

Candy Foster Interview – June 11, 2015

Home of Candy Foster, Champaign, IL

Subject: Candy Foster (CF), blues singer and band leader

Interviewers: Rory Grennan (RG) and Katherine Nichols (KN), of the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music

RG: Get started with posterity here, it looks like the numbers are running. So...my name is Rory Grennan, from the Sousa Archives and Center For American Music, today is June 11, 2015, I'm sitting here with Katie Nichols from the Sousa Archives, and we're at the home of Candy Foster, to ask him about his career and some local music history. Say hello, Candy.

CF: Hello there! Happy to be with you young people, and happy to be a part of this project.

RG: Well we're happy to have ya. Looks like levels are good, so let's get started. ...Let's start at the beginning. Where -- where and when were you born?

CF: April 16th, 1938. Danville, Illinois.

RG: Danville. ...What can you tell us about your folks? What did they do?

CF: Oh, well...Danville...simple...town, little bit more 'n this, a coal-mining town, it ended up in my time, in the '80s as a General Motors town --

RG: Okay.

CF: -- a long time when I was coming up. ...was most of my -- me and my family worked for General Motors. ...My mother was a domestic and...was a, you know, workin' at home, she worked as a cook, restaurants, like that. So she did most of that work day and night. So I was basically raised by my grandparents, and...grandmothers, and...back when I was comin' up, a village really did raise a kid.

RG: (chuckle) yeah.

CF: That was really true. Back then...as far as being a neighborhood. ...you had to --you know, you drove down the street and we'd run over there, eh, who's ever cookin'? (laughter)

RG: Right, right.

CF: And, ya know, it was just that way, it was just that...pretty simple life. Back in them -- in them days. In the 50s and... early 50s, shoot, that's the way it was. We all had gardens, 'n -- and... livestock, oh you know, chickens... whatever, you know, some of the men had fished, and they'd share that with you. Eh, "Come over and get some of this fish! We got --we got a big catch today!" We did a lot of that stuff. So it

was a pretty simple life, and you got to know everybody...probably everybody knew everybody's business, but it was alright. Ah...I always tell people, I tell some of my kids.....I didn't even knew I was poor until I was grown. Hey, everybody was doing the same thing, so. That's kind of a cliché, but it's true. So...then... my Daddy was into sports more. Then they... well, of course, you know, you had the wars, and all that, and most of them were gone, and he was -- he was in two of them... my dad --

RG: Oh yeah?

CF: Yeah. So, the fact is that a lot of the times, it was just the women raising us, and my mother, she kind of moonlighted, that's where my music thing coming in at, she was a jazz singer, she did a lot of stuff, where, when she could. She was a... you know...just judging back from talking to her, my uncles, her brothers and sisters, she probably coulda did a lot bigger things if I hadn't came about. I came along and she was eighteen, so. Just when she was gettin' ready, starting to be recognized as a little singer...kind of hindered her...you know, I'm thinkin' back on it, and listenin' to...I'm sure that probably stopped her from goin'...and doin' a lot of stuff that she probably could have got to do.

RG: So she didn't perform as much, after you were born.

CF: Well...yeah, because... because a certain amount, that...you know, would mean travelin'.

RG: Mm-hm.

CF: And that kind of life is not a life for, for a kid, so I think maybe she wanted to stay at home, but she... they tried -- "they" meaning the grandparents, and all that, they helped out a lot, so she got to do some, but...I think she chose not go away and stay away, weeks...time, like that, I don't think she wanted to do that, so.

RG: But she would still play out locally.

CF: Oh yeah.

RG: Okay.

CF: They had supper clubs in Danville, and Westville, and Georgetown, and 'round here, all these places... they had a real nice supper club that made a lot of history back in the days, when I was real young, called the Lamp-Lighter, and, a guy that...anyway, the guy that did that "Rock around the Clock Tonight", one of those movies --

RG: Bill Haley.

CF: Haley.

RG: Blackboard Jungle, right?

CF: Yeah. See, back in them days, when she was a...he was one of the guys used to hang out in these areas, tryin' to make a name for himself, he had a band, swing band, and she performed around them, too, and, Bill Haley and...well, there were some more too. Neil Jackson...and, so she used to be around guys like Wes Montgomery, and they used to come to Danville, and, you know...put their shows together, work on their stuff, so when they go into the city, they would be a lot better, you know. So they hang around, play, so my mother would moonlight at night, and she bartended, and they -- and also sang. You know, the Elysian, the Elks, and the different clubs, you know. And she was with a guy, he never really did make it big, Tootie Russell... he was a bass player that had a pretty popular band, for the Midwest. Had a lot of guys, hung out, come and play with him... Indianapolis and St. Louis, things like that.

Then there was, another famous one was Clark Terry ...she was around him. And the biggest one was Bobby Sharp...you know, before he went and left Danville went out to make it real big, in New York...he was younger. I guess, the story is that he used to do gigs with her and play...used to get her to sing, but he did, supper clubs and things like that. And she was also with Bernice Holmes...Bernice Holmes was probably...a jazz pianist and singer. And...I mean, she was probably one of the top, around...you know. I don't care who was playin' jazz, she was, one of the tops. And she played when they came around, they looked her up. They...they needed to play with her or asked to play with her. So...which, in the meantime, I'm a little child, I'm goin' around, you know...I'm just soaking all this up.

At the time, some of these people, that are, household names or...history, didn't mean a thing to me 'cause I, you know...well, some of them were...known, but they wasn't...known known then, they were, and they... bid for fame, and that's another reason why, you know, when I think back on it, I'm like, man! And I tell musicians, yeah, I was 'round them guys! They look at me like, what? Well, you know I...I was young and didn't really realize the the value of it, at the time, although, you know, they all was valuable to me because I was fascinated by musicians and singers, and all that kind of stuff. So.

Danville had a very rich history of entertaining, acting, whatever, all kind of dancing, whatever. They just...from the time I remember, clean on up, I participated in stuff, and even after I left and started on my own, always came back, and ... performed, free to keep that goin'. And, it was one of the biggest things that really set all that off, for us--especially for us young black entertainers, and of all sorts, was... an organization called Warlettes, was all women. And... but it started in Champaign. Warlettes No. 1, was formed here, and...I think it was, eight to ten black women, professional women, more or less, and then they got a sister... grew up in Danville, ended up being twice as big as the one here. And then they started this huge talent show, well I don't think it was that huge when they started, started before I was... my mother was...real young. ...as the Winter Frolics.

And that's when the Frolics, you know, consist of chorus lines, and big bands, and, you know, all kind of things, back in the day. Like they did, the Cotton Clubs, you know, you seen them, the comedians, all kind of stuff. So that's what it was based off of. And, so it was a multi-talented thing. So everybody that had any kind of talent, to do that...started in a barn!

RG: Yeah.

CF: (laughter) They started in...they couldn't afford to, you know, rent a real nice place, so they started in a barn. But they clean the barn up, I think it had eight, ten-piece bands, and I remember goin' and...ridin' out there with my bicycle. I was too young to go in, go out there and put cans and stand up in the window, watchin'. It was exciting. So I was always, kinda, interested in it, but then, make a long story

short about it..... when I got to be a young teenager, I had singing groups. Back then, that's what I was into. Singing groups, you know, and we'd rehearse, and do all that. We started on the street corner singin' the doo-wops, and then we turned it into a little singin' group we called the Five Shades. Neighborhood guys. We had a piano player, Johnny Lawrence, and these guys were not only, was a singing group, but we first was, buddies, partners, and went around together. So, what that really means is, is that, out of the five, maybe two could really sing.

