

**ASBURY PARK AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT****INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**Interviewee: Alford “Al” Griffin** [AG]  
**Keith Griffin** [KG]

**Interviewers: Jennifer Souder** [JS]  
**Charles Trott** [CT]  
**Melissa Keeling** [MK]

Date: January 22, 2018

Time: 2:00 P.M.

Place: Neptune, NJ

JS: So, we came up with a number of questions. We’ll go through them, but we want you to talk about whatever you feel like talking about. We don’t have to stick to this. If at any point you want to be done, you just tell us. We’re on your time. I’ll let Melissa and Charles introduce themselves as well.

MK: My name’s Melissa, I live in Asbury Park, I’ve lived there a few years now. I grew up in Kentucky, that’s why I have this crazy accent. I’m a musician, I play the flute; I moved to New York to get my doctorate in flute performance. Now, I teach in Red Bank – elementary music. I’m glad to be on this project. It’s an honor to meet you, sir.

CT: I’m Charles, Charles Trott. You know my family. I’m a visual artist; I’m the oldest of a tribe of children, and a life-long resident of Asbury Park. I have a great interest for history, especially African-American and African-descendents’ history, but all history. That’s one of the reasons I’m here.

JS: We’ll get started, if that’s okay. So, can you tell us just your name, and when and where you were born?

AG: Alford Griffin. 1310 Springwood Avenue, Asbury Park.

JS: You were born *on* Springwood Avenue.

KG: Upstairs from our family business, that we just sold the buildings. My grandfather started the business in 1915 on Springwood Avenue – Griffin’s, called Griffin’s. Right between Dewitt and Borden Avenue. Matter of fact, ride past there, the name’s still up there; we just sold the buildings in August. Him and my uncle, who’s 92, born upstairs, born in 1925 and he [Al Griffin] was born in 1929.

JS: 1929. When did you start playing?

AG: When I was about fourteen.

JS: About fourteen?

AG: Mm-hmm.

JS: What got you interested? Tell us a little about getting started playing the drums.

AG: Well, I happened to be sitting outside of my business – my father’s business – I was born in that building, as a matter of fact. You see it – can you see it? (*points to photograph of Griffin’s on the wall*)

JS: Mm-hmm. Right over Melissa’s head there.

MK: This one, right.

AG: Well, there’s... right here. There you go. The building is still there, guess it’s there. Just sold it about a month ago [August 2017]. I was born in that building.

JS: So you have lots of Springwood Avenue memories. Tell us a little about – you were telling us, you were sitting there and you got interested in drums?

AG: Yeah, I was sitting outside, and this fellow came by, a friend of mine, with some drumsticks. I said, “Where are you going with those drumsticks?” He said, “Just messing around.” I said, “Where’d you get them?” He said, “I got them at the West Side Community Center” – which was right around the corner from me. He said, “They’re starting up a drum and bugle corp,” so I’m going to try to get over there. And that’s what I did. I liked it, and they put me on the front line. We won three awards.

JS: That’s when you were about fourteen?

AG: That’s when I was about fourteen. That’s when I started.

JS: Okay, wow. Melissa just may have reminded me – should we do some video? Are you okay with a little video? If we do a little video while we speak?

KG: *Video* you, dad.

JS: Are you okay with a video?

AG: Yes.

- MK: Thanks for reminding me; didn't want it to be too much.
- JS: So you played in the corp, and that was when you were fourteen. Do you remember the first time, did you play in the clubs?
- AG: I was too young to play in the clubs, you know, the laws. So, I had to wait until I was eighteen to start playing the clubs. So that's when I started.
- JS: Do you remember your first gig on Springwood Avenue?
- AG: At the Capitol. That was a ballroom about two blocks from where I lived.
- JS: Okay. I might say this wrong, but we were reading about the drummer Cozy Cole?
- KG: Cozy Cole, you trained with. Him and Gene Cooper [sp?].
- AG: Cozy Cole?
- JS: Did you remember playing with Cozy Cole?
- KG: Trained.
- JS: Trained?
- AG: I studied with him, in New York.
- JS: When were you doing that, do you remember what years?
- AG: When I was about... I guess I was about 25 or so.
- KG: About 1954.
- JS: Did you play with Dinah Washington?
- AG: Yes.
- JS: Can you tell us a little bit about that?
- AG: I stayed with her about a year and a half, and we traveled all around to different places. I rather enjoyed that. After I left her, I stayed in New York and played at Sugar Ray Robinson's club on Seventh Avenue. I stayed there for about a year or so.
- KG: He was part of the house band, at Sugar Ray's, when Sugar Ray was the champion. This picture's at the Apollo with Dinah.

