

ASBURY PARK AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC PROJECT

Interviewee: David Peace

Interviewers: Jennifer Souder, Yvonne Clayton

Date: 10/28/21

Location: Turf Club, 1200 Springwood Ave., Asbury Park, NJ

Jen Souder: Hi, I'm Jennifer Souder from the Asbury Park African-American Music Project. I'm here today with Yvonne Clayton and Mr. David Peace. And we're really happy to have Mr. Peace here together today to talk about his memories of Springwood Avenue and the Turf Club. Uh, so the Asbury Park African-American Music Project has been working for a number of years to document and share the stories of Springwood Avenue and make sure that this history is preserved and also shared with other generations.

Yvonne Clayton: So we are here to preserve this history and we're very, very honored that today, with us, is David Peace who is a very important part of that history. And-and what's significant about today is that we're filming in the Turf Club and Mr. Peace performed here. And I think he did one of the last performances in the building before it closed down. So, thank you so much for agreeing to come out and be with us today.

David Peace: My pleasure, my pleasure.

Jen Souder: And can you just tell us your full name and, uh, when you were born and-and where you were born?

David Peace: Okay. My name is David Leon Peace. I was born August 24th, 1947. I am now 74 years old. I was born right here in Neptune, and, uh, I was, well as a young kid I grew up in Farmingdale, New Jersey. And I moved here when I was in the fourth grade. Moved to Neptune in the fourth grade and, uh, I've lived in quite a few places but this is basically my home. Yeah. I just moved back in 2003. I was in Newark since '77. And all the music stopped here so I went to Newark to pursue another career up there. But I got homesick and I came back home (laughs).

Jen Souder: Well we're glad you're back. We're glad you're back. And, um, can you tell us some of your earlier memories, um, of Springwood Avenue?

David Peace: Oh man. It used to be the hot spot. You know? From 35 to the railroad tracks. There was always something going on and, you know, had a lot of businesses there, you know. And, um, as a kid we was up and down screaming all the time just enjoying ourselves you know, doing what kids do. You know, every now and then, you know, running around the block doing stuff, you know.

Jen Souder: (laughs)

David Peace: But, all in all, it was a great, it was a great time to be alive, I tell you. Asbury Park really happening, yeah.

Jen Souder: And how did you get started with music?

David Peace: Well I've been doing music since I was a little boy. Yeah. Started out in church, as most of us do, you know. But once I moved here I used to come down the avenue, always hear music playing in the Turf or Big Bill's or the Orchid Lounge and I would want to get in there, you know. I wanted to see it for myself, you know. And, um, by the time I was a teenager, you know, started putting groups together, you know. So we did a few groups and stuff, until I met this brother named Charles Mcmillan and that was like '66, '66, '67. We started out with a five man group and dwindled down to two people, him and I, you know.

We always wanted to get in the Turf Club, you know. So we worked hard at trying to get there. And at that time, Wakie Goldston, who was running the Turf, we used come in and ask him, you know, "Give us a shot." You know. But it was a maybe, maybe, maybe you know. So one particular night, we were sitting in the club and they had a band from Paterson here. And the people didn't like them. So usually, if you work for them, you work Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, a Sunday afternoon matinee and then Sunday night. So the band was here Thursday night and Friday night. But nobody liked them.

So he told us Friday night, "I'd like to give y'all the chance because nobody liked the band." So, uh, later on that night before the club closed, he came to Charles and I asking if we had a band, that we could come in Saturday night. We told him yes. We didn't, but we told him yes anyway. So he said, "Well be here Saturday night, 9 o'clock, to start playing." So we left the club, started knocking on doors, getting people together. And at 6 o'clock that morning, we was at the barbershop, Jam's barbershop rehearsing. And that night, we was onstage.

Jen Souder: Wow.

David Peace: And I guess the funniest part about that was now that he gave us a shot, we only had Saturday night. If we did well Saturday night, we could the Sunday matinee. And, uh, so we did the Sunday matinee and Sunday night was gonna be our last performance. So we had to think of something to do for people to remember. So in our last set, we undressed and we had on nightgowns-

Jen Souder: (laughs)

David Peace: And, uh, everybody went wild for it because we were there for the next couple of months.

