

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEES: Mary Elizabeth Sampson Irvin (MEI), Doris Funderburk Morgan (DM),
Martha Jonas Sadri (MS), and Betty Buyck Stack (BS)

INTERVIEWER: Sherrie Tucker (ST)

DATE: May 28, 2009

The interview took place at the Feminist Theory and Music 10: Improvising and Galvanizing Conference held at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's School of Music (UNCG). Also present were UNCG Development Officer Miriam Blackwelder Fields (MF) and Unidentified Participants (UP) of the audience.

[Begin CD 1, Track 1]

ST: Thank you all for being here. This is a really special occasion. I wanted to tell a little bit of a story about how this session came to be. Two years ago Elizabeth Keathley [UNCG professor of Historical Musicology] approached me and said she was thinking of hosting the conference this year and one of the reasons—maybe the main reason she was thinking that this would be a good idea because she knew about this all-women band that had been here from 1942 to 195—

UP: Three.

ST: Three. So she said would you be interested in working on something where we could do something with the Darlinettes, and I immediately went: Oh, Darlinettes. Uh-oh, because I had written this book where my main—one of my main—points was that I know the jazz historians to be more open and to be able to imagine jazz history that included people that they didn't know were there. And I worked real hard, and I interviewed over a hundred people, and I got the names of over a hundred bands. The Darlinettes was one of the bands that escaped me. [laughter] So I am absolutely thrilled to meet them, and I'm sorry I didn't meet you earlier, but I'm very happy to meet you today.

So we decided we would do some interviews, and I want to—There are some people to thank. These interviews are going to be recorded, and our Darlinette alums have generously agreed to have these recordings placed in the Special Collections [and University Archives] here at UNCG. [applause] So we're not just recording on women's jazz history here today. We are actually recording some history that will be in the Archives for other people to know about in the future. And I just—I appreciate that so much. So thank you so much.

And I have some people to thank on that regard. First of all, Elizabeth Keathley for coming up with this idea for hostessing [applause]. Yes, and I want to thank the person in Special Collections who's been so helpful in terms of getting photographs and getting recordings. And that would be [University Archivist] Betty Carter here at UNCG. And I don't—Betty, are you here? Betty here? Well, I'll point her out. [applause].

And then I also want to thank a person who has been instrumental in being a liaison between us and the Darlinettes and in bringing the Darlinettes here yesterday and today, and that's Miriam Fields and I—[applause, unclear]. I ask Miriam to please also—At some point we're going to make sure a microphone gets to her or bring her up here because she is going to have some very great specific questions. She knows the history so well.

So anyway, let's get started. I would like to introduce—The names—We sat kind of in name order. I'm Sherrie Tucker, and I'm in the wrong place. I should be on that side. This is Martha Sadri, Martha Sadri, Class of—

MS: Forty-nine.

ST: Forty-nine.

UP: Instrument?

ST: Instrument.

MS: I was a vocalist. We had a trio. I was the alto in our trio.

ST: Yes. And Betty Stack.

BS: I finished in 1946, and I played clarinet and saxophone. I should say saxophone and some clarinet. [laughter]

ST: Okay. And Mary Elizabeth Irvin.

MEI: I was in the Class of '53, and I joined the Darlinettes when I came to college in '49, and I played the trumpet.

ST: And Doris Morgan.

DM: I graduated in 1946, '42 through '46, right?

UP: Yes.

DM: And I was what they called the leader of the pack. I didn't play an instrument; I did some singing, but that's all.

ST: You founded the band. You founded the band.

DM: What?

ST: Did you found the band?

DM: No, no. The band was founded two years before.

ST: Okay. Alright I want to show a couple of images up here for people just to see other bands that were performing at the same time. This is Ada Leonard's All-Star Girls, the brass section. This is the International Sweethearts of Rhythm trumpet section from the 1940s. This is the Prairie View Coeds. One of the trumpet players in that band—This is a college band. This is from—This is an official college band from Prairie View A&M, a historical black college in Texas. One of the trumpet players said that she had gotten a scholarship at Bennett [College] here in town, but that she took—She went to Prairie View instead because they had an all-woman swing band, and she knew that, as a classical, she would have more job opportunities if she had some jazz band training, so she went there. And then we have yesterday morning's workshop.

UP: Yea.

ST: Here are some more Darlinettes: Mary Watts [Class of 1953], Audra Foil [Class of 1953], and Jean McMillan [Class of 1951], who and—Mary Elizabeth, I think you knew—

MEI: Yes, she was in the same class with me.

ST: Okay, okay. Yes. And we did a group interview, and I'd like to thank the workshop members, too, who were here yesterday morning, and who interviewed Mary, Audra, and Jean yesterday. And there they are, the workshop members, back there. And then here are the Darlinettes with—And I'm hoping that you will be able to help us identify some of the people in these photographs.

DM: Cherry Folger [Class of 1944] was the originator. She was from New Jersey. Where in New Jersey?

BS: White Plains, New York.

DM: White Plains, New York, yes. And she started the band after she came here; transferred from Eastman School of Music [Rochester, New York], and she started. She had an orchestra there, and she started here with the Darlinettes, and this—she is a trumpet player, a fine trumpet player—and this was the original group here that she started.