JS: That's amazing.

MK: Oh, wow.

JS: That's amazing. Please tell us about Gents of Rhythm? The Gents of Rhythm? Was that a band? Was that a trio?

KG: Gents of Rhythm, dad? Who were the Gents of Rhythm?

AG: What is that?

KG: I don't know, I've never heard of it. Gents of Rhythm. Are they a band?

AG: I've never heard of it.

JS: Oh, we got our research wrong on that one?

MK: The *Squires* of Rhythm? I know the *Squires* of Rhythm.

JS: Maybe I typed it wrong, it's possible. We'll come back to that one. Since you grew up on Springwood Avenue, I know you've got a million memories, but when you were in your early years, when you were starting out there, do you have a story or a memory that comes out in your mind about one of the clubs – the Capitol or anywhere – one of your earlier memories?

AG: Before I started playing clubs, I used to play upstairs, over top of the shop. On the kitchen table. My father used to holler, "Stop that noise up there!"

JS: And you didn't? (*laughter*)

AG: Then after a while, I saved up enough money to buy a set of drums. Cost me a hundred dollars. That's what I did. I started practicing every night, and my father used to tell me to go upstairs and go to bed, it's nine o'clock. Every day I used to practice.

KG: Dad, you remember the first club you played in?

AG: The Capitol. That was a ballroom down the street from where I lived.

KG: Do you remember any stories about any of the clubs that you played in?

AG: You mean big time?

KG: No, just in Asbury. On the Ave.

AG: On the Ave.? Well, Cuba's is a nice club, they had dances there.

KG: Tell me the Charlie Rouse story.

AG: Huh?

KG: I said, tell me the Charlie Rouse story. You hired Charlie to come down to play?

AG: Yeah.

KG: One of them, somebody didn't show up with the band, so you guys didn't gig, so you paid Charlie and he got back on the train?

AG: Mm-hmm. *(laughter)*

KG: Charlie Rouse used to be with Thelonious, he was his sideman for like eleven years.

JS: Wow.

KG: His son Chico's from Asbury. Charles, you know Chico.

CT: Chico, yeah. Yes.

JS: Chico had reopened that club, not long ago, for a while.

KG: Yeah, it closed about five years ago.

JS: Can you tell us about playing with Dee Holland? Dolores Holland?

AG: Who?

KG: Dee, Dee. With your trio. Dolores. Dee, Dee.

AG: Dolores Holland? Oh yeah, nice, nice.

KG: She's asking you about playing with Dee.

AG: Dee Holland, very nice. Very nice lady.

JS: Did you play with her for many years?

AG: Yeah, all my young years, we played together.

JS: We had a chance to sit with her, and she mentioned you.

AG: Yeah, we played around quite a bit.

KG: I remember that, I was a teenager.

JS: How about Cliff? Cliff Johnson?

AG: Who?

JS: Cliff Johnson.

AG: Cliff Johnson?

JS: Mm-hmm. Sax.

AG: Cliff Johnson.

JS: Clifford.

KG: Who was your sax man with you and Dee?

AG: Cliff? Cliff. Yeah, Cliff! You're right, Cliff Johnson, you're right. *(laughter)*

JS: We got *something* right.

MK: You guys were in an organ trio together?

AG: Yeah.

KG: With Dee.

MK: With Dee? Oh, that's so perfect. I saw a newspaper clipping where you were playing with Max Bryant and the Vibratones.

AG: Right, right.

MK: I think that was in Belmar, I think.

AG: Right on the beachfront.

MK: I have it with me. Blast from the past... *(papers shuffling)* Let me see, here it is, right here. This one – there you are right there, right?

AG: Yeah, yeah, sure. At the hotel, at the deck.

KG: At Madonna's.

AG: Mm-hmm. And Herman Green. You got an extra one of these?

MK: You can have that if you want. There's a few more in there, I thought it might help jog your memory, I know there's been so many performances; it all blurs together.