Jen Souder: Oh, I wish there was documentation of that (laughing).

Yvonne Clayton: (laughs)

David Peace: (laughs) Yeah. But it was fun.

Yvonne Clayton: What did you call yourselves?

David Peace: Charles and Dave and the Soul Kings. Yup. It was [Robert Lee], [JB Williams], [Claude Collins], and [Freddie Wynn]. And Charles and myself. Mm-hmm.

Jen Souder: Amazing. Ah.

Second Video.

Jen Souder: So about what year was that?

David Peace: Uh, I think that was... Well, we actually got in here... I think it was about 70... 71 when we finally got in here to actually perform.

Jen Souder: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So it sounds like persistence- (laughs)

David Peace: Yeah, yeah.

Jen Souder: ... persistence, a little bit of luck and a lot of talent, I'm sure.

David Peace: Yeah.

Yvonne Clayton: And talent, yes.

Jennifer Souder: A lot of talent.

Jen Souder: Uh, and so when you f- when you did get to perform that first weekend, can you tell us a little bit about what you remember it being like in here in the Turf Club?

David Peace: Oh, man it was... everybody was having a good time, you know, and everything. You know, [inaudible] the place was lit up nice [inaudible]. I mean, it's hard to explain. It was just great. (laughs) It was great. (laughs) I'm telling you, the atmosphere. Uh, you wouldn't believe the atmosphere. You know? And all the people that came, you know, we didn't have to worry about fights, shooting and all that stuff, you know? Everybody just enjoyed themselves, you know? It was... It was a good time. It was really a good time.

Yvonne Clayton: What did the club look like back... back then?

David Peace: Ah, well, let's see. Well, we had a [inaudible], a U-shaped bar right here in the center. They had the stools on each side. I had tables along the wall, all the way

around. You know, and, uh, of course they had the dance floor right over here. It was a... i-i- it's great.

Yvonne Clayton: It was a dance floor?

David Peace: Yeah. Yeah. (laughs) Well, they danced all over the place, but really, you know? Yeah, people dance at the tables, you know, but it was... it was great. It was great. Yeah.

Jen Souder: And you guys ended up playing in other places on Springwood Avenue?

David Peace: Uh, Big Bill's, the Orchid. Yeah, we did that. We use... Uh, we used to do the Big Elks when it was here and the Little Elks and the Reindeer Rest... Oh, so... Redmonds Hall. It was... We played all over. Asbury and Neptune, uh, the Redwood inn, on 35. Yeah. And Bill Carter played with us a lot too. Matter of fact, the first group I was in, Bill Carter was... He was my first musician when I first come here.

Jen Souder: Oh, wow.

David Peace: Him and I performed in grammar school together, just him and I. And him and I did some talent shows, and we won a talent show or two, just the two of us... Me singing and him playing saxophone.

Jen Souder: Oh, again, I wish there was video of that. (laughs)

David Peace: Yeah, I mean, so do I. (laughs) But yeah. Yeah. It was a wonderful time then. You know, it really was. And every place we went, wherever we performed, we always had a good time. You know? And here, it was always standing room only whenever we performed.

Jen Souder: What... What were some of your favorite, uh, songs to perform?

David Peace: Well... Well, we did everybody, but we did a lot of Sam and Dave, you know, the duo, but I mean, we did everybody, male, female, it didn't matter, we found a way to do it. Yeah. So. Did a lot of Temptations and... Oh, God, we used to do Marvin Gaye, Tammi Terrell... I mean, anything that was out, we would do, you know, it didn't matter.

Yvonne Clayton: Yeah. Did you write any of your own songs?

David Peace: Not at that time, no. No. Well, I'm not good a writer anyway. (laughs). So. I used to write poems, but you know, I don't know, putting it to music was something different, you know, but we tried to [inaudible]. Then we... we did hook up with Billy Terrell... Ray Da Rouge and Billy Terrell used to write for the Manhattans. We did a recording years ago but, uh, of course nothing ever happened.

Jen Souder: And then was that under the same name, same group?