ST: Okay. Do you know any of the members there.

BS: Yes, I know the one on the end. That's me. [laughter and applause] That one next to me is [Catherine] "Kitty" Fritz [Class of 1944], and the next one is [Rosalie] Pilley [Class of 1943], something Pilley, P-I-L-L-E-Y. I don't know who—I can't remember the trombone player and the trumpet player in the back, but there's Cherry on the left and the piano

player. That was the very beginning of the Darlinettes. And that was, I think, our first practice. [laughter]

[End CD 1, Track 1—Begin CD 1, Track 2]

ST: Can you say a little bit about those early days with the Darlinettes? How did this—Because unlike some of the bands, unlike, for instance, the Prairie View Coeds, which was an official band, this was not an official band of the college.

BS: No.

ST: What was the relationship between the Darlinettes and—?

BS: The college took no credit for having the Darlinettes in their midst, and in fact we practiced down in the basement with no windows and one door. We never got any college credit for playing in the Darlinettes, and they—we could take no credit of being in the Darlinettes when we said our activities—gave our activities in the yearbooks. We never said that we played in the Darlinettes.

DM: You just weren't recognized.

BS: It wasn't recognized at all.

UP: I kind of believe it was in the '53 book. I was thinking—

ST: In the '53 book.

DM: No, we didn't have a picture in the annual. We were just not recognized at all. And everything we did was on our own. We made the bandstands; we stored the bandstands; we hauled them to the gym when we played; and if we went out of town to play, we hired a bus. And I have a contract where we went to Catawba College in Salisbury [North Carolina], and they very plainly stated: We can't pay more than \$125. This is a fifteen piece band. And we had to rent a bus because of transportation. Nobody had cars then, you see. And we had to rent, and the bus cost us fifty dollars, so we had a little bit left over. Everybody got a dollar or two, [chuckles] and we bought some new music. And that's how we operated, but the school completely ignored us. If it had been a classical endeavor, it would have been a different idea. They were very supportive of those things, but they did not understand jazz. And the fact that they offer a degree in jazz now just thrills me to death. [laughter]

ST: Can you say—Can you tell us more about—I mean, why did they think that—Why didn't they support jazz? Was it just because it wasn't classical, or was there something particular about jazz that they didn't approve of? What was it?

BS: I think they didn't think that dance music was appropriate for someone studying music at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, so they certainly looked down upon anybody that played in a dance band. But now we're recognized as the beginning of the whole jazz program. [laughter and applause]

ST: A program that, by the way, is called the Miles Davis Jazz Program, isn't it. Yes.

MEI: We must have come into our own when I came to college because we were invited to play for the 24th Annual Gym Meet, which was in 1952 and Class Day in 1951, and you know, I don't know. I also played in the orchestra, which I don't know if anybody here is a member of the Guild here in Greensboro, but I got real shook-up this past week when they were saying that the Greensboro Symphony is having their fiftieth anniversary. Well, I know that I played in it in '49, so [laughter] that was sixty years—

BS: And I got on it in 1946. [laughter]

MEI: And so anyway I got on the phone and had some words to say. And what they're saying is that they're celebrating the incorporation of Greensboro Symphony Orchestra. But I don't know whether that was the fact that I played in the orchestra and the band. I didn't feel—I had the feeling that you all did about it. I felt that we were very well accepted. And I was the director at the end, and apparently there wasn't anybody that wanted to take over after that, so I was the last. And we had somewhere between fifteen and twenty people playing.

BS: And she's got the original music that the band played.

ST: Can you tell us a little bit about the repertoire? Where was the—Where did you get your charts and what kinds of—?

MEI: Well, I was looking through and found a couple of sheets where apparently they had made the list of the songs that would be played at the events, and I copied those down if you want me to kind of read through them in a hurry.

ST: Sure, sure.

MEI: One of them was—Starting with *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody*, *Blue Moon*, *Over the Rainbow*, *Be My Love*, *Stardust*, *Five Foot Two*, *Buttons and Bows*, *Blue Skies*, *Dancing in the Dark*, *You're Just in Love*, *Prisoner of Love*, *Long Ago*, *So in Love*, *Goodnight Irene*, *September: A Song*, *Full Moon*, *Empty Arms*, *Tennessee Waltz*, [cough] *My Heart Cries for You*, *In a Slow Boat to China*, *Autumn Leaves*, *I'll Be Around*, *Anniversary Song*, [unclear] *Samba*, *Charlie My Boy*, *Some Enchanted Evening*, *All the Things You Are*—

ST: [unclear] That gives us an idea. You have quite a book. [laughter]

MEI: *Adam and Eve*, *My Foolish Heart*—

UP: We played all of that in one night?