AG: Thank you, that's beautiful.

MK: Oh, I think this one might have been with the Vibratones.

AG: Max Bryant, yeah. You got everybody here. You got around pretty good, didn't you?  
*(laughter)*

MK: Did a little research in advance... I really like this one, I think it describes you as – it gave you a nickname – “*Colossal Al Griffin*.” I thought that was really funny. I'd love to be described as “colossal.” *(laughter)*

AG: Yeah, I wonder who thought of that! *(laughter)*

KG: Where'd you find that?

MK: newspapers.com, it's an archive of all the local newspapers; I just searched “Al Griffin.” It archived the whole last century, so, I found whatever I could where you were mentioned in the papers to see about your performances. This was what... a trio?

AG: Yeah, yeah.

MK: Instead of organ, though, with a vibraphone player.

AG: Even if we were with an organ, it's still like a trio anyhow.

MK: Four players, but still a trio. I see.

AG: Because when you played the organ, you didn't need a bass player.

MK: I see. What about Roy Green?

AG: Who?

MK: Roy Green? What did he play?

AG: *Herman* Green.

MK: Oh. *(sound of microphone being bumped into)*

JS: The tenor sax, he plays?

MK: It just says, "Roy Green. "The Sauve Roy Green."

JS: I like the adjectives.

KG: You remember him?

AG: Honestly, I played with so many fellows...

KG: When do you think that was dad? The 50s or the 60s?

MK: That was 1954.

KG: Hmm. Before me.

AG: Yeah, I remember this. The Hotel New Windsor, down on the beachfront. That's where you're from?

KG: No, she's from Kentucky.

MK: I'm from Kentucky. I'm a resident of Asbury.

JS: But she lives in Asbury Park.

AG: Kentucky. Louisville?

MK: I've been to Louisville.

AG: I've played in Louisville.

MK: You've played in Louisville? That's the big city in Kentucky.

KG: Do you remember where you played?

AG: What's the name of that club... it was right on Kentucky Avenue... right?

MK: Mm-hmm. There's a ton of places down there. Is that when you were with Dinah Washington? When you were on tour with her?

AG: No, I was with Milt Buckner, that fellow there, right top. (*refers to photographs on the wall*) Yes. An organ player.

CT: That's back in the 50s?

AG: The organ player I was with.

KG: (*referring to an adjacent photograph*) I think he said – this was the night I was born? You were in Philly in this picture?

AG: Yeah, that was made in Philly. Yeah.

KG: And I was born after or something, the day after this picture was taken?

JS: That's an important time.

AG: Yeah, that was the week I came to see you. And you said, "how you doing?" (*laughter*)

JS: So, the trios – its seems during the 50s and 60s, there were a lot of trios with the organ, drums, and either sax or guitar. That was your regular group?

AG: Yeah, right.

KG: He always had a horn, he didn't have a guitar too many times, unless they were playing a quartet. But his trios were a drummer, keyboard, and a horn. Probably 90% of the time. Like I said, unless he played with a quartet, then it would be maybe somebody on guitar, which wasn't a lot. Unless he was playing in somebody else's quartet.

JS: Just to confuse matters – you pointed to Roy Green, and there *is* the Herman Green, the sax player.

KG: Your horn player with Dee was Palmer Jenkins, right?

AG: Yeah.

JS: Okay. That's a new name for us.

KG: I have a picture somewhere, of that trio.

JS: That'd be great to see.

MK: Palmer who?

KG: Jenkins. I think Palmer was a... I don't know if he was a music teacher at Rutgers or something? I think he was some sort of educator. I think... wasn't he dad? Did Palmer teach?

AG: Yeah, yeah.

KG: What was the name of that again? With the newspapers?