RG: (laughter)

CF: You know, and the rest, was...hey, they had heart. They stuck in there, they did what you told them to do...and they'd get their parts, it took 'em a while to harmonize, but we made it work! And... 'cause, we was always together, so there wasn't no sense in going out to try to get -- get somebody we didn't know, when we had guys there was willing to do it. (15:00) And it worked out, and they actually, they probably worked at it harder than the ones who could sing it. And so that's what made the group so special. And we used to sing around the different talent shows, and different things like that. So we ended up getting on the Winter Frolics, and doin' our thing there, and my mother would perform.

All these other people....older people, you know, they had a spot where the young people did their thing, and then the older people start doing theirs, so it was always good, it was like, and then when we really did get--they was out of the barn when I got there. They rented a Union Hall in Civic Center. Danville. ... Tilton. Union Hall. Which was great. They could come in. To give you an idea, of what this was like, this was, like, a heavyweight bout, once a year, and the surrounding Danville, Champaign, All around. ...basically for black people. I mean, it was a mixed crowd, but, I mean, ninety percent of it...were black people 'cause this money went to help out the community. Nobody really pocketed the money. You know, they -- they put it back in the community- -the community center... Boy Scouts, all kind of stuff, that's what they did. They bought chairs for the church, and this that and the other. So, they would do that, but the important bit is, is that, we get up there, and that chorus line, that was what was great for the young ladies.

I mean, they would spend half the winter picking out, they had trials, you know, they'd have something like twenty, twenty-five girls try out, and, they got professional on us, they got -- the dance instructors. And it was... 'cause they had black ones, that had danced professional, but they wasn't actually teachers. You see what I'm saying? These people...there was a white couple that --that's what they did. They were professional instructors. So, they turned it over to them and put that chorus line together and I mean...it was the highlight of the whole thing, I don't care whose talent was on there, the chorus line was the biggest thing on the Winter Frolics. Well, for a lot of reasons. First the pretty girls, but they were GOOD! I mean, they made it work, they didn't jive around, there wasn't no "who's who" and -- and -- and Miss Sally's daughter, basically "she can't dance, but ... she gonna have to be in it because it's prestige" -- they took all that away. Put all that out of there, and you had to earn a spot on that line. And that, you know, that was the beginning of really somethin' big for that, they had -- they had all the outfits made, everything, it was great. So that was one of the biggest things that went on for quite a few years...you know, I was seeing fifteen years of it. Ah, you know, I seen women, and their kids, their girls would come up and be in it. Now, the other thing was...the professional talent that would get involved, and come in and do things, dance, or comedians, and all that, it was great. I mean, just...and while I was excited doin' my thing, it was also a chance to see stuff I wouldn't ordinarily get to see, 'cause I couldn't be in the clubs, so I would be there and see a lot of that, the entertainment, how

they acted, what they do...and it was always a great thing to see my mother, 'cause, you know, she was...she was, ah, they called her the young...oh...Dinah Washington.

RG: Mm-hm.

CF: Her voice, if you listen to her...stuff by Dinah Washington, you pretty much can tell what my mother sounded like...yeah. So she was a lot better than...she could have been a lot better. She could have got out there and stayed out there a little.

RG: What was your mother's name?

CF: Richard Anne Buchanan. Yep. She's a little bitty thing. And, the...the family they called her "Inch." "You as big as an inch! Be quiet!" (20:51) Ah...so, that's what ... you know, and there was a lot of the stuff I went through, when I was in Danville, I lived down the street from, what's it called, Housing Authority, and (()) Terrace, and they had a wonderful thing back then. Like I said, it was a big band time back then. And Stephen Morris, the Morris family, they, he put together a band...twelve, fifteen-piece band. Sound like Count Basie. Duke Ellington, all that. I mean they did their charts, they did...and I...it was like--it was like magic to me. I can remember as a kid, coming around there, and I'd be playin' out there, playin' ball, and they were like a...and when they go, once or twice a week, you can hear--bein' the summer, they had to open up the windows...I don't think they had air conditioning built.

Much as I love football, basketball, and all that, when I hear that band, boom, I stop in my tracks, it was like a magnet to me. Rest of the kids was like "come on, come on!" I was like, "see ya." I just go right to that thing, you know, and this...eventually, they closed it up, so I got smart. I figured out what time they put everybody out and locked the doors, right. So I'd go in there and hide in the bathroom. And they'd get all the kids, all the grown people out and they locked the doors, and the band kick off, and it was grown...it was professional musicians, they were great! So I come out, and I'd be...so finally I met the band leader, he called me a couple times, "Get out of here, you know better than that, get on out of here!" Then I would...but that never stopped me, so a couple times, after a while, guys would say, "Hey, you need to leave him alone, heh, he ain't hurtin' nothin!"

So they he'd act like he didn't see me. They let me...think I was gettin' away with somethin'. (23:31) They ask me, "How was practice, how was rehearsal tonight?" Ah...well, so I did all that...and I got to know some of 'em, and I'd hear 'em sittin' around, talk about...you know, they did their...the big bands, and the combos, some of 'em had combos, they played jazz and blues, and...so I always watch 'em and listen to how they did things...I learned a lot from them guys. Because...one thing I learned about more than anything, they had a lot of pride in being a musician, and...they...they, like, they respected each other. You know, if you can play, and you -- you know...you put in, you paid your dues, they respect you. They didn't care if you wasn't as good as so-and-so or not, they didn't measure that as much as they measured how, you as a musician and how you carried yourself, and -- and -- and everything, and they would say, "Alright." Band leaders would say, "You pay...if you don't get the five dollars...you make sure you split it with them guys. And if there ain't nothin' left, you just come back another time." I'm talkin' about the band leader.whatever, you know. You don't...if you promise 'em something, you pay up, you pay your musicians. That.....that was always -- that was always drilled in my head, and I know for a fact that when I come here and started doing things, and started getting' out

there on my own, well, I know that really really helped me, 'cause, there were so many guys that didn't do that.

You know, they..."Well, didn't hardly make no money today, I'll get back with y'all," or somethin' like that, or whatever. They'd do a lot of stuff. And not all...because, what they were doin'...everybody was in the little rat race of little bitty money, everybody was cheatin' everybody, you know...the--the club owners, he's holdin' out on you, he's doin' that, "Well...you know, we didn't do this, and we didn't make that...here we goin' give you that tonight, we was plannin' givin' more, but we can't do that today," and all that, and by the time he does that, and then he'd...slice the other guys, ah, you know, that old kind of...it just went on and on. But there was guys like me, and...oh, just guys, I'm talkin' about musicians, that just wanted to play, you know, they didn't like it, but they sayin', "Well, I'm gettin' to play, and learning," and they take it you know, they go about their business. So that -- that was the kind of thing that I -- I brought here with me...that was built in Danville.