MEI: [laughter] Well, it's really strange because there were two different [unclear] evidently, and they were on both sides of the paper. That's what they intended in doing, and actually—Anyway, the *Foolish Heart*; *Until*; *Serenade of the Blues*; *If*; *Nevertheless*; *There Is No Tomorrow*; *My Darling, My Darling*; *How Deep Is the Ocean*; *For All* [unclear] *Places*; *Tea for Two*; *Ballerina*; *Maybe You'll Be There*; *I'm Confessing*; *I Want to Be Home*; *Careless Hands*; *You Are Only Fooling*; *So Tired*; *The Love for Long—The Love I Long For*; *It's Been a Long, Long Time*; *I'll Be Seeing You*; *For Sentimental Reasons*; *Pretending*; *If I Loved You*; *This Time We'll Build a Bungalow*; *Love Letters*; and *Laura*. And of course a lot of those are on another sheet, and then there was an envelope there that had—

ST: [laughter] I never knew this. Mary Elizabeth, I'm going to cut you off.

MEI: If the songs that they had intended [unclear].

ST: That's so—

MEI: I actually [both talking, unclear].

ST: I am so, I'm so [unclear].

DM: These were stock arrangements; we bought stock arrangements of what the big bands did.

BS: I think they only cost about two dollars.

DM: Right. Of course, the big bands were really five saxophones.

UP: Amazing.

ST: Did you get them in the music store? Did you find them in stock at the music store?

UP: Yes, we found them in the music store.

MEI: Harvey West Music Store is where I went and bought while I was director.

ST: Do you have any memories of a particular arrangement that you enjoyed playing, where you thought the band sounded really good? This is a question for all of you. Did you have a particular—Was there a particular piece that you thought the sound was—Isn't that—?

BS: Rain.

ST: It's rain.

UP: It's raining out.

BS: We left the umbrella in the car. [laughter]

MEI: I think it was interesting that these lists I have apparently—and I don't remember this for sure—but we must have opened with *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody*. That was kind of the theme song.

ST: That was a memory yesterday morning that somebody had was that the theme song was *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody*.

DM: Our theme song was *Autumn Leaves*.

ST: Oh, is that right?

DM: Yes.

ST: I actually have—Oh, here's the Rhythmettes? Is this the vocalists' group?

DM: Yes.

ST: Were you in [unclear].

UP: No, that's the [unclear] that year. [unclear: rain sounds and low voices]

ST: The Rhythmettes were the vocal group that were with the Darlinettes, and [pause] yes. So here again—I mean, here's a Junior-Senior Dance from 1945. So it's interesting that the— It seems like maybe the administration or the faculty were opposed, but somebody must have supported it enough for the band to play at the Junior-Senior.

DM: But it still would be the governor per se of WC [Woman's College] had nothing to do with this. If this was the Dikean Society having a dance, or if it was the Junior-Senior Dance, whoever was the chairman of that committee hired us and paid us. Nobody ever— It never went through the school.

ST: How much were you paid for—?

UP: Fifty dollars.

ST: For the whole band.

DM: This was in the gymnasium. We didn't have a—There was no other place for a dance, per se, and this was a set-up for one of the Junior-Senior Dances in 1945, I think, in the gym here on campus.

ST: Okay, and this is you?

DM: Yes.

ST: This is you leading the band.

UP: Yes.

UP: Well, I don't think we were ever paid. If we were paid, I never got any. [laughter and applause]

UP: [unclear, laughter]

ST: Really.

MEI: There wasn't any pay as long—from '49 to '53, I know.

ST: Okay.

UP: We just [unclear].

DM: You might find it interesting that the Rhythmettes, the four singers, was something that I loved because if you remember the old Pied Pipers, and those singers of four-part close harmony: that's what I like so that group there is the group that I arranged music for to sing with the band.

And one night—One day in the music building up in the practice room up on third floor, I was working so hard trying to get that thing. I was playing and writing, and writing and playing and then scratching out and doing it again, and all of a sudden the door flung open and this man was standing there. He was Dr. George Thompson, the organist, organ teacher, choir director and all like this. And we called him "Pinky" Thompson because every time he got excited or angry, he turned red. [laughter] That day he stood in the door, and he said, "What do you think you are doing?"

I was eighteen years old doing the best I could, but it wasn't [Johann Sebastian] Bach [German composer and musician of the Baroque period]. [laughter] It wasn't [Frederic Francois] Chopin [French composer and virtuoso pianist of the Romantic era], and that's what he meant. He was so upset that I would be spending my time. He said, "Get back to what you should be doing." That's the kind of atmosphere we had. And another time when I asked the Dean [Hugh] Altvater, who was a German, dean of the School of Music, and very firm. Stood six foot four violinist, and he controlled the building. These were during the war years when faculty was going and coming. He didn't have the option—[thunder]

UP: Oh, great.

DM: Of working with the faculty year after year. [laughter]

DM: You reckon that was your car.

UP: Yes, I think it is.

UP: The lights just went off. [generalized laughter and unclear comments, applause]

DM: I went to get out there after a summer of playing the organ—the piano in radio station WPTF in Raleigh, which at that time was the only fifty thousand watt station in the state, and I played piano with the organist, Leo de Solo. We did a program every night, right after [Jimmie Fidler [American columnist, journalist and radio and television personality], and they asked me to type some scripts. I said, “I don't know how to type,” and they were astounded. So I come back to WC; I go to the Dean Altvater, and I said, “I need to take typing next semester,” [laughter] and he drew himself up his full six feet, four inches, and he said, “Vatt does a musician need to know about typing?” [German accent] It was hard, y’all. It was hard to move along and do what we loved doing, but it was fun.