David Peace: Yes. Well, it was just Charles and Dave at that time, yeah. Yeah. With them it was just Charles and Dave, but it wasn't the band. Yeah.

Jen Souder: Okay, and then you... you said you were here in the 70s and then you made a choice to go up to Newark, was that later in the 70s or later on?

David Peace: 77. I left in 77. And, uh, was up there to the 2003. [inaudible] was a group up there. You had a group called Ten. The guys were from Jersey City. It was pretty good for a while, but you know, in most groups there's always something that stops you from doing something, you know, so. After all that, I decided to come back home... try my luck again, but no, I done got so old now that I don't know.

Jen Souder: Oh, nonsense.

David Peace: But we... I still talk to a couple people. Like Bill and I, we're still close. You know? We've been talking about trying to do something, so we've been trying to hook up some musicians, but they're hard to find. They're either dead or moved. Yeah.

Yvonne Clayton: Yeah.

David Peace: So it's rough. Yeah, but we're gonna try one more time. Yeah.

Jen Souder: I hope so. I hope so.

David Peace: Yeah.

Jen Souder: And we were... We were talking a little before we started about some of the younger generation coming up and, uh, you had mentioned a couple ideas about getting... getting some youth involved in music.

David Peace: Right. Right. Yeah.

Jen Souder: And that's something that we really think is so important, 'cause we hope that-

David Peace: Yeah, because they're doing nothing, you know? Like I said, when I was growing up, like I say, you walk down Springwood Avenue, every corner there'd be a group rehearsing, you know, getting ready for a talent show or variety show or something right there. Then now what I seen now it's just kids on the street, you know? They don't have nowhere to go, nothing to do. You know, and it's sad. You know, really sad.

Yvonne Clayton: Geez.

David Peace: You know, and I would like to do something to try to help that situation, you know?

Jen Souder: Yeah. As do we. As do we. We think it's a really important part, um-

David Peace: Yeah. Yeah.

Jen Souder: ... and also to... to make sure that there's that connection between different generations.

David Peace: Right. Right. Right.

Jen Souder: Uh, and now in... in 1970 every- things were changing, as you mentioned.

David Peace: Right.

Jen Souder: Um, and you were talking a little bit again before about what it was like to walk down the street, how it changed where there used to be music on every corner and then that change happened. Uh, why do you... Why do you think some of that came about?

David Peace: It's well... Like I said, well, number one, you know, the people changed too. You know what I mean? And like the, uh, I guess the officials of the city or whatever, they start closing things down, you know. I guess everybody was afraid, you know, that something else might happen, you know?

Jen Souder: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Peace: But nobody really put nothing back, you know? You know, all the resources and stuff they were gone. You know, nobody wanted to help anybody. You know, and the... and the kids had nothing to do, nowhere to go, so the youth is just on the street. You know, that's why a lot of them got into drugs and all that stuff. You know, getting locked up and stuff. It seemed like some of the parents didn't care either. You know what I mean? Because they wasn't doing anything, you know? You talked to people about different things, they might say the same thing, but nobody do nothing. You know? And it... You know, it just got... It was rough, you know? So... but hopefully one day they'll get it back. Well, I think this project will help a lot too, you know. That's why I'm all for it. Yeah, I'm all for it. Yeah. Anything gotta help. Yeah.

Jen Souder: We hope so and Yvonne, do you want to talk a little bit about the vision for the Turf Club, 'cause I think it ties in a lot to what Mr. Peace was talking about?

Yvonne Clayton: Well our... our hope for the turf club is t- to renovate it, bring it back to what it was. And that's why we're so interested in-

This transcript was exported on Apr 07, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

David Peace: Right.

Yvonne Clayton: ... what did it look like? How can we kind of recreate it with a modern twist?

David Peace: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Yvonne Clayton: But it's... Our hope is that we can bring musicians in. It's gonna be a club where you can come and be comfortable and sit down-

David Peace: Right. Right.

Yvonne Clayton: ... talk to your friends. It's a meeting place and it's a place that the community can come and be comfortable and share ideas. Um, also we have a website and we've been collecting information and interviews like yours that will be available in this club-

David Peace: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Yvonne Clayton: ... so you can actually come in and access it and look at the map, see what Springwood Avenue looked like back in the day.