But where I got over here...they didn't...they was more cutthroat, you know back-stabbin' and doin' all that and they didn't pay up, and I was like "Oh...this the other side of the world, here, this music world." And so it just wasn't...I found out a lot of things, and, eh...everybody's doin' a lot of...for themselves. And I run into that right off the bat. And it didn't matter too much when I had little singin' groups and stuff like that. ... we just had competitions and -- and it wasn't no Hollywood money, worth nothin' involved, so, but when...you know, we run around, doin' a little singin', get in contests and winnin' somethin', that's fine, but...once I started gettin' into the band thing, then that's when I realized..... started experiencing a lot more stuff with guys had been out there, some guys, they take advantage of the, young guys that out there tryin' to learn, and ...some of 'em were really good bands, and some of 'em were really good people, but still, they still did it. But so did the managers, and the so-called bookies, you know, these guys, runnin' around, settin' up little things for us, to give the tour, and you hear...black artists talkin' about the Chitlin Circuit...have you ever heard that before?

RG: Mm-hm.

CF: (28:56) Yeah, so...I got a taste of that too. That.....that's pretty rough. You know, but still, one part of it is rough, but then over here, it's an opportunity. And you wait it through together, and, no matter what happened, you're still glad that when you got home you was glad you did it. You know...you know you got messed over, you had to sleep in cars, you know you had to do this, do that, you wasn't eatin' right, you didn't do...and I didn't even drink! So...that was a good thing, or smoke, or anything. So I was one of the lucky ones. I didn't have a lot of vices... but, still...it was still kind of rough. Because, even when you --even when you did make money, and everything, you could, there was only certain town, certain places you could, you know, get a hotel room...and they wasn't givin' no black man...you know, a band, no rooms. And nothin' like that.

So you had to go in the neighborhood and find boardin' houses and stuff like that. And...that kind of thing. So...we did a lot of that. But then...there again, there's...you set the little tours up, so each job depended on goin' to the first job to take care of the next job. One of them fell to the side, then boom, you comin' up short. Gotta get gas, the car breaks down, food you gotta eat, and so. At some dance halls, sometimes you go in there and call the management people up, and say, "can we get in the dance hall early, we got into town early, and we'd like to practice, rehearse," but we really want to do is sleep!"

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: That's what we wanted to do! So that's better than the car, and the bands...I remember one time, goin' down there, they sittin' in the restaurant, we got...drinkin' with everybody, we got some bean soup, somethin' to drink, that's about it. 'Bout all we get. So I took my money, and say "I ain't...that ain't gonna get it with me." So they say, "Aren't you gonna eat?" Say, "Nah, man I ain't hungry as all that, I don't want, I don't eat bean soup." So I happen to look down on the street, at a little grocery store, a little country store, I go down there, "Oh, this is it!" I go in there, and get me, I say "can you give me some baloney and slice it there pretty thin, so you give me a lot of it," (laughter) "and slice some cheese up," and he said, "yeah, I can do that", everything, and I'd get me a little box of crackers, and all that so, I had...and then I bought a bunch of cheese and baloney, and...I come back to the dance hall, boy, them guys, I asked look like, "you thought I had T-Bone steaks."

RG: (laughter)

CF: Talking about, that was the best meal...woo! I'll never forget that one. So, you know, we used to do stuff like that, and we'd get goin' to boarding houses, and the...little lady would say, "Now looky here. I don't want no more than two, three people in that room up there, go down to so-and-so, she got something, she might have something for you, but I don't want nothin' of it. "Yeah ma'am, yes ma'am..." So won't let us in...we sneak 'em up the back stairs!

KN: (laughter)

RG: Right, right.

CF: Take the mattresses off...you know, they have a box mattress, then you have another mattress down there, and we all on the floor...And I – I – I – would work right good, so we figure out...but the problem was in the morning. One bathroom.

RG: (laughter)

CF: Yeah, about six guys up there, she's like, "man...those are two clean people, they do a lot of washin' up there!"

KN: (laughter)

CF: "What's goin' on up there!" "Oh, we fine, we just had to get washed up." "Out the dang building! Boogity-boogity-boogity!"

KN: (laughter)

RG: (laughter)

CF: Oh, man... it was crazy. But, you know, all that...you go through that, and you think back on it after you went through it, and you know, it was like, hey, it was a good experience. And some places, we had trouble, up in Missouri, we'd...one of the cars got in a wreck...

RG: Mm-hm.

CF: It wasn't us. Minor wreck, but it broke the car down...we couldn't afford big vans, and stuff, we just had to do it all...put stuff in this car, and put a little stuff in that car, and a little of that...so half of the band was in one town and half of the band was in another town at the dance hall, so we sittin' there...yeah, with no drums. And...somethin' else we was missin' – and the bass. Now at that time, we had the upright bass, that big thing, (laughter) so...we're thinkin', "well, shoot." But we had the drummer!

RG: But no drums.

CF: Yeah. He was the drummer. Okay, so we...we get there, we look around, next thing we know, it's – it's the guys, put on a...call the police department, want to know if, see if...and then finally they come back and say "well, you know, it was a wreck." And they didn't have no cell phone, nothin' like that. And they were in an accident, but they all right. But, in the meantime, they were trying to get there, but in the meantime, all these people were linin' up outside, waitin' to get in. Like, "Whoa! We gonna have a big crowd!" Half a band!

RG: Right.

CF: So we' run around there, and I talked to the manager, manager said "there is some guys that...live in this area, right across the river there...you might can talk to them and they can get you some drums." So, ended up, that worked. Brought the drums in, set it up, got some of the other stuff together, say "Shoot, we gonna have, we gettin' this goin'! And then ...quite nicely he say, "There's this band across the river". We look up and seen all these people, they probably, I figured, they should be my fans, and they over here (())...so, they gonna get in there, and later on (()) I said, "yeah, let 'em play, let 'em play too." So they gonna try to show us up, and, you know, quite nicely, they gonna do all this. So, it turned out that people got more than their money's worth. 'Cause...I had guys in my band, and...it really wasn't my band...guy that I'm gonna tell you about later, he was the drummer, and performer. You're like, "Oh no, you don't come here try to show us up!" (Laughter) He figured that's what I was tryin' to do, so he was like "Okay, I'm gonna have to turn the volume up a bit!" Go to work on them, man! Well, I tell you...he played them drums upside down and backwards, he come off and played them in the front, (laughter) Lookin' like, "I never seen that before!"

And he was about 6'3, he had long legs, Count Demon. You hear of that word--name? Count Demon, his real name was William Evans. He was not only my college buddy, my teacher, my... he did a whole lot for me, took me under his wing as a young man, 19, 20, and...and showed me the ropes, 'cause he was an entertainer, he get up there and he'd sing, and dance, and do everything, people were crazy about him. And he did novelties, songs. And all kind of things to keep people laughing, and when he danced, he had long legs, well he goin' down, had a Mexican sombrero (laughter), he was a great hit,

and – and, so, he just – he just knew how to entertain. So...that guy, he ...go around, take the bands, with ... -- ... take us with him, and do a good job.