BS: My clarinet teacher was Dr. [Elliot] Weisgarber, and he told me that if I continued to play the saxophone in that band, I would ruin any kind of embouchure I could have for the clarinet. It would just ruin my clarinet playing altogether. But I didn't listen to him.

DM: And she found out later that her experience playing the syncopation and all in jazz helped her in other orchestras, right?

BS: Yes, I would say. I can still play any rhythm because I played so much band music.

DM: Most of our musicians were strictly out of high school bands. This makes you think of—know the importance of a high school band preparation, the music program. They had back in those days—and none of you are this old, so you don't know what I'm talking about—but there were no outlets for this kind of music, but if you liked music, you played in the band, and most likely the marching band. Sometimes the concert band, but those were the girls. We had three music majors, I think. Right?

BS: Yes, in the band.

DM: Three music majors in the Darlinettes—in the big band. The others were just out of high school, and they learned what they learned from a very hard-working band director. But we had so much fun, and their memories now, I can tell you, like mine, have a lot to do with our experiences in that band.

ST: What were your majors?

MEI: In 1949, I had a copy out of the Greensboro-Winston paper, and they made a point of saying that there wasn't anybody in the Darlinettes that was majoring in music at that time, so they didn't even have, you know, music majors in [unclear]

ST: What were your majors?

MEI: My major.

ST: Yes.

MEI: Business.

ST: How about [unclear]?

BS: I majored in music.

ST: Music. And you.

UP: In music.

BS: You all were unusual [laughter] for the Darlinettes.

ST: Have any of you thought of a special arrangement that you—Can you remember what the band sounded like? From being in band, can you remember a time when it sounded—When you really liked the sound; something that was special about the sound?

UP: I can't think of anything special except *Where or When* was a really good number for the harmony for us. We liked that a lot. But other than that, I can't think of anything. You probably can.

BS: Well, people liked things like *In the Mood* and *They're Either Too Young or Too Old*.

ST: But did people know that song?

BS: [unclear] Ramone. I can remember that [Pyotr Ilych] Tchaikovsky [Russian composer] symphony tune: *Full Moon and Empty Arms*. [laughter]

UP: That was beautiful.

ST: That's on the recording, that Burt Bruton [nephew of Sue Bruton, Class of 1947 and original Darlinette] put together. You did some—Do you—Are you on that recording, the recording from 1947?

BS: We are, yes.

[End CD 1, Track 2—Begin CD 1, Track 3]

ST: I have some pieces from the recording, and I'm not sure if I—We clearly don't have a picture, but I'm wondering if we have sound because I have—Or I could actually play it. Let's see it. I could play that *Empty Arms*. [unclear]

BS: Okay.

DM: Please, Sherrie, tell them please to remember the condition of the recording equipment at that time. [laughter] On little teeny 45 [rpm] discs; you know, little plastic things. The sound is not good.

ST: What do you remember about that recording? How did it come to be?

BS: How did it come to be? [laughter]

DM: We went to the Greensboro radio station to do it. I remember that.

[recording is played, followed by applause]

BS: That's good. [more applause]

ST: Okay.

DM: We really had some good sax players. You can hear that sax section and that's pretty [unclear]

BS: I mean that sax was the whole foundation. [laughter]

DM: Most of the stock arrangements are written for five saxes, you know, and with Glenn Miller [American musician, arranger, composer, and bandleader in the swing era] sometimes a sixth one down here, but we had only four and were happy to have four, and they were good. Yes?

ST: Can you tell us anything about this photograph? This is a little dark. I'm not sure many can see it, but this is a photograph that—actually Betty Carter said they didn't know anything about.

DM: That's Cherry Folger. That's the original group.

ST: Okay.

DM: The original group. And those are the Rhythmettes, the four singers over there in the corner.

UP: Oh, yes.

DM: We didn't have uniforms then. We borrowed evening gowns.

UP: This is me.

ST: Okay. And this is—Who is this?

BS: Doris Funderburk [Morgan].

ST: Oh, Doris. Yes. Doris is in the photograph, but we can't really see her. You're just a little too dark there. And here's the band from 1953, and it looks like there's a man in the front of the band.

UP: Is he the director?

ST: He's directing it.

UP: I don't know who that is. Betty, Do you know who that is?

UP: Nineteen fifty-three.

UP: I can't see. Has Betty got the name?

BS: No, I don't have it.

ST: I have some more recordings. I don't know if we—if there's one here that you'd like to especially listen to. I'm curious about a song here that I think Doris you wrote.

DM: Yes, that a [unclear, laughter and applause]

ST: That was [unclear] story of this song.

UP: Are these musicians who—?