David Peace: Oh, yeah. Right. Right.

Yvonne Clayton: See what was where, you know. Where... Where was the Orchid Lounge? Where was Reindeer Rest?

David Peace: Right.

Yvonne Clayton: Where were all these places? And with a blurb about what they meant. What were they?

David Peace: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Yvonne Clayton: What... You know, you talk about the Big Elks and the Little Elks, that doesn't mean anything to the current population.

David Peace: Right. Exactly.

Yvonne Clayton: And to people like me it's like, "yeah, I remember that". (laughs)

David Peace: Right. (laughs) You're right.

Yvonne Clayton: So... So, we wanna have that feel, like the feel that you could go to Cheers-

David Peace: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

This transcript was exported on Apr 07, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Yvonne Clayton: You know, you go someplace and everybody's comfortable 'cause you already... you know each other and it's... it's a community place.

David Peace: Exactly.

Yvonne Clayton: And also, a place where people can come and kids can come and learn about music.

David Peace: Right.

Yvonne Clayton: And... and be instructed by musicians like yourself and-

David Peace: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Yvonne Clayton: ... and Bill Carter, because you're our community-

David Peace: Right.

Yvonne Clayton: And you have this history and you have this knowledge and you have the talent, and it's an opportunity to share that and pass it down to the generation that we have now.

David Peace: I would love to do that, you know what I mean? I would love to be a part it. You know what I mean? To help rebuild something-

Yvonne Clayton: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Peace: ... because this was great once upon a time. It really was, you know? And, uh, I would love to see it back better than ever. And I know the talent is here-

Jen Souder: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

David Peace: ... but nobody is trying to, uh, collect that talent, you know, or do anything about it. You know what I'm saying? Just let them do it, you know they're always, let the other guy do it. You know, but... Like I said, I would love to be a part of something like that, you know? So, I'm all for this project (laughs), but I'm telling you I'm... I'm... I'm gung ho about it, really (laughs), you know. So anything I can do to help? I'm willing.

Jen Souder: That's music to our ears, isn't it?

Yvonne Clayton: Yes. We're gonna do it.

David Peace: Okay.

Yvonne Clayton: We... we're gonna make this happen.

Jen Souder: We're gonna make it happen.

David Peace: A- all right.

Jen Souder: And part of it...

Video 3.

Yvonne Clayton: ... almost. (laughing) So David, tell us exactly what did you do with the band?

David Peace: I was one of the singers. Charles and I, we sang. The band played and we sang. (laughs)

Yvonne Clayton: Okay, so you were the vocalists?

David Peace: [crosstalk] I like entertaining, you know. I won't say I was a great singer but I could hold my own but uh, I just love entertaining, making people happy, feeling good, you know. That was my thing, you know. I liked a lot of movements. So I did a lot of dancing but that was it for me, you know. I just loved to sing. Let somebody play. Let me do what I feel, you know. That's what it was really.

Yvonne Clayton: Did you sing in high school or talent shows or things like that?

David Peace: We did talent shows in school, you know, uh, in church like I said, you know. And uh, like I said, they always had something going on like at the community center, stuff like that. We always did talent shows, stuff like that. It was just good. It was just good, yeah.

Jen Souder: And you just taught yourself or is it something that you knew? You listened to other...

David Peace: Well, my whole family was musical, you know. Say I got brothers and sisters that play instruments. All I says is look, I can only play the radio, sir.

Yvonne Clayton: (laughing) I can do that.

Jen Souder: (laughing)

David Peace: I tried, you know. I tried to play, you know. I got a keyboard. I mess around on it once in a while but I can't really play, you know. But uh, I should have 'cause I had started taking lessons when I was in Newark but then I had to go to work so that stopped, you know. But they had a lot of crafts and arts and stuff there at the time that you could just go to different places and learn. So I did that but I had kids too so I had to...

Yvonne Clayton: Yeah

David Peace: ... go to work so I couldn't go there so I said well I just stick to what I know.