- MK: It's a website called newspapers.com. I think most of those were from the Asbury Park Press, but there might have been another paper, Jersey Shore paper, because some of those were from Belmar. I just went to newspapers.com, you can search by state, I just clicked New Jersey.
- KG: Then it comes up, all the papers? It gives you dates, you can go back?
- MK: Mm-hmm, you can select the dates.
- JS: I'm trying to get to the bottom of this, Gents of Rhythm.
- KG: Do you remember any group or anything with "Rhythm" in it? Did you play in any group with the name "Rhythm" in it?
- AG: Had *who* in it?
- KG: Had *Rhythm* it? The name.
- AG: No.
- KG: The Gents of Rhythm, or anything of Rhythm? Not you, huh?
- AG: I don't remember that group.
- JS: You – during the 50s and 60s, sounds like you played with a lot of different trios.
- AG: Right.
- JS: How did you navigate that? Did you have an agent? You just talked to people, met up with people?
- AG: When you go out to play, you meet other musicians. Like, when you're off, they're working, so you have a gig. [inaudible]
- JS: We read about you traveling around the world quite a bit. Did you perform when you traveled?
- KG: That's the *only* reason he traveled.
- AG: When I was traveling on the road, I was usually with somebody that was steady. Like Milt Buckner, was with him a long time. Dinah Washington, I was with her a long time. I have the pictures up there.
- KG: And with Bob Crosby, Bing's brother.

- JS: Do you remember some of the places you went?
- AG: Oh yeah. The Fontainebleau in Miami Beach.
- KG: Out of the country, dad.
- JS: Either is fine.
- AG: Out of the country? [inaudible]; Sydney, Australia; Okinawa; Guam; Manilla; [inaudible] Germany. I said Manilla, right?
- JS: All over the world.
- AG: The Fontainebleau in Miami Beach; Sands in Las Vegas; Hollywood. Frank's in Hollywood.
- KG: Newport Jazz Festival.
- AG: Yeah. Mexico, and Texas; Montreal, Canada; Quebec, Canada.
- CT: Do you remember playing Bermuda? I noticed that was one of the places you played.
- AG: Which picture are you talking about?
- KG: No, he said he's *reading*; he said you played Bermuda.
- AG: Oh yeah, Bermuda; I played Bermuda.
- CT: When was that, back in the 50s, 60s? Do you remember about when it was?
- AG: Around that time.
- CT: Round that time, yeah.
- KG: He was on the road until 1976; I was 16 when he came off the road. My grandfather got ill, and he came in and took over the business, from 1976 until 2006. He had a quadruple bypass, and that was kind of the end – retirement.
- JS: Retiring; but still playing every day.
- AG: Yeah.
- KG: He wasn't even twenty-four hours out of his open-heart – the first thing he asked me was... once that surgery was done, like four in the afternoon, so that morning – I work in a hospital, so I was there seven o'clock in the morning – first thing he asked me for was

his practice pad. I said, "Better leave it to the doctor and make sure you can *have* a practice pad." (*laughter*)

JS: Didn't want to waste any time. So, when you were traveling, out and about around the world, did you come home and play in between?

AG: When I came home? Yeah.

JS: You would play clubs on Springwood, or out around the area?

AG: I was always playing, if I came home...

JS: That's amazing. That's you playing, right after your surgery.

KG: (*referring to photo of AG with his drumsticks, in the hospital*) – at the hospital.

MK: Oh my gosh, can't stop, won't stop!

KG: That was like, the day after his open-heart surgery.

AG: Let me see. (*laughter*)

JS: So then when you came back in '76 to run the shop, to run the store, there'd been a lot of changes on Springwood Avenue.

AG: Yeah.

JS: Was yours one of the few businesses there, still? Things were changing?

AG: Well...

KG: There were a few; the riots had happened in '70, so the east side of Springwood after Atkins Avenue, there was nothing there – all the way down, past the tracks, until you got to Main Street. But the west side, those stores, what little stores were there were still there. Nothing really changed. Even when he was touring and he'd come home for a while, and he'd come back to the shop, he'd stay there. Or he'd stay at my aunt's in the Bronx -- on Crotona Avenue. But when he came for good [in 1976], that's when him and Dee got together, and they had the trio. Him, Dee, and Palmer Jenkins – and then sometimes another guy. Through the '80s, he probably played; I remember going to see him play. I probably was 23, 24. So he stopped, probably, playing out in '85.

JS: I didn't realize it was that late during the '70s and '80s. We have one reference here to you playing with Dee at the Terrace Bar in 1975, or around then. Going back again, going back to the '50s – Cliff Johnson had told us about playing in one venue, at the Turf Club, and going for a break and going around to the next club – the Capitol, actually, is what he

mentioned – listening to everybody play, walk around, come back in and play. It sounded like there was an exchange of everybody listening to each other, a real camaraderie.