DM: Yes. And you will find it interesting about how I had to do this. The stock arrangements, you know, come per se, and nobody—We just played it like it's written, but so often the singers could not sing it in the key that the arrangement came in, so this four-part arrangement that I would come up for those singers would be in the key in which they would sound the best. So we worked this thing out. The band would be playing, so at letter "C" for instance, the piano and the bass and the drum would keep playing, modulate and get down into our key. [laughter] Then we'd sing our glorious voice, you know, for our chorus, and then we would back away and then they would modulate back. [laughter] And the band would pick it up at letter "D" and finish it so that's how that had to be. In our day we didn't know any better.

ST: So what is this song, *You Don't Get It from Books*?

DM: I wrote that, but I don't remember. I've forgotten it.

ST: Would you like to hear it?

UP: [unclear]

DM: Whatever you think. However best your [unclear]

BS: No wonder the faculty didn't approve of this.

ST: Okay. Where's the [unclear]? Is this [unclear] in volume?

[recording is played, followed by laughter and applause]

DM: I don't remember the words.

ST: You don't remember the words. [laughter]

DM: That's the four-part harmony I was telling you about. That was very hard to do.

ST: So *Autumn Serenade* that was the theme song—?

DM: Yes.

ST: When you had—Shall we listen to a little bit of the theme song?

[recording is played, followed by applause]

ST: You put a lot into this without support from the college and without giving credit, class credit, you just—I guess I have one more question. I want other people to ask questions, but I want to know why you did it? What was it? What was it about?

UP: We loved music, you know, the music so much. It was much more fun to participate than to hear it, I think. Don't you?

UP: I think you find a lot of agreement with that.

UP: Yes.

DM: We just loved it, and made time for it. Some of us had so many hours in the Music Building every week doing what we had to do that if we hadn't had this outlet, I don't know whether we would have made it or not. But—

BS: And because it was fun.

UP: It was fun.

UP: It was just fun to be with the girls.

UP: Yes.

BS: And then that wonderful music of the forties will never be surpassed.

UP: Yes.

DM: And then we have the wonderful Steve Haines here on campus now who is heading up the Miles Davis School of Jazz, and if any of you have any money you don't know what to do with, please give it to him. I want that program to go and survive and it is; it is.

ST: I'm looking at the slide here of the story about the endowment for the—the Darlinettes Endowment for Artist in Residence, yes. So that's definitely—if somebody wants to support an endowment that is to bring female artists in particular as artists in residence—

BS: Yes.

ST: To the jazz program. [applause]

[End of CD 1, Track 3—Begin CD 1, Track 4]

ST: I know that Miriam's got some questions. If we could get the microphone to Miriam and then take some questions from the audience, that would be great. Now I have to warn you ahead of time now. This is being recorded. It's going to the Archives, and anyone who asks a question needs to sign a release form. See Sara afterwards to sign the release form.

MF: How did you determine your dress code? Is it on? Your dress code during that time? It was in the Depression [severe worldwide economic downturn in the decade preceding World War II.] Budgets were very tight. How did you all determine what to wear to perform when you went out of town? And I just think it's amazing that you had the funds to be able to have the busses and go outside. So tell us a little about that.

DM: Well, this started with Cherry Folger who originated the band in '44.

BS: Forty-two.

DM: Forty-two. And, of course, we were doing well to be in college. You all don't know what it was like at that time. Financially, we were coming out of a big Depression, World War II, and the best we could do were black skirts. Women did not wear pants then. You wore black skirts and white tops. Right? Finally we made enough money for the four singers, and we bought four dresses by—Well, anyway, we bought four dresses [unclear] and so we looked—We felt like we looked pretty professional, but the band continued with the white tops and black skirts.

UP: By the time we got to '49, we didn't dress alike. We just wore whatever evening dresses we had, and we felt we [unclear].

UP: We wore white blouses and dark skirts when I was here, and then I wore something [unclear], I have to tell you one interesting thing, my claim to fame. We went to South Boston, Virginia for a dance one night, and everybody remembers Charlie "Choo-Choo" Justice and Art Weiner playing and most people want their autographs. Guess who came for my autograph? "Choo-Choo" Justice and Art Weiner. So that's my claim to fame. But we had a good time; I really enjoyed it.

ST: I don't know who Choo-Choo Justice is.

UP: A great football star at UNC.

BS: All the way "Choo-Choo." [laughter] They were big football stars in the fifties.

UP: University of North Carolina.

UP: Yes, Chapel Hill.

ST: I was dating it. I thought maybe I was the only one in the audience who didn't know who Choo Choo Justice was. [laughter]

UP: How many people have heard of Choo-Choo Justice?

UP: A few. Yes.

UP: You can tell how old we are.

ST: Betty Carter is here now, and I want to give her the applause I tried to give her earlier. [applause] Betty Carter—We only have slides, but these are photographs that are in the collection—in Special Collections [and University Archives] here at UNCG, and there's a fantastic amount of research materials on women in music here so if you have a chance to, head over and take a look at the archives.

MF: Tell us a little bit about your bandstand. Who made that and who was responsible for bringing that out each time you performed?

UP: What did she say?

BS: The bandstand. The "D" and the—

DM: That stands for the Darlinettes, and it was black corrugated board; you know, corrugated cardboard painted black, and the letters were glittered—sprayed with glitter. Every new year we'd have to take them off and paint them and put them back on. We spent no money, in other words. [laughter]

ST: Next question.