Yvonne Clayton: So did your family, all of your family played instruments? Did you ever...

David Peace: Not all of them. A lot them did. A lot of them did, yeah.

Yvonne Clayton: Did you ever perform with them?

David Peace: No we never really performed together. Mm-mm (negative). They weren't into it like I was, you know. They really weren't into it like I was, you know. It was something I always wanted to do. I used to when I was kid, get the broom and pretend to play guitar and sing and all that kinda stuff, you know. But nobody was into it like that. Yeah.

Jen Souder: Now you were sharing some pictures with us which we can't wait to, to share um, through our digital museum and there's a picture of your uncle performing here with you.

David Peace: Oh well he, he sang with Charles and I at one time. He was part of the group when we came down to two.

Jen Souder: Uh-huh.

David Peace: 'Cause we started out with five. Then it ended up being four. Then it ended up being three. Then it just became us so. Charles and I performed together for about six years, you know. We was on the road a lot. Whenever we was here, this is where we were performing.

Yvonne Clayton: Did you perform outside of Asbury?

David Peace: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Uh, the last time when Robert Lee was here, he was talking about this place in Springfield, Massachusetts called The Famous Door. Well, we was all there together. We was all there. Then we went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, did a lot of stuff down south, North Carolina, Fort Bragg, yeah. Used to- uh, we used to play over at Fort Monmouth a lot. We'd perform over there a lot, yeah. Fort Dix, yeah so we did a lot of military bases, yeah. Even out at Earl. Yeah, we, we, we put in a lot of performances- I'll tell you we only had two weekends off in two years.

Jen Souder: Wow.

David Peace: One we had to just take and the other one, the people that wanted us, we was on the road, so they missed us. Yeah, we had a good run, we had a good run.

Yvonne Clayton: I would say, sounds like you had a very good run. (laughing)

David Peace: Yeah, yeah. It was good.

Jen Souder: Do you have any recordings?

David Peace: Nah, nah, not- What I can say we did that one recording with Ray Da Rouge and uh, Billy Terrell but uh, I don't know what happened to that.

Yvonne Clayton: So no cassette tapes in your basement?

David Peace: Nah, nah.

Yvonne Clayton: (laughing)

Jen Souder: (laughing)

David Peace: I just have a demo that I did some years ago with this guy named Ernie [Suscon?] up in Irvington, but it's half a demo, you know. I think he passed away or something. I don't know what happened to that. But I don't regret anything, you know. I ain't become the superstar I wanted to be but that's okay.

Jen Souder: (laughing)

Yvonne Clayton: (laughing)

David Peace: (laughing) You know. It's all right.

Jen Souder: It sounds like you shared a lot of good music.

David Peace: Yeah, yeah, and met a lot of artists, a- a- a lot of artists, you know. That was fun. I mean, the people that was already out there.

Yvonne Clayton: Okay.

David Peace: Yeah

Yvonne Clayton: Who did you meet?

David Peace: Well I think the first people we met was uh, Little Johnny Taylor. He had a record out there called Part-Time Love. So he let us sit in with his band. That place called L&P Lounge in Newark. And that was fun, yeah. Uh, we met, well, we met Patti LaBelle. Well we did a show with Patti LaBelle. And uh, [inaudible] right here in the Convention Hall. Yeah. So we, so we met a few people.

Yvonne Clayton: So you performed with Patti LaBelle here in, in Convention Hall?

David Peace: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jen Souder: Oh wow.

David Peace: Yep, yep, mm-hmm (affirmative). Yep. Met Jackie Wilson and uh, matter fact back then there was a, a church organist. He took us to a show with him 'cause he played for the Manhattans and the Chi-Lights and all that stuff so we got meet those guys, you know. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Jen Souder: Now you were, you were here performing the Turf Club most weekends but when you weren't performing, do remember other musicians coming through, did you see?