AG: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

JS: Do you have memories, things like that? Does that sound right to you?

AG: Yeah.

KG: Dad, you talk to much. *(laughter)* They're trying to get some information from you. Tell them what it was like. Cuba's just got his building, you could go to Cuba's; you could go to Orchid; the Turf.

AG: Yeah, and the Capitol.

KG: What was on Atkins Avenue – I remember you guys playing at the Elks?

AG: The Elks, and the Capitol, and Cuba's, and the Redwood. These are all clubs around Asbury.

KG: And Big Bill's?

AG: Big Bill's, yeah.

JS: Did you have a favorite?

AG: Did I have a what?

JS: A favorite place to play?

AG: I enjoyed all of them, really. I enjoyed playing my music.

JS: Didn't matter where you were?

AG: Right, right.

MK: What do you like to play? What are your favorite tunes?

AG: My favorite place?

MK: Tunes.

AG: Tune?

KG: Did you like big band or jazz more?

- AG: I like big band, and I like small groups, too. I just like playing.
- JS: I see a theme here; as long as you are playing, right? Did you ever play with Eddie Chamblee?
- AG: Eddie Chamblee? Yes! My friend! A friend of mine.
- KG: That was Dinah Washington's husband.
- MK: Oh, a-ha. What was that group called?
- KG: He had a band too, that my dad played on.
- AG: Eddie Chamblee, he used to go with Dinah Washington.
- MK: You recorded an album with him, right?
- AG: Mm-hmm.
- MK: *The Rockin' Tenor Sax*. We found that – glad to know it was you.
- KG: I pulled that up on my iPad, dad, I let you hear it. I was playing it and I said, "Do you know who that is? That's *you!*"
- JS: I listened to it his morning, as well. Beautiful. So that connects some dots. I think in maybe the clipping you showed there, it mentions the Dominoes, with Clyde McFadder [sp?]. Is that the same Dominoes that played on the same bill? (*papers shuffling*)
- MK: Let me see... here it is. See you're playing this gig, with – did you play *with* the Dominoes, or is that just another group that was performing that night?
- KG: They were on the bill.
- AG: They were on the bill, yeah.
- MK: So that was a separate group.
- KG: Same night, but...
- MK: ...different groups?
- KG: Yeah.
- AG: Matty Dice, I was playing with Matty Dice then. And Bob Brittenham.

KG: *This* was a group, and the Dominoes and the Sultans just happened to be on the bill.

*[nursing home worker enters]*: Mr. Griffin, you want a snack? Sandwich?

KG: Thanks, man.

AG: Thank you. *[door closes]*

JS: Did you play up at Fort Monmouth? With Dee [Dolores Holland]?

AG: Yeah. And Herman Green trio.

KG: That's my father on the left, and Eddie Chamblee on the right. *[refers to image on the internet on a cellphone]*

MK: Oh, that's a great picture... Oh yeah, I read that blog, from where that photo's posted. That's how I learned about that picture.

KG: Dad, who's that guy in the middle? Who's that?

AG: That's...

KG: Organ player?

AG: Yeah, organ player... let me look at that, and I'll be able to tell you.

MK: Yeah, that's the third person on the album.

AG: Dayton Selby.

KG: Dayton Selby, that's right.

JS: Have you met Charlie and Pam Horner? They've been working on a book around this for years.

AG: Charlie and...?

JS: ...Pam Horner.

AG: No.

JS: I wasn't sure if you've met them in person. They've been writing about music from the west side and this type of thing. Charlie had mentioned that same image of you at the deck in Belmar in 1956. He thought you were in trio with Bob Brittingham?

AG: Bob Brittingham.

JS: Okay, Brittingham. And Mary De Rosa?

AG: Played the organ.

JS: He played the organ, or *she* played it?

AG: Bob Brittingham played piano, or the organ.

JS: What about Mary De Rosa?

AG: What's the name?

JS: Mary De Rosa. Does that ring...?

AG: Trumpet player.

JS: Oh, she's a trumpet player.

AG: Trumpet player.

JS: Another female.

MK: I was about to say, a woman playing a brass instrument. That's pretty uncommon, right?

AG: Yeah.

MK: I haven't heard of very many female musicians, besides Dolores. And now, I know this Mary. I know to be a singer, that used to be pretty common. Were there many other women that you performed with on the Shore, locally?