UP: Someone—

UP: How did you get your name—Darlinettes?

DM: Cherry—I met with Cherry and the other girls, and they had many suggestions for names, but Cherry—the original founder of the band—liked Darlinettes, and it just made me ill, but [laughter] since she was the leader, she won.

ST: Any of the other possible names for the band?

DM: The Rhythm Girls, or what did she think of?

UP: Nothing like Smashed Pumpkin [Smashing Pumpkins, American rock band]. [laughter]

UP: [unclear]

UP: Isn't that cute?

MF: Any other questions?

UP: Whenever you take part in a project like this, which is such a team effort, inevitably there's a kind of lore that develops around the team effort. And I'm just wondering if you remember any vivid experiences that became part of the story of the Darlinettes. Something that you all maybe—or several of you—shared as a memory. I mean it's just an experience, an event of some kind. Maybe at a gig, I don't know.

DM: We went to Pinehurst [North Carolina]. This is the one and only time that the school recognized we existed, and that is because the provost or assistant provost was program chairman of the National Rotary Association meeting that was to be held at Pinehurst. He needed some entertainment so—my Lord, we got the job. He asked us to go. They sent the school bus this time. We stayed at the Carolina Inn, and we were really uptown. And I remember: I was nineteen years old, but I was in charge of this group. We had no chaperones, no nothing, and I remember getting checked in, everybody into their rooms, and looking out the upstairs window, and here goes a whole group of the Darlinettes in a wagon with a horse. [laughter] When they came back [unclear]. Where are they going, and how do I get them back? Things like that always happened when you have a bunch of young people around, but the one thing I have to say now—and I haven't ever told anybody this—was: girls—you know how teenage girls are. They are pretty snippy, and they will talk behind your back. They can be unkind. None of that existed in this group. This group liked each other; they had a good time; they looked out for each other, and so that was that spirit there. I don't know how it got there, but it was there, and I'm so thankful for that because if we had had any major problems—We did have one girl who was boy crazy and everywhere I went, I was having to drag her out of the bushes with somebody. [laughter, unclear] You know, you just had to do that, and put it back

[unclear], but there was a feeling among all those players. You know they had to love this because they had full college schedules to keep, but they found time twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, was it?

BS: Tuesday and Thursday.

DM: Tuesdays and Thursdays we met in that dank room in the bottom of the music building to practice. We worked this out with all the other things we had to do, we worked it out. And for no reason except that we loved it.

ST: Did you still rehearse in the same room with your later band?

UP: I think we were in the music basement. I believe we were in the basement.

UP: Yes, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

ST: That's interesting that the band could continue even as people were leaving.

BS: Yes.

ST: How did you work it out? How did you—?

BS: How did the band begin?

ST: No, how—

UP: Continue.

ST: How did it get passed along? I guess somebody—

UP: Well, there were always newer and different classes, and they kept it going because it was—

UP: It wasn't just one player.

UP: Well, I have a question? Well, I have several questions, one related to recruitment, and how you recruited and how you auditioned. You know, you had this group that went along that was a real close-knit group. How did that process go so that that would continue as well as the quality would continue. That was one question, and the other thing I wanted because I'll just forget it if I don't say it right now. About—I love that—your piece. I really loved it. I mean it was the best thing that we've heard, and I thought—and I guess you don't remember writing it—but did you do all the writing or were there other folks in the band who helped with little pieces and arranging and stuff, too?

DM: No, I arranged other things, but that, I think, is the only thing original that we, from the very jump-go, started and wrote and arranged and performed.

MF: So, any other questions?

ST: The other question was about auditioning. Did you audition members? How did you recruit members?

BS: Heavens, no. If you could play an instrument—

UP: You were in.

BS: You were in. There was such a shortage of girls that played instruments, other than string instruments.

DM: See, there were so few girls in bands back then. You all think, in the '40s. It was mainly a male-dominated thing.

UP: I know when I was in the sixth grade, I was the only girl in the whole band.

DM: So if you could read music and stay on pitch and tune your instrument, you were in.
[laughter]

UP: Maybe this is just the nature of the big band, but it seems that things sit pretty low in terms of the pitch range, and seems to be kind of an absence of trumpets, but it makes me think about instruments that women were prone to playing and instruments that they weren't prone to playing. I was wondering whether the trumpet might have been a little bit outside of the range of the instruments that girls were most likely to have experience playing. Did you have trouble finding females who played on certain instruments? Was there a shortage among certain instruments?

DM: Hard to find a drummer, but—

BS: How did you happen to start the trumpet? How did you happen to play the trumpet?

MEI: Well, I started out when I was in the fourth grade with a cornet and stuck with it.

UP: Did they need a cornet player? Is that why, or did you really just—?