David Peace: Oh yeah, yes, yes. A lot, a lot of people came. I think my favorite was the Baghdads, Kim and Eddie. Now they were good. They were really good, yeah. And they was out of Louisville. But they used to be here all the time, you know. One, one of the guys, they lived here in Neptune. We called him Boo. I couldn't even tell you his real name. He used to play drums. Whenever they came we always, you know, we support them when they're there. They came to a lot of our shows too you know. So and that's what we used to do, you know. We uh, support one another, you know. And like, even like with the Equations, Alphonso and them, watching them. We shared a lot of stages with them when we were younger, yeah. But he had a couple other guys too but I think they passed on. But yeah, we, it was, it was good. It was good. Yeah.

Jen Souder: And did you all, did you manage your own group all those years or did you have people h- helping?

David Peace: Well Charles and I pretty much managed everything, you know. Of course we had no business head but until Wakie started with us, you know, managing.

Yvonne Clayton: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Peace: But that was short-lived so. But it was fun. It was fun. We had a good time.

Jen Souder: And what about now you're out there performing now?

David Peace: Not at the moment. Well, the only thing I was doing lately was singing in church but now church is closed so I haven't been doing anything, you know really. Well I did do a thing with uh, Bill Carter, Donna Carter and made a video that uh, [inaudible]. So I, I sang on that video you know, for him. [inaudible] lately. And now just singing at home.

Yvonne Clayton: (laughing)

David Peace: Yeah, if I'm not watching TV. (laughing)

Jen Souder: (laughing) Well hope to hear you sing live outside of home.

David Peace: I hope so. I hope so. I hope to get the opportunity, you know.

Jen Souder: Now if someone was walking down Springwood Avenue today, what would you want them to know?

David Peace: Uh, wow. (laughing) I don't know just that uh, if you wanna know about how-what it was like, I could tell you that. You know, that, you know, whatever I did personally music wise, you know. I just try to do the best I can do, you know. I try to be the best person I can see, be now, you know. And uh, you know, just want everybody to be well, you know, everybody love one another and let's try to make something happen, you know. And let's just do, do the right thing, you know. Do what Jesus asks us to do, love one another.

Jen Souder: Sounds like a good plan.

David Peace: That's pretty much, that's pretty much it.

Jen Souder: That's a good note.

Yvonne Clayton: Is there anything else that uh, you wanted to talk about or share that we missed?

David Peace: I, I think that's about all.

Yvonne Clayton: (laughing)

David Peace: (laughing) That I can remember, you know what I mean. But uh, I don't know. I just, I'm just, I'm just hopeful. Just hopeful for something new, you know, that uh, that bring people together. You know what I mean. And that's pretty much it, you know, because we need it. We need it especially, for the young folks. We really need it, you know.

Jen Souder: Well, you, you taking the time to share your story, we think is a big part of that future because we talked about you know, having a rehabilitated Turf Club and having live music. It's not n- it's not really about creating something, a brand new place or recreating. It's all about building on that, on those stories.

David Peace: Right, right.

Jen Souder: So without those stories, without that piece, just any old place but...

David Peace: Right, right.

This transcript was exported on Apr 07, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Jen Souder: You know, tying it to history is what we want to do. So we thank you so much for taking the time...

David Peace: You're quite welcome. My pleasure, my pleasure.

Jen Souder: Yes, and being a part, and being patient because... (laughing)

David Peace: (laughing) That's okay.

Jen Souder: So being patient with us. Sometimes it takes us awhile (laughing) get ourselves together.

David Peace: That's all right. That's all right.

Yvonne Clayton: Thank you for sharing.

David Peace: Nice to be remembered. (laughing)

Yvonne Clayton: Yeah, thank you for sharing your story.

David Peace: You're welcome.

Yvonne Clayton: And being part of a legacy of the Turf Club-

David Peace: Thank you so much.

Yvonne Clayton: 'Cause it has a legacy that we don't know.

David Peace: Right.

Yvonne Clayton: And we need people like you to come in and share it and-

David Peace: Anytime.

Yvonne Clayton: ... inform us so we're very appreciative.

David Peace: Okay, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Jen Souder: Thank you.

David Peace: Yes, all right.

Transcribed by: Rev.com, 3-12-22

Edited by: Jennifer Souder, 4-7-22

Reviewed by: David Peace, 4-16-22

This transcript was exported on Apr 07, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Final edit by: Jennifer Souder, 6-9-22