AG: No, just Dee Holland. That's all I remember.

JS: Do you remember people calling Dee, "Queen Dee?"

AG: Wendy?

JS: Queen? Queen Dee? Do you ever remember anyone calling Dolores "Queen Dee?"

AG: No.

JS: We'll just keep asking that. (*laughter*) So is there anything that you would like someone walking down Springwood Avenue today, to know about its history? Something that you wished they'd know, that they might not understand today?

AG: I don't know. I'm trying to know what you're saying.

JS: What I'm asking: because you have so many years on Springwood Avenue playing music, and now, when kids are walking down Springwood Avenue, you can't see the clubs, there's not so much left to see or know about that history. Is there anything for you that you would like kids today to know about Springwood Avenue, and the music of Springwood Avenue?

AG: Cuba's; that was a main place, Cuba's. There was... the name of the place was Savoy. I think it was Savoy. The State Ballroom. The Capitol. That's about it.

CT: Did you know – what was the name? – Henry Lopez, Cuba's the proprietor of Cuba's? You met him, you knew him?

AG: Cuba's, yeah. Yeah. It was a nice room back there.

KG: Did you know the owner?

AG: Of Cuba's?

KG: Yeah.

AG: That was him, Cuba. (*laughter*)

CT: That's what everybody called him.

AG: That's what I knew; that's what I knew – “Cuba.”

CT: Found out he *was* from Cuba. He was actually Cuban.

JS: Did you ever play out on the boardwalk, at the Berklee [Hotel in Asbury Park] or anywhere?

AG: Nowhere on the boardwalk, no. Not in Asbury. Atlantic City I did, but not in Asbury. Matter of fact, I played Donald Trump's father's place out on the boardwalk in Atlantic City.

JS: What about Main Street? Anywhere on Main Street in Asbury?

AG: I don't remember any clubs on Main Street that I played in. I don't remember... none on Main Street. In Asbury Park?

JS: Mm-hmm.

AG: No. I don't think so. Down the beach, played down there. And on [Route] 35, I played on 35, in Asbury. Yeah, that's about it.

KG: Dad, where did you play down in Asbury on the beach? You said not on the beach, but where? At the hotels down there?

AG: At the Plaza.

CT: Plaza?

JS: Where the Convention Hall, Paramount Theater is?

KG: No, there used to be a bunch of hotels, you know, where the circuit is. Inside the circuit, there were hotels that used to have live music. I remember when I was coming up, there was bands that had live music, and I was wondering if you played any of those. You don't remember?

AG: No.

JS: Do either of you have anything?

CT: Yeah, I just have one question. When you started out, you know, started to play *jazz* in particular, not just playing the drums, but *jazz*, and you were going to play. Did you have any other musicians that were an influence to you?

AG: Yes. There was a fellow called Nathan Ricks. He played saxophone. He and I used to be friends, you know, he was my age. We used to get around, playing different places. We weren't old enough to go in bars, but we used to get together.

CT: But what I mean is – were there any other drummers as you were starting out, that when you heard their playing, they sort of influenced *your* playing?

AG: Yeah, Albert Fields; he played, I enjoyed his playing. There was another fellow called Sonny Seagers, I enjoyed him. There was John Jordan. He couldn't play as well as me. *(laughter)*

KG: These were New York cats, dad?

AG: Huh?

KG: These were New York cats? These were cats in New York?

AG: No.

KG: They were down here?

AG: Yeah.

KG: In Asbury?

AG: Asbury, yeah. Sonny Seagers and Albert Fields.

KG: Did those guys ever go out on the road?

AG: Who? Those other fellows?

KG: Yeah.

AG: No, just me. I used to go out on the road. Nobody else in Asbury went anywhere.  
(*laughter*)

JS: You went *everywhere*, though. Sounds like you went everywhere. So when you mentioned your first friend, Nathan?

AG: Nathan Ricks, he played saxophone.

JS: Now, when we first came in, you said you saw somebody walk down with drumsticks.

AG: Oh, that was Jordan -- John Jordan.

JS: John Jordan.

AG: He messed around with drums. He couldn't play as well as me, he couldn't; but I...

KG: You tolerated him? (*laughter*)

AG: Yeah, put up with him. (*laughter*) We were friends.