MEI: No, that's what I wanted to play. In fact, my mother wanted me to—She was not real thrilled with me joining the band. There was a fellow—a little boy that lived kind of catty-corner across the street, and he played the cornet. That probably had some influence on me, so anyway, when they had the meeting, Mr. Herbert Hazelman [1953 master of education] was the band director for all of Greensboro back in those days. I wish we had another one like him. But anyway, he met the parents of the students that wanted to be in the band, and my mother wanted me to take piano lessons first before I joined the band, and so she asked him if my teeth were all right. He looked down and said, "Yes, she'll make a fine trumpet player." She'll make another Betty Blackford, which was a girl that

was in high school at the time. So that's how I got started, and I played in the band and the orchestra all through high school. He used to pick me up.

There was a band here when I was in high school that practiced, I think it was the McIver Building in the attic. Do any of you all remember anything about that? Well, anyway the fire department came, and there weren't any windows or anything and we had to stop playing there, and then that's when I started playing in the Greensboro Symphony. So that's the reason I know that the Symphony has been—It's older than fifty years. [laughter] So, anyway I played in the Orchestra and in the Darlinettes. When I took over, of course I knew people that played instruments from different things that I had done, and so we even had a French horn.

DM: Oh, did you?

MEI: Yes, we had all kinds of instruments. We had fifteen or twenty.

DM: Oh, that's great.

MEI: We had a big group.

DM: That's great. String bass is not an easy woman's instrument either.

MEI: No, you don't find those very often either.

DM: We had one and she was a teeny little girl, and she had a time hauling that thing around..

MS: I played saxophone in school. I started in sixth grade, and my husband swears this is responsible for my overbite. I never thought that was true. I think you are born with that, don't you? [laughter]

ST: Well, why didn't you play the saxophone in the Darlinettes?

MS: I just didn't love it that much. I liked singing a lot better. And the vocalists were much easier to find because, you know, you could sit around the room and harmonize, or going in a car and harmonize just because it's fun.

MEI: I remember the first cornet that my folks bought for me was forty-eight dollars, and then I wanted a Conn, and they gave my folks credit for the forty-eight dollars that they paid for the first one, and the second one—the Conn was one hundred and fifteen dollars. It's funny that you remember those things. Then I wanted an Olds and that was two hundred and twenty-five dollars. I don't know what the instruments are now. They are pricey, I know, but they are a lot more money than that. But that was interesting to remember the price of the instruments back in those days.

[End of CD 1, Track 4—Begin CD 1, Track 5]

DM: Somebody asked about things we remember. It wasn't—this is about music especially, but—Wherever we played, we had to go by bus. And this was a city bus that you called and made arrangements for and paid them to take you, stay, and pick you up and bring you back. And the sight—if you can imagine, fifteen or sixteen girls with suitcases for spending the night sometimes, and if not, they had their instruments, and we had a time getting on the bus because everybody was riding a bus in those days. We didn't have cars. But we finally found out if we sent the drummer ahead with her wire frame music rack folded out like this, and she would get it. They would fan out and the rest of us could get on the bus. [laughter] That was the way to do it.

ST: A question back here. Yes.

UP: My question is related to your personal life. I was wondering if anybody—any of you or any of your colleagues, [unclear] I mean. Did your parents allow this and condone it, and did they know you were traveling at night alone unchaperoned, and things like that?

ST: Did you hear the question? This was—What did you—What did your families, what did your parents think of this? Was there any problem? Did they know you were going out unchaperoned at night? No. [laughter]

MEI: Mine did because I lived in Greensboro. [laughter]

ST: How did they feel about it?

MEI: They didn't complain. They figured we were with a good group. Mr.—like I say, Mr. Hazelman was here for a number of years, and we traveled a lot with him. In fact, while we were there, they took the first trip away from North Carolina, and went to Florida for a week, and I told my children, I said, "By the time you're in high school, you'll probably be going to Europe." And that's what they did. They travel all over now.

ST: How about the rest of you? How did your parents and families think about this?

DM: They knew.

BS: I didn't tell them.

DM: [unclear] the band. [laughter] They knew about the band, but they did not know to what extent we were going here, yonder and everywhere. And I had a really helpful roommate, and we had bed check at eleven o'clock [pm]. Can you imagine that: bed check at eleven o'clock, but we would fix my bed with pillows so that it looked like I was in there, and she was in her bed, and we would turn off the lights and once the bed checker passed, the hall checker passed, she would go downstairs and unlock a door in the basement, and leave it ajar so when I came in by taxi from wherever I was, [unclear] I could creep through campus—and we had—they locked the gates. You weren't supposed to get in campus after a certain—after eleven o'clock, and we had a night watchman with his little flashlight. He was looking everywhere and so I would dodge him. He would go, and I

would go this way. I had to go a half a mile to get to North Spencer [residence hall], but that's the way I got in. [laughter]

MF: And you were never caught, Doris?

DM: No, I came awfully close one time. Awfully close, playing out at—what's the name of that?

UP: Sedgefield.

DM: Sedgefield Inn. This was filling in. This wasn't the Darlinettes though. I'm getting away from the story. I was filling in with a band that was travelling through here, and something—they didn't have a piano player and they called, and I had done this before so they knew who to call, and I was playing out there, just having a grand time, looked up and there was my housemother [exclamations, laughter] sitting at a table out there, and the rest of that night I was so miserable. You don't know what it's like to grow up in a little town, Southern Baptist town, and used to do everything right, and your parents know you're doing everything right, and I knew in my heart I was going to be shipped home the next day. It was so miserable. I was so miserable but I crept home, got back in the bed and cried awhile, Nothing happened. She never said anything. Nothing ever came of it. And all of a sudden it dawned on my eighteen-year-old brain: she was married but she was out there with a captain, an [US] Army captain. [laughter, applause] I didn't get reported. Neither did she.

