridge and went to the community center in Weirton.

???: This is my husband, the nights that he won a talent show at--

JD: *Horace Hite Show.*

???: *Horace Hite Show.*

(556)

JD: That was back in, I think '52, wasn't it? I know it was a good, good many years ago.

MNK: May I have this copy?

???: You certainly can.

MNK: Thank you.

???: Because I have several copies of them. I keep copies. This is one of the groups that ... guys he played with.

(562)

JD: But there was, like I say, I think--

MNK: Now who was that on the sax?

???: That right there is Frank Hallop.

JD: Frank Hallop, he was good too. ...

???: Sandy Butler that was playing. He's had several groups.

JD: I had--I changed around as the years went by, you know. A lot of guys went to college, and they got their master's degree. That's how most of them went to school, by playing with me. They, they paid their way through college and got their master's degree and left Wheeling.

???: A friend of his, who also played drums with him, was a Ronny Rose.

JD: ...

(571)

???: And Mr. Rose has recently been the teacher at John Marshall--

JD: He still is.

???: School, music teacher.

JD: I think he finishes up ...

???: No, he's, he's--

JD: Next month. Next month.

???: Next month?

JD: May, I think.

???: And he's been associated with the Wheeling Symphony in, in the past doing some choreography work for them. He's a very talented man.

(577)

JD: He's a drummer. He teaches music down at John Marshall. He's retiring this year.

MNK: How did you, how did you two happen to meet?

???: You wouldn't believe.

MNK: Tell me.

???: Out in the middle of the river.

JD: Used to be ... Boat Club on the Island.

???: Used to be a floating boat club out on the Ohio River.

(583)

JD: Our parish had a dance over there, Our Lady of Lebanon had a dance over there, Arabic and American music. And I met her over there.

???: In the middle of the Ohio River.

JD: Back in '56 or '57.

MNK: How did you happen to be in a thing like that?

JD: Who, me?

MNK: No.

???: No. Well, he was working over there. They had American Lebanese music that night. And I happened to have a friend. I graduated from nurse's training here in Wheeling in 1956. And she coaxed me into going with her. And so we went over. And she happened to have some friends over there, one of which was Jimmy. And that's how I met him.

MNK: Did you have a Lebanese background your--

(596)

???: No, no. No, I'm German. Scotch, Irish, Welsh and German. How's that? I'm from Ohio. But I've lived here now since--I came when I was sixteen to go in nurse's training. And I've lived here since, since--Went to school at Ohio State and then came back.

MNK: Did you like Jimmy's music? Were you--

(605)

???: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. He was a big thing. Big thing in the valley, you know.

JD: ...

???: Yeah, sure he was.

JD: I, I enjoyed it, music. I, I liked it. I loved to dance too.

???: ... friend--

JD: I used to ... floor shows dancing, you know, in between the music. We'd take a break and I'd dance with a partner, you know, jitterbug. At that time they called the jitterbug or boogie, whatever you want to call it. I'd put on floor shows.

MNK: You were a--You had danced professionally?

(616)

JD: I danced and--

???: He could, he could have been professional, but he just happens to like to dance.

JD: I just like music in general. I, I went from the microphone to singing and then start dancing, and back on the piano, and just a variety and just to have a good time.

MNK: Did you ever get around Gene Long any?

(623)

JD: Yeah, Gene's my buddy. On the Island?

MNK: Yeah.

JD: Oh, yeah, Gene, I like Gene. His, his boys played, and his daughter's a very good singer. I, I--Let's see, when did I talk to him. Out the, a place they're having next month, the home show, I seen last summer out Wheeling Park, Gene is. No, did we see him on the riverbank one time--

???: Yeah.

JD: After that?

???: Um hmm.

JD: I think I talked to him one time on the riverbank. He goes down--They have music down there on the river in the summer. That's the last time I spoke to him. Either there or the October, better home show.

MNK: Well, I'd like to get you two guys together sometime.

(637)

JD: Gene's a nice, good tenor.

MNK: Yeah.

???: Yeah, very good, very good.

JD: But the last time I talked to him he introduced me to his wife. I think he told me his wife plays piano.

MNK: I didn't know that.

???: I didn't know either.

JD: But Gene, I knew Gene. I, I remember Gene when his dad was--His dad worked in the hardware store. That's how long it's been. Gene was in the service. He got hurt pretty bad in the Second World War.

MNK: He did?

(645)

JD: Yeah, Gene got shot up in the stomach. He had a lot of stomach trouble. In the Second World War. And then he--The last time I talked to him he was having prostate trouble. He said he was in Pittsburgh. He was doing pretty good.

MNK: Wow. Mention Jebbia's Market as you start.

(656)

???: Down in the old market, Jim, not down here, the old market.

JD: I said the old market.

???: Yeah.

MNK: Yeah, okay.

JD: Jebbia's old market, Russell, Dom, Gene, they was all brothers. They was all in business together. That's who I worked for. And we used to set up the stands like on a Thursday and Friday and sell on the weekends, Friday night and Saturday, you know, at that time. And that, that's what got me started, you know. That was my first job, working in the Market House in produce. But as, as far as playing music, it took me, you know. After I come out of the hospital I, I started playing when I was nineteen.

(670)

???: Used to go up to Maxwell Hall.

JD: Well, I said dancing. I said--

???: Yeah, but they had a piano up there.

JD: Oh, yeah.