But... same band, these political motors is rippin' us off! He's – he's got a – got a guitar there, so he started doin' it himself. So ...I ended up...me and him ended up bein' roommates. For a long time, he had a band, and I had a band. Now Count Demon had already...he's quite a bit older than me. Count Demon come out of Akron, Ohio...and Canton, around Canton, and all that kind of stuff. He took out onto the road, he was with, you know, top-notch jazz musicians, and all that kind of stuff. ...A famous organ player that's from Champaign, Jake McDuff.....brought Count Demon here. He start drummin' for Count...I mean, for, for, McDuff. And boy, they played all over the country. Everywhere. And they pioneered Chicago. They ...they were doin' some of the best jazz in – in Chicago.

And ...he brought a bunch a bunch of guys in from Akron Ohio, Count did, that were really, really good jazz musicians. Lotta these jazz musicians 'round...would come far and wide just to hang around with them guys. And they used to have a club called the Cadillac Club in the north end of town here, and all the guys in the band had Cadillacs. And you know, that's the kind of stuff that I came up watching them guys do, and they – they were very popular, they were good. And they were so good that a lot of guys out of Chicago, they all come down here when they was off, they come down here to play with 'em. Gene Andrews, Eddie Hares... Sonny Liston, I mean Sonny...Sonny Rollins, yeah. All them jazz artists, like that, was comin' down through here to play with him.

RG: What year was this?

CF: This...were...I would have to say... '69, '70 ...'68, '69...you know, and ...maybe some of the seventies, they was... 'cause they had a lot of different spots in the area, a lot of the U of I Jazz players used to come over here and play too. And all these jazz spots. We had a lot more jazz spots then than we do now here. But...so, I was one of the ones that kinda near back to the.....well, I was picked up, and talked at by another young man that is in the same bracket, more or less, as Count Demon, or maybe not big as Count...was Tony...Zamora, I – ((oh man))...

RG: Tony Zamora.

CF: yeah, yeah, you heard that name, right?

RG: Uh-huh

CF: Okay. Good. That's very good, because Tony was instrumental...in a lot of things, especially jazz around here, and all them mus – a lot of musicians...and a special thing that he did for me, 'cause I was still into the singing group mode, when I was hangin' out with a lot of these guys, I still had my little singin' group, I had, you know, the – the backup, all that old kind of stuff. Tony...actually, what Tony did, before I started -- before I went on this, you know, on them Chitlin' Circuit, he actually...came to my house...I had to be nineteen, I think I was nineteen. I don't think I was twenty yet. And... 'cause I'd just got married. 'Cause I know it wasn't...but anyway, he, uh...I knew about him, 'cause, you know, he was - -he was well-known in the community, but...what was he doing? He said, "Hey, Foster...I need a singer." I said, "Oh, you do? What's goin' on?" But he said, "I need a blues singer." I thought, oh, man!

You what I do? I'm singin', I got me a little group, I'm singin' the doo-wop stuff, you know...shoot. The Drifters and The Platters, and all that stuff. I was doin' all that kind of stuff! And then...Impressions, and oh, everybody's doin' that stuff like that but, he said "Yeah, I know that, but you can do a little bit of that," said, "but the lady...we gon' be the house band, in a club downtown called the Rainbow Tavern." He said, "The old man told me, he said, 'I know y'all can play, but I need, we need somebody singin' the blues up in here too. You can have all that jazz, but bring up some blues too.'" And he said, "I don't know nobody...all the real blues singers are already booked up and ya'll goin'..." which was one was Ronny...that was really good, but he was tied up. And I said, "wow..." It was an opportunity for me to go on my own, but I just...that blues thing, it scared me to death. But anyway, to make a long story short about that, they said, "we'll help you, we'll help you." I said "Okay," I got up there I went to a couple of rehearsals, did a few...I had a few old tunes that I knew that my mother and them did, all that stuff...so I got through the first part, one week, and...true story. Two weeks later B.B. King came to Danville. A big band, him and his big band. At the Civic Center, that I tell you about over there, the Union Hall, in –

RG: Tilton, where the Frolics were.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Okay.

CF: (47:30) And then, my Dad say "what you doin'?" I say "I want to go to that." He say "Yeah, well, I'm going! You can go with me!" He took me out there, and I went in there, and I got me a seat, it was dance hall, you know, there were people dancing, it wasn't a concert. They were dancin', but they had seats and everything, some people sat in them, but I sat right by the bandstand. The bandstand was tall, but I was sittin' right up there, B.B. King ((bout to hear that door beat)), and I watched him all night. And I listen to them blues, and I'm sayin' to myself... "I don't know, maybe I can do this." And so...I'm sayin', I certainly like it, and that's what I did. I got the records, and started listening to him, B.B. King and Bobby "Blue" Bland.

And I played them records every day. And the next thing I know, I was up there, singin' some of that stuff...course I, you know, I sing some of them, couple of them hit songs, the R&B, too, you know, but, I would throw in the blues, I would get... each time that I'd figure another one, pretty soon I was doin' some blues, you know, and we had it goin' on! And I was goin' pretty good at it, and then Tony got this big offer to go play with a bigger band that's making money, 'cause he was...Tony was good, you know, he was – he was a...you know, we was down here, he was up here, for us, you know, musician-wise, and ... Probably lucky to keep him that long. So he turned it over to our guitar player. Oh, no, to the bass player. ... actually, turned it over to Ronnie and Cecil Bridgewater's uncle. Pete Bridgewater. So, Pete, more or less did all the footwork and the management, you know, made sure that everybody got paid, things like that. And he was the bass player. And Pete would help me out. And then they'd help me out a little they...him and another guy, used to help me out a little bit over the jazz too. So I really -- I really probably would have made a better jazz singer, than what I ended up doin'. Because I was more or less set up to be more of a jazz singer than I was a blues singer. But financially, they kept pushing me on the blues stage, because that way everybody can make money. When – when I rehearse, they'd have me over there doin' jazz, but I only ever got to do a jazz show. I was like...then finally I just said, "hey",

you know...and then, the more I did it, then they realized that I was gettin' bigger out in the front, right, and they said, "Well, he's got...we got to put him out front, we got to put him on the posters," and all that...then that's when this...Candy come in. This – this – see, all this there wasn't no "Candy" involved. It was Gerald Foster. 'Course I never...my name would be in the print. Sometimes, but not always. I was just part of the group. The singer.

RG: What was the name of the group?

CF: Well one of them was...well...Tony's group was... We mostly went by Tony Zamora and (()). I don't remember what...I don't know if he even had another name. It was his group. And then, after the other guys took over, called The Twisters, 'cause the Twist was big. And that's when , later, then they decided that we needed to get up out of this little-bitty club, we could do a little better than this, we could go play some more clubs, and, they say "well, you got a little more motion stuff, that means you got to draw people." So that's when...they started wanting to put me out front. And so I was pretty excited about that. I said, "man, I'm gonna be a front man", you know. And then they come back and they say "Well, that name ain't workin'." And they kept talking about it and they asked me, if I ever have a nickname, and I said "Well, I'm not gonna put that over there." 'Cause they had...and they said 'Well wait a minute, what was it?' I said, it really wasn't a nickname, I mean, it was a nickname, but it really wasn't supposed to stick, I said, it was somethin' happened when I was playin' basketball, that ended up bein' a joke, but you know, they were teasing me about it, and it kind of, like, stuck.