JS: He went to the corps with you?

AG: Yeah, he was alright. He was a nice guy.

JS: Just not as good as you.

KG: What happened to Ricks, horn player?

- AG: Nathan Ricks? Well, we played together quite a bit. We were friends, he used to come over to my house.
- KG: He never did it professionally?
- AG: Huh?
- KG: He never played professionally?
- AG: No. We used to go down in the back of the store and play, get together and jam. There was a lady that lived in the back, where I was playing. She took me to court. I told the judge that I was just learning to play, and I liked playing my drums. So the judge told me, "You just keep on playing," and, "Miss, if you come back down here complaining again, I'm going to put you in jail!" (*laughter*) He was only kidding, I supposed.
- JS: That's a smart judge though, a smart judge. That's a great story.
- AG: I was about 16 years old then.
- CT: Did you play – was there any school band? Because you went through high school in Asbury.
- AG: Yeah, I was with the high school band. Asbury Park High School. I was in the jazz band. I was with the street --, the band that played for football games.
- CT: Right, the marching band.
- AG: I was with the jazz band, I just liked playing jazz drums.
- CT: Right, right. They even had jazz back then. They didn't have jazz when I was going through. (*laughter*)
- JS: You didn't have a jazz band?
- CT: No, we weren't playing *jazz*. No, it was one of those periods.
- AG: Are you a drummer?
- CT: No, I used to play clarinet and sing, but I wasn't professional, but I know a little music. It's my brother who was the musician, not me.
- KG: Gladstone.
- MK: Did your brother – did you ever play with Gladstone?

AG: Did I play with him?

KG: Did you ever play with Gladstone, dad? Do you ever remember playing with Gladstone?

AG: Who? Gladstone? The name sounds familiar.

KG: You know Gladstone, he's a few years older than me. He was an organ player, he played for the church, forever.

AG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know. Yeah.

KG: You never played with him, though?

AG: No, but I know of him. Yes.

JS: A lot of the musicians, it seemed, that played in the clubs on Springwood also played in church. There was a lot of the same churches, it seemed like people were going into the same...

KG: Not him.

JS: Not you?

CT: He was strictly jazz. *(laughter)*

MK: Yeah, no drums in church.

CT: Well, maybe not *his* church.

MK: Yeah, maybe not. Back then, I don't know...

AG: Can I have this? *(referring to papers with newspaper clippings of AG's performances)*

MK: Yes, of course.

AG: This is really nice.

KG: Dad, you never played drums in church, did you?

AG: No. No, I never played drums at a church. Mostly bars and stuff.

KG: I don't think he ever stepped foot in a church, have you?

MK: *(resident enters room)* Hi, sir. We're in your room.

JS: Might want to watch out. Sorry about that...

KG: How are you doing?

*(resident speaks inaudibly)*

AG: He rooms here.

KG: That's his roomie.

JS: We're just talking to Al here about his music. So is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

KG: Jog your memory. How about the time when I was a baby, and my mother and I came to Chicago to see you play, and they lost all my baby clothes? *(laughter)* Any stories you want to tell?

AG: I was trying to think of something...

KG: I don't think we have that much time.

JS: We have plenty of time!

KG: We gotta jog his memory.

MK: I understand.

KG: Dad. At the Fountainebleau – that was with Timmy Rogers?

AG: Yes. That was Timmy Rogers.

KG: Timmy Rogers was a comedian, and he used to tour with him.

AG: He's a comedian, Timmy Rogers.

KG: Used to tour with him; they've done a few commercials. I remember the commercial with him and Sammy Davis Jr. He's passed away now. You did some gigs with Red Fox, too?

AG: Red Fox, we did...

KG: Midwest somewhere? Kentucky or somewhere?

AG: Atlanta, Georgia.

KG: I know it was somewhere south, right?

AG: Mostly around New York, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.

KG: And Sammy Spear?

AG: No, I never played with Sammy Spear?

KG: Never played with Sammy Spear? I thought you played with Sammy Spear.

AG: Uh-uh.

JS: When we came in, you were playing. I'm wondering if we can get you play a little bit.

MK: Will you play for us?

AG: Sure. Better close the door!

*[AG improvises a two-minute percussion solo with drumsticks on a makeshift drumpad and a set of cymbals]*

*[applause]*