???: They used to--

JD: YMCA, that's where I--I used to go, in the YMCA. I didn't have no piano at home. I'd go in the YMCA and tinkle, and they'd throw me out. But I enjoyed it. Like I said, in a period of time it just gradually come to me. I guess that was my life, the piano. And every time I'd see one I'd run to it. I didn't know much about them, but I liked them. And like I say, as you get older, you, you pick up, you know.

MNK: What was your first job you ever played?

(686)

JD: First job I played with a woman called Jean Reuther, Reuther's Bar. I played piano for her. And I played at ... That's how I started out on solo, just neighborhood bar. You know, they'd get together and sing along. And on the weekends--And once Horace Hite come here, that, that was my shot in the arm. He come here in '52. And once I got on his show, I started getting a lot of calls, a lot of jobs. That's when I formed a band and then started playing up and down the valley.

MNK: What was it like playing at Reuther's Bar, what was the bar like?

(702)

JD: It was a neighborhood bar, people could sing along, you know. Get along, get a few beers, everybody can sing. And that's what, you know, just like--Back then I think it was Guy Mitchell that had them sing alongs. People used to get together and sing, *Sweet Sixteen* and *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* and all them old songs, you know. And then as the time went on, I got my own group together and things changed. Once you get a saxophone and drums, you start going. And that was, that was my lift, the *Horace Hite Show*. (playing piano)

(Side Two)

MNK: Okay.

JD: (playing piano) ... way back, Mike.

(010)

MNK: Can you sing *Sweet Sixteen*?

JD: (playing piano and singing) 'I love you as I've never loved before. When first I met you on the ... Come to me, you're my dream of love before. I've loved you. I've loved you when you were sweet, when you were sweet sixteen.' Boy, that's way back, Mike, I, I don't remember the words to it. Do you remember?

MNK: No. That's why I wanted to get you to do it!

(019)

JD: Well, that's way--That's going fifty-six years. Well, that's--And *Sentimental Journey* and *Sweet Sixteen*, *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*. They were--

MNK: So people would gather around--

JD: Yeah.

MNK: And sing?

JD: Sing along. You sing along, you know. And that's when you first started out. And then I started, you know, jumping in boogie and I couldn't sit still. Boogie, blues, and like *Night Train*. You remember *Night Train*? (playing piano and singing) 'Night train. Night train.' Remember that song, Mike? I bet that too far back for you too, huh? *Night Train*.

(037)

MNK: Oh, I faintly remember that one.

JD: You're still a young man. (playing piano) And we have *Franky and Johnny*. Then they had this. (playing piano) That was *Near You*. They had some nice, you know, songs back then. They just--You know, you forget most of them until you sit around and start, you know, talking about them and trying to think about them. But there was so many, so many songs to choose from. You can go, go, go, you know, all night long just playing. But, you know, like I say, when you get away from it--This is the first time I tested this piano in, I don't know how long. I, I usually play that thing over there because it's so easy. This thing here is work!

MNK: Let's hear you play something on that.

(051)

JD: That Casio, I, you know. (playing Casio)

MNK: ... Let's make a clean start.

JD: (playing Casio, singing in Arabic) ... How's that?

(087)

MNK: Great. What is this?

JD: That's Miserlou, it's Arabic and Greek, they both use it. Greek use it and Arabic.

MNK: Did you hear that as a kid--

JD: Yeah.

MNK: Growing up?

JD: Yeah, oh, yeah. Pick it up. Like I say, anything, anything I learned, I just picked up on records or done live. And just pick it up.

MNK: Was there Lebanese music played on a--Was there a special radio program every week of it or--

(091)

JD: Used to years ago. They had Tom Saad, he's come from Bellaire radio station. I told you I had that ... music. And they used to play it for an hour back in, oh, I'd say in the '50s.

MNK: Were there any people in the neighborhood who sang these kinds of songs. Do you remember hearing them sing?

(095)

JD: Oh, yeah. Sam Habdo, my sister Roberta, she's out in Oregon now. Yeah, a lot of them. We get together and have, you know, like I said, they do a good job singing.

MNK: At family gatherings or where?

JD: Yeah. Get together. Sam's related, and he's a tremendous voice. And my sister had a opera voice, she sings in church. And, and did all, all this Arabic music.

???: I'm a firm believer that I think their culture should be carried on, you know. Their cooking. Their music. I, I really think that every opportunity they can get, they should do it. Because one day it will be lost.

(104)

JD: Well, that's everything. It just keeps going. As long as there's Lebanese people, there will be Lebanese music.

???: In fact, once a year we try to have an outdoor gathering. And most of the people we invite are people of his culture, you know. And, boy, we set up the music and we really go to it outside. We enjoy it.

(108)

JD: Every August after the picnic they have out here, we, a couple weeks later we have here. See, my sister comes here every year from Oregon. And then we have a party for her and get all the Lebanese people and all her friends together.

???: We try, you know, try to do the foods and--

JD: Did you ever eat Arabic food? Kibbee and ... tabouli?

MNK: Yeah, I was at that picnic last year.

JD: Yeah.

???: Were you?

(113)

JD: See, we have a--We, we get together and everybody cooks here, her, my mother and my sister, they all get together. And I invite about eighty, ninety people. I, I, you know, next thing you know--

???: There are people that some of them participate in the music, you know. A lot of them like to dance.

JD: Just friends of hers and mine and my wife's and families. And we get together.

???: It, it's--I think it's a necessary thing, I really do, that these people continue, you know, keep up their culture. It's--If it's lost, it's lost forever.