I was playin'...and we played out of town one night, one weekend, in Watseka...oh, no, no, no. Great Lakes, up in that area.Evanston, around Evanston. So we played...we played another recreation place, you know, we playin' kind of semi-junior college teams, stuff like that. And I hadn't been on the team for very long, so I didn't have no name on my jersey, and what they did, they put me in ... I was playin'...these girls were up in the bleachers up there, and they were...flirtin' with the opposite team, you know, we from out of town, and when I come in they said "Ohhh"...and said "What's his name?" And I didn't have no name, so they started calling me the Candy Man. So the guys on the benches, basketball, every time I come in, they "Oh, the Candy Man!" So...so when they game's over and everybody on the bus, you know what I heard, all "Candy Man!" So they teased me about that for a whole week. And then some of the guys kept on callin' me, "hey, Candy Man." And so like that, it just kind of stuck. That was just about between the basketball guys around the basket...didn't have nothin' to do with no music. Nobody knew about that. And ...so I said "well, that's the only name I can think of that..." They called me a lot of things, but didn't ever stick. So...they said, "Hey...put it on there."

RG: On the poster.

CF: They put it on the poster. But then they had it Gerald "Candy" Foster, and that went over, and I remember my picture, my first big picture out there on the marquee and all that, and all the posters in the neighborhood, the kids, they were...I'd get off work and they'd say "You a movie star, aren't you?" And I was like, "well, yeah, yeah." Well, then I said "I ain't no movie star." But they say, "Yeah, we seen you, you on the..." Yeah, that was me! But I said...that was the beginning, turn loose a monster. But that was that...and so they had a...from that day on, I been out in front, of some sort. But I wouldn't, you know...but then the next time, went into another band, that was the Soul Brothers. And then that was...that was when I really started getting some experience. We would start gettin', doin' a lot of big

stuff. You know, travelin' around, doin' things. And so, we had a lot of guys from the military band, and, you know, different musicians from different places, and a really good band.

RG: What was that sound like?

CF: Huh?

RG: What was that sound like?

CF: Oh, we had...you could call us a jazz band, you could call us R&B band, you could call us...we were doin' everything. We was even doin' Blood Sweat and Tears. I mean, we was doin' arrangements. We was doin' all that stuff. That was like, that was the kind of band that was. Well, for one thing, see, we...ended up doin' a lot for the...Air Force. All the different students, and we played on base all the time. Then we ended up goin' to other bases, they hired us to go 'round and entertain the soldiers, and stuff like that. So we had to play for everybody. I remember, Tony called me one time, and said, "Candy! Can get you – get your guys together! Can you get the – get the guys together!" It was on a Monday, or somethin' like that, Tuesday or somethin', said, "can you come up here, go on the base." Said "the commander called me, said they need some black bands up here, and they need 'em NOW." I guess the black students, and the black soldiers, they at the Airmen's Club, that's where the young ones are....the students. They were hearin' country western and all that stuff, and the blacks didn't have no music, they said "they're sick of it, they're starting a riot, ready to start a riot, everything."

And this is a true story. I said, "Well, I can see if I can get Ernie (Hight?) and some of us out, and get up there, and go up there and play. Talkin' about the Airmen's Club? 'Yeah, yeah!'" He said "we played last night, we gonna play again, but we need more than one band." I said "okay," we went up there and we played all week, you know, and they kind of calmed down, and so it was kind of like that from then on, you know. They mixin' it up, you know...and...calmed 'em down, you know, so...but it put us on the map, so to speak, too, because, well, that's not the only base, got the same thing in other bases. And then the Vietnam thing came along...then we got real popular again, we really got popular then because there was a whole lot of kids in the military –

RG: There on the bases, yeah.

CF: Yeah, yeah, on the bases. And so, that was a good time in our...for us. You know, and I was playin'...and then we started playing for different organizations, The Elks and The Shriners, you know, conventions, things like that...so it was good time, and we'd...but you wore – wore uniforms, and...it ain't like it is now, guys walkin' around, blue jeans on, and all kind of...oh, no, no, no, none of that, you had outfits on.

RG: You look like a band.

CF: Yeah, you look like a band. They didn't have to ask you was you in a band, "oh, you in the band so"... On our big nights, we'd...at half time, we'd change into another outfit. Shoot. Guy like me, sometimes you changed two or three times. Butwe did all that kind of stuff, man. We had routines, and it was...it was good. I think people took a little more pride in all that. And then I think what happened was, then

the...then the go-go dancers and some of that disco stuff kind of came in and took the focus away from the real music, and they started accumulating music in the studios, and it took away the real, live, guts of the other stuff. It was, mechanical, started gettin' involved there. I didn't like that. Ah, you know, that was another thing. I'd be up there, I'd be tryin' to do James Brown, and all the old kind of stuff, and they got girls in the cages and doin' all that, and I, you know, it's like – it's like... .. you up there performin', but you got a TV, and somebody lookin' at the football game.

Well, you're competin', with the football game. OK. But...I learned -- we learned how to work with the go-go girls. You know...some of the bands seemed like they were workin' against the go-go girls. I'm like, no, that ain't the way to do that. You work with 'em. You bring them in with you. And I started doin' that, and it just went {finger snap} boom, and they were happy, and we were happy, and everybody was happy. You know, and...it was...I figured it out, so...the band looked at each other, like, "how'd he do that?" Hey, it worked out, and I was...shoot. Because when they had it up here, when they first started doin' it, these clubs, they had these girls over here and over there, and it was just like, part of the furniture doing something, you know. And..."What is that? Come on over here and let's work out somethin'. Act like you know each other." You know?

And we'd get up there and "come on!" They'd get up there and dancers would be doin' things, and ...and then, I even put together like a, tango music, like a caravan, tune caravan, jazz with the drums...I had 'em work a dance routine off of that. They did their own thing, we highlighted. And it went over great. Like, oh, yeah! So I got a new act! And they was like, "yeah, this is good!" So I did all of that stuff, I used to... pick up a lot of stuff like that, you know, as I went along I...it was important to me, so I - I did a lot of homework, and did a lot of things at night, that I wanted to keep my name out there and keep...whatever we had goin'. Made it interesting.

And ...so ... that's – that's kinda way I...and they used to come around me and musicians say "man, I don't care who you playing for or where you're going, Candy, he works all the time", you know, "you go over there and work for him, you can work all the time." And it wasn't because I was better than them, no, you know, I was a better singer, better dancer, nothin' like that. It was because I was just using, utilizing everything I had. And, you bring in a guy, I had a tenor man that played with the Temptations, and Tom Jones, and Smokey Robinson, and all them...this guy, if he's good enough to play with all these people, why would I put him in the back somewhere, and not highlight him? That would make no sense! Hey! You put him up front!

That's what I would do, you know....lot of so-called front people, you know, they've got a whole "no, he don't outshine me," and you don't worry about that. You take your – I do what I do, they do what they do. And they're like...I get the girls doin' the singing. "Well you, you ain't singin' no more, you let them sing?" Yeah! I let them do their thing. That's what I get them there for. They got...it gives you another something to...jump up and notice 'em. You get extra for your money. That's all you have to look at. When I get a girl I do what I do, what you expect me to do. And once they realize that, then they realize how big your product is. And some of them, it's so funny, 'cause they come back and say "you know, them girls did this, that and the other, and you – you – that's good for you." They're acting like it's their idea.