BS: One night we came in late. It was after the time that the doors were closed, and so we went up to one of the windows up on North Spencer, and we didn't know who was in what room, but we knocked on the window, and the person saw that we were out there so she raised the window and let us in, and when we found out that she was the hall proctor [laughter] and she helped us in, it was too bad.

DM: And for that you were campussed.

BS: And that I never was able to get off-campus practically the whole time I was here. I was always in trouble about something. But I never could get to the grill.

DM: Times were hard.

ST: We have a question over here.

UP: Did you all continue your music and playing after the Darlinettes and did you—How valuable did your experiences with the Darlinettes help you in later life?

UP: I didn't hear what you said.

BS: I have. I continued to play in bands until a couple of years when my lip gave out. But I have always played in a band wherever I was or in some group, chamber music.

DM: And I stuck with jazz. I was either in—well, one band called The Reflection. They did music of the '40s, you know: James Dorsey [prominent American jazz clarinetist, saxophonist, trumpeter, composer and big band leader] and all of those. And that was a nice experience. We travelled a good bit. I played some piano; I directed some; and with some combos and things, but—and all sorts of things that you do: shows, *Sound of Music*, all of this I would play. Directed those also and then I ended up at the Charlotte Coliseum, an organist for thirty—forty years for basketball, ice hockey, and trade shows, and all those things, so my career has been so varied, but it all gets back to that love of that jazz music, which is what I was playing.

[sound of footsteps]

UP: I just wanted to ask you about gigs, and how you got gigs, and how many—how often you played, and also about how far you would travel? You've already mentioned a couple of gigs that were particularly fun for you and stood out or whatever. But I don't have any idea of the scope.

DM: Well, it's like everything. One thing leads to another. We'd play one place and somebody would hear us and then they would contact us for another. But most of it was school affairs, except we did play over at Chapel Hill for [unclear]. Chapel Hill, was it a—?

BS: I think it was a dance.

DM: I can't remember exactly what that was. And then Pinehurst and Catawba. We went to Monroe [North Carolina], my hometown, for a something.

BS: We played at Fort Bragg [United States Army Base] and we spent the night in—I don't know what it might be—visitors' accommodations or something. The whole band got to spend the night, and everybody was in bed and quiet, and then I could hear people out in the hall, and they would be chatting and talking, and I went out and found out that were bedbugs in our beds.

UP: Oh, no.

DM: That same thing happened to us at Camp Mackall in Laurinburg [North Carolina] or Lumberton [North Carolina] or somewhere down in there. One of these girls was squealing like mad, bedbugs going up the wall. These were guest quarters. [laughter]

BS: I was so tired, I just shook my sheet and went right back to sleep. [chuckles]

ST: I think we can take one more question. I sure hate to stop, but we've—we're getting close—We're actually over time, so we will take one more question.

UP: I'm interested in your founder. You've got a Yankee coming down. She's, you know, starting a band out of—where there was none before. Could you tell me, you know, tell a story about her, what she was like, and have you kept in touch with her?

BS: Cherry Folger she's talking about?

ST: Yes.

BS: That she was talking about. Cherry was from White Plains, New York, and she had gone to Eastman School of Music for two years before she came here. She transferred to WC. When she was in high school, she had a dance band but they weren't girls; they were all boys in her dance band. She thought, now, this would be a wonderful idea to have an all-girl dance band. We had an army base in Greensboro [Overseas Replacement Depot], right in the city of Greensboro, and she thought, now that would be wonderful. We could go out and play for the troops, and then we could play for the dances once a month or some—Every now and then we had dances on campus where they invited the troops from the army base to come in, so she just spread the word around in the Music Building and put up notices on all the bulletin boards around in the dormitories. There were only about seven of us that started the band, but it continued to grow, and I'm sorry it's not here now, but we have some wonderful jazz going on on the campus now that is just marvelous. And all of the facilities, and everybody is behind it one hundred percent.

But Cherry graduated after two years, and she married an agriculturalist or something like that. She moved to Rocky Mount [North Carolina], and she had four children, and she died of cancer at the age of thirty-nine. [sorrowful sounds] So I wish she was still here. She was a wonderful person.

ST: And talented. She started a band that lasted for twelve years, and went through several generations of student musicians.

UP: She broke the barrier.

ST: She broke the barrier [unclear]. Well, I think we have to thank the panelists now, and any of—Will you be around to sign autographs maybe? [laughter] We have some scrapbooks up here, too, so people might want to take a few minutes maybe and come up.

And I do have to remind you: anyone who asked a question on the tape, we really need you to sign a form that Sara has over here. So if you asked a question, please sign the form, which gives us permission to put the recording in the Archives, okay. But thank you very much and thank you. [applause]

[End of Interview]