RG: Right.

CF: The people act like it's their idea! I'm like "yeah! I know, I know! Who do you think put 'em there?" ...So what else? I'm rappin' and ravin'.

RG: I know, I think that was my first question.

KN: (laughter)

CF: Oh, yeah, I'm motorboatin'.

RG: No, this is great, this is great. So let's back up. So...when did you – when did you move to Champaign?

CF: Woo...boy. Okay...in...actually, I was, first time I come, yeah, it was in '69, 1969.

RG: And you were based out of Danville up until then.

CF: Right.

RG: So...What -- what was attractive about Champaign, that made you want to move?

CF: Girls. (Laughter)

RG: You wore out your welcome?

CF: Uh-huh!

RG: In Danville?

CF: Yeah, in a way. Well you know... At least my mother said so.

KN: (laughter)

CF: The mothers are talkin' about you. Well, they come and they say "well, you runnin' around too much. You got too many girlfriends."

KN: (laughter)

CF: Well, a part of that is true. But... I ...actually, we were just sowin' our oats, and...but, I was at, we'd run back and forth, we had...four or five guys that do that, and then the same thing in Champaign, was runnin' over to Danville... back and forth, two or three times a week. During our time, in the sixties and early seventies, there was about ten or fifteen marriages come out of – out of Champ – guys out of Champaign marrying Danville girls, and about ten guys at least, eight to ten guys from Danville marrying Champaign girls. It was just, that was, you know, it was a funny thing about that. And it wasn't nothing – it wasn't nothing wrong with the girls, it was us just, (laughter) you know, running back and forth, doin' something' different, that's what it was. But ...that's what it was. So I come here, and then, you know, I end up gettin' some work here. So I either had to, if I stayed in Danville I was going to have to work for General Motors. Okay? Well, my dad was workin' at General Motors and all that, and he didn't think I

needed to be working, if I could get by without working there, he thought, maybe then I need to do something different. He said, "Man, that's a rough life." At the time when they was workin' at General Motors it was pretty rugged. Dirty and...it wasn't – it ain't wasn't like the modern car plants now, you know, all that stuff, they got all the electronics –

RG: Robots.

CF: Robots, and all that. No, it was – it was the dirty stuff. Hard work. So he kinda was tryin' to say "if you don't have to go in there, don't go." But, if I stayed in Danville, I was gonna go to General Motors. 'Cause that's where the money was for everyday people. So anyways, and...I don't know, I was...I ended up with--see, the problem with me, was that in early life in my...freshman, was about...boy might have been sophomore year...Glen, my first-born came along. So, that kinda flipped everything. And, so I had to quit school for a little bit, you know, because everybody poor, you gotta take care of the business, and do all this kind of stuff. So that was kind of the thing that I did, you know, I went back and tried to go back to school and do this, then work, then go back to school, and...but that way I wasn't makin' no money. You know, but then the next thing you know ...I'm up here and they ...I started comin' over here, and then they offered me some jobs, hotel, say "you go over there, you can do a lot better," so I started workin', me and my buddies got an apartment over here, what they call an apartment.

It wasn't much of an apartment. But it was a way to do what we had to do. It didn't take much for us. And then I'd send money home, you know. So that's kinda way I, that's the other reason why I ended up over here. And that kind of thing. So I got – I got married early, I got, you know, I got into child thing early, way too early, and the whole kind of thing like that. Kinda...kept on going, so. I think...I look back on it and if I could've stayed there I probably could'vewell I was pretty good, track and football, things like that so I could've...I'm pretty sure I probably would've got a little scholarship from or something from one of the schools. But, that blew that out the window. Especially back in them days.

Now, kids can do that, you know, and stay...all they have to do is stay focused, and they can keep right on going to school and college and whatever. There's plenty Ivy Leagues out there, come here, comin' in to Illinois with...got a kid, or one on the way. Shoot, you know, I'm not, that's just, pretty much the way it is anymore. But back then when I'm talkin' about a long time ago, first of all, that was like "Ohhhh, Lord." Oooh, it was taboo, you know, it was...the whole – the whole neighborhood, everybody, "Oh, oh, he done messed, look what he did." So, you know, back then they weren't even sure they wanted me to come to school. You had to go talk to them about comin' back to school.

RG: Hm.

CF: Yeah. Which I'm glad that's over with, I mean you know I'm glad because, I think that's a terrible thing. People goin' to school, but...so, that's how I, around that time...like I'm sayin', and then...couple of years later I got married. Young lady, Charlene MacMillan. Then we had kids, kids, woo, then we just kind of... then they had kids, and we got a lot of grandkids now. But that's all great, you know, my mother lived to see some of 'em....so, you know, I can ...I got a lot of little things that you might want to see too. ...awards and stuff that might explain a little bit more to you.

RG: Yeah? That'd be great.

CF: You want to hold tight for a minute?

RG: Nah, we'll let it run--we'll let it run. Are we gonna walk around, are you gonna bring some things over?

CF: Yeah, I can bring it over here and walk around. Come on, let's go on, let's walk around.

RG: Let's do it. Stretch our legs.

CF: Yeah, Relax a little bit, you're at home here. Okay...this one here...think you better look at it. It ain't gonna hurt nothin'. Go ahead and take it out.

RG: Alright. Now who's this -- we got a Lifetime Achievement Award, 2012. Who's that from?

CF: That's from the whole community, everybody around. I mean a little bit of everybody was involved in this, all over the place. Both cities and Danville, and...little bit.

RG: So that's a custom award.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Just for -- just for Gerald "Candy" Foster.

CF: Right. And this is a annual award that goes out every year --

RG: 40 North Ace Award.

CF: Yeah.

RG: And what was that awarded for?

CF: One of the...it's about, more or less, being a friend of -- a friend of the community, being involved -- bein' involved in a lot of things in the community, and making a lot of people happy.

KN: Mm-hm.

CF: Think I been doin' a lot of stuff like that. You know, award shows, you know, fundraisers I put together. Yeah, that's one of my promotional pictures, and that's my wife over there.

RG: Oh. 's that your piano?

CF: No, no (laughter). I wish!

CF: Yeah. So, then, back here, here's my -- here's my hangout...

RG: Ah, the den.

CF: Yeah, that's ... this is where I hang out a lot. Do all that, do all my little stuff, and try to get the gigs straightened out, and musicians to get together –

RG: Who are these kids? I know some of these kids.

CF: I know! I know you know a lot of 'em.

KN: (laughter)

CF: I was gonna show that to you.

RG: Who's this group here?

CF: Ah, this is the music department of all around, got together and...they were doin' concerts for all the different musicians and entertainers, and they just took the whole...all these are musicians or entertainers.

{Long Pause}

CF: Yeah I...I think that's a really good...

RG: What was the occasion for this photograph? This is the... the Virginia?

CF: Yeah, that's at the...the theater. Downtown.

RG: That's the Virginia, right?

CF: Yeah!

RG: Yeah I see a lot of –

CF: Yeah, the Park District in the city was puttin' on different concerts...

RG: See a lot of Jazzers in here.

CF: Yeah. It was more or less a jazz...

RG: Josh Houchin, Tom Painter?

CF: Yep.

RG: Is that Morgan Powell hiding back there? Ernie Hoffman.

CF: That whole bunch of them –

RG: Parkland faculty for many, many years?

CF: Yep. You knows a lot, you know somethin', huh?

RG: I been around, I been around, Candy.

CF: Yeah, yeah, I thought he was!

RG: Ernie Hoffman was at Parkland when I was a student there.

CF; Yeah, yeah, alright...that's my mother right there.

RG: Oh, where is this?

CF: That's when the...woo, lord! You was a twinkle in somebody's eye when that was done.

KN: (laughter)

CF: (laughter)

RG: Is that...is that the Union Hall in Tilton?

CF: Yep.

RG: Okay.

CF: And that's me and my dad. I think I did a show at the Palmer Center.

RG: Okay.

CF: Me and Tons of Fun. Yeah. And...that's when I did a big show at the --

RG: This is you?

CF: Yeah, Danville –

RG: White three-piece suit?

CF: Yeah...I was dead out of Livin' in America. Seen, the ... Uncle Sam hats?

RG: Yep, yep, yep.

CF: That was my backup singers, and...yep. That's somethin'. And now, right here, that's the Foster clan.

KN: Oooohhh.

CF: Bring it out of here and show it to you. Eh, it might be a little dusty. That's, that's me.

KN: Aw.

RG: That's a little Candy in the middle.

KN: (laughter)

CF: That's my grandma, my grandpa, my uncle, my dad...That was...at least in the 40s.

RG: Alright.

KN: Mm-hm.

CF: She a full-blooded Cherokee. She had hair crimped down here before –

RG: (1:24:45) This is – this is your Dad's mom.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Okay.

CF: And my Grandpa. They all came from Kansas. Carson, Kansas.

RG: That's where your dad was from.

CF: Yeah. All them. I'm the only one that wasn't from there.

RG: That was from Danville, at the time.

CF: Yeah.

RG: And here we have a plaque celebrating fifty years in the music business?

CF: Yeah. The neighborhood people put that together. And they present it to me at Douglass Park. And one of the Champaign-Urbana days. And... a fraternity, uh. That's where I retired from.

RG: The IDOT?

CF: Yeah. ... Can you see that?

RG: ... Twenty-two and a half years, with the Illinois Department of Transportation, he retired in 2000.

CF: Right. That's one of my sons, and me at the Illinois...they played--and one of my grandsons was playin' football.

KN: Mm-hm.

CF: that was a long time ago. Now he – he's in college at Illinois State now.

RG: Playin' football?

CF: Ah, no, his dad stopped him playing football. Now here's, uh, other stuff. This is ...they made ... one day, Danville Day, for me.

RG: May 20th, 2012 was Candy Foster Day in the city of Danville.

KN: Wow.

CF: Oh. Take it out! This is what they call the...key to the city. I think that's ... which one is that, Urbana or Champaign?

RG: That one doesn't say. This one is Champaign.

CF: This is Champaign. That must be Urbana. That's Urbana. They say I'm the only guy they know that got both keys! (Laughter) Yeah, and ...I think my band, I don't know who got that. I think my band got that. Yeah, yeah.

RG: Honest working man.

CF: Yeah, that's what they, oh...

RG: Military Police, Company E, Springfield?

CF: Yeah, I did a big show for them. I won an award on that ship. I was on there, I did a...

RG: The *Fascination*. Was it a cruise ship?

CF: Yeah.

RG: Who was that for?

CF: That's a--what's the name of that company? They the biggest one now – Carnival!

KN: Carnival.

RG: Okay.

CF: Yep. And this one here, that's for...that's U of I stuff, there.

RG: That's right, eBlack.

CF: Yeah.

RG: eBlackCU.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Project director Noah Lenstra.

CF: Yeah. And this here is kind of the neighborhood. This whole neighborhood. And then we do, a thing every year, it was named after Jenny Rose, 'cause she was the one who started the neighborhood program. And then we ended up adoptin – adoptin' King Park, which, you know and.....it's the neighborhood watch, and it does eh, a lot of functions. And so I was... cause then I was bein' vice president, and doin' all kind of stuff so. Yeah, so...

RG: It's great. That's quite a – that's a lot of recognition.

KN: Yeah.

CF: And that's from Urbana Park District. I worked there, it was ...that was one of the jobs I picked up right after I come here. ...

RG: 1969 and 1977. Management, Urbana Park District.

CF: Yeah. Fraternity I belonged to, it's the black fraternity that...Alpha Phi Theta. Yeah, so.

RG: That's quite an array of awards and recognition.

CF: That's one of my daughters, one of the oldest ones. That's Melinda. She's a minister. But she works for the U of I. She's kind of an assistant minister. Walk around, she does speeches, and...she does real good. So that's – that's that.

RG: That's that.

CF: Wait a minute. Well, we ought to take up back front. I just take some of this stuff that you might – might – might want to see.

RG: Uh-huh.

CF: Here.

RG: Some photos and clipping, it looks like. Alright.

CF: Yeah, I throw it all together, 'cause I lost track of it.

KN: (laughter)

CF: Ah, boy.....y'all want somethin'? A drink of water?

RG: I'll have some water.

KN: I'm okay, thank you.

CF: You alright?

KN: Yeah.

CF: Let's see. Check some of this out and I'll get that water for you. Might be something in there that remind you of...

RG: Lifetime Achievement award....40 North Ace awards.

KN: Mm-hm. So that's...that year? Oh.

RG: So this is last year, no it's that one.

KN: Oh, it's a different one.

RG: Lifetime Achievement.

KN: Hmmm.

RG: A clipping about it.

CF: Now, did you read about – about that? That was kind of thing that happened to me. My stuff got stolen right in front of the house.

RG: I heard about that!

CF: Yeah.

RG: That was right here not too long ago. Right?

CF: Yeah. So that was a big moment in my life...that, uh, what you call the bitter sweet thing, because it turned out to one of the better things --

RG: oh yeah?

KN: Thank you

CF: ... And ... because of what...Champaign County. I gave this...say Champaign-Urbana cause people from...all these towns and all around. I had people coming in from, you know up north comin' down here, sendin' me money and things. And my...that website money thing, raise seven thousand dollars --

KN: Oh my goodness.

CF: For me to get equipment.

RG: Yeah?

CF: They say we don't never want you to quit.

RG: Did that cover it?

CF: Yeah! I had more than that, I just stopped it, because you know I didn't want to be greedy, you know.

RG: Right.

CF: So I said...I went back, to the back in the, you know, Corson Music I said, "Here's what we need...how much is that?" They count – they add it all up and say "Well yeah, you got enough already, to give you what you need." So I Just I said "Well, I don't want to be, you know, greedy," and you know, because I was just so shocked, at what everyone was doing. I had an old guy, I would say he was in...late, late sixties probably seventy, that...pulled up out here, me and my wife sitting here, and I looked out there and I seen, like the car looked like he...the guy was lost. I say, "He lookin' for somebody."

He went down turned around, came back, he pulled up right, he got out, older fella, I had no idea who he is. He come up to the door and ring, and he said, "You Candy Foster?" I said "Yes sir, what can I do for you?" He said, "What you can do for me is what I want to do for you." He said, "I want to thank you, I heard a lot about you, and you do a lot of good things, and you're very important in this community." And he handed me an envelope like that and I said, "What's your name, sir?" And he said, "Aw, no need for that. You just take it, and I appreciate you taking it and I'll see you, and vacate and I hope everything gon' be alright for you." And was like, "Well, you sure you don't want to talk and come in?" And he was like "Nope, nope, nope." Went on about his business. I walked in and opened it up looked at it...a thousand dollars. Cash. No questions, no nothin'. I had no idea who that man is, never seen him before in my life! Actually he didn't seem to know me that well!

RG: Right, Right.

CF: He was like "You Candy Foster?" That blew me away. You know. And he said "I heard about you, some of the things you did." And so from that time on, I said "I'm never gonna question about things I do because there's always someone watching," you know, and there are people out there who do appreciate you, and you may think about it, you know, but it is what it is and I've been doin'...Daily Bread and food kitchens and all that stuff for years, and ... you know, and I'm so happy that I did that,

when I first started doing that I'm like "Well, you know, the first one, might do it for a year and then I'm through with that. But I kept on, and people were so nice, and... Well you know, you just do things. And the next thing you know, you start realizin', you start seeing people like that...there are some singing groups that I did back in the days I was telling you about, that, say, "well, you know, this is important."

RG: It's the Soul Brothers.

CF: Yeah, that's the one that --

RG: Where are you, this you in the middle?

CF: Yeah, sittin' down.

RG: OK.

CF: There.

RG: Now who are these gentlemen here?

CF: Oh, that's the singing group, we were, woo, that's going back some. We were called The Gleams.

RG: The Gleams.

CF: Yeah. And some of them, a lot of them are not living anymore...well, that's not true. On both things there. I think he got messed up--I think he was airman, I think he got messed up in Vietnam. I don't know.

RG: This talks about the Rainbow Tavern.

CF: Yeah, well I'll tell you --

RG: Yeah, on First Street, where was that, is that building still there?

CF: Oh Lord no.

RG: No?

CF: No.

RG: Where was it?

CF: Right out you know, well, there's parking lot there now, but it's right there...on the First where...the barber shops and all that --

RG: Right by University.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Yeah, there's a barbershop and then--

CF: And then a few more other places but--

RG: Jackson's used to be up there.

CF: Jackson yeah. See, right where the parking lot is, used to be a whole string of cabaret clubs.

RG: That big lot across the street where they do, like a market in the summer?

CF: And half of it was owned by a, black man called Wardell...Jackson. And...he was...he ran policy, back then we called it policy. Now the government makes money off it and they call it the lottery, yeah, but policy, he was doing it illegal yeah.

RG: in the movies they say they're runnin' numbers.

CF: Right

KN: (laughter)

RG: That's it? OK.

CF: That's what he was doin'. So he made a lot of money, and he owned a lot of those old raggedy buildings up there, some of them, not all of 'em but, but Lorraine Boswell and Cody Boswell, was the owners of the Rainbow Tavern. And they had two different spots that they... you know... and...it was really good, just a local, everyday type of bar that did real good, you know, for the community. And there wasn't no whole lot of racket went on down there. That was one of the few bars where there wasn't no shootin' and fightin' ...Rainbow they kind of, the old lady Ms. Boswell, she didn't, she didn't take no stuff, she like "Ah na, you young people just move on down the road there," but ... And... that kind of stuff like that but, then you got ...eh some more, like Russell--Russell Cheatham. You know about him?

RG: I know that name. Why don't you tell us about Russell.

CF: Organ player...he also played with the Gay Poppas, that's the Lane brothers (pause) Eddie Lane was, uh, they had a group called, the Lane Family, they had a group called Gay Poppas. Around the same times as the Soul Brothers, but they were a little before the Soul Brothers, they were -- and they had a blues singer...Sanders. Sounded like Bobby Blue Bland ... he was really really good. And, but the Lane brothers, they, Tony Zamora he even played with them. And they had a really good band. Eddie Lane was the drummer for 'em, his brother Bobby was lead guitarist, he did a little singing, and the daddy, played the tenor saxophone and another brother was a bass player, they just had a big family that played, and those, the offsprings of the Lane brothers, like especially Eddie, his boys are in the big time music now, and you heard that Michael Lane the one had been around here.

RG: The same Lanes?

CF: Huh?

RG: He's the same Lane.

CF: Uh-huh

RG: Okay.

CF: His family, and his brother Chris is older than him, is out there in Vegas and California, that's all they do, they big time with MGM, and all that. He plays in all the top clubs in Vegas, they been out a long time in Vegas doin' a lot of stuff. And that's Chris, and then Michael, he's...he's doin a lot of...he said he's tryin to ... he's writing a score for, said he's workin on...say he's doin some music for a movie that they got him doin workin on. So, that family, got some real good history, on -- on music, and I came up around them and they...so...Ed and Russell used to play with them too. but Russell, Russell also had the group Sorghum --

RG: Sorghum.

CF: Yeah that was the jazz group, organ group.

RG: Yeah we got some recordings.

CF: yeah. And then Jelly Hines, and all them guys and...you know the guitar player...oh shoot...oh, that guy, what was his name. He's in Chicago now. But that's Russell right there. That's Russell Cheatham.

RG: Okay, hanging out on the end.

CF: Now, over here, is a niece of mine, Vicki (Cappel?). Was first Vicki (Britt?). She was a jazz singer. She used to sing around here with Heitler and all them guys. She had chops similar to Nancy Wilson and all them guys, that's the kind of chops she had. She hung with McDuff too. McDuff trained her. You know who this is?

RG: Bring it in here...no I don't recognize this gentleman.

CF: Don Smith. Don Smith was with the, Harvard, the big band from U of I that went to Russia and all that?

RG: Right, with the Bridgewaters?

CF: Yeah. Don Smith was a singer and, with Dee Dee Bridgewater?

RG: Mm-hm.

CF: and Don played the flute, piano, Don is a brother to Lonnie Liston Smith. The organist. Don's...yeah but Cecil's on one of my first CDs.

RG: Yeah?

CF: Yeah, Cecil. Course did you know Jeff was on a lot of my stuff there too...Jeff played with he, he's...Jeff scored most of my music...he arranged most of my music for my shows. My book, well he masterminded that. Of course, few guys since then, John (Hutchin?), you know, and they got stuff in there now, course Jonny Beckett, now, he's my lead man now and uh, oh man...man he carry a 6, 3, 4 rise every night.

KN: (laughter)

CF: That man, I can't say enough about him. He always encouraged me. I mean from the time, goin way back. always encouraged me... if I did somethin', he read about me doin somethin', he drop me a little card, in the mail or somethin, "Candy I'm proud of you, keep on doin' it." He was always in my corner. Always, you know, keepin' me up there. Took me to my first, one of my first pro baseball games too.

RG: Yeah.

CF: Yeah, sure do miss him. And...so these are people like that, that come from, you know, back when... and Garvey...I mean I didn't have too much with him, but the guys I'm telling you about that I kinda come up under, well, they were Garvey's pet projects. Like Count Demon and Tony and all them, Don Smith and all that, well, they were people that...Garvey, man, he was like...they were like...well they were super stars, you know like big good recruits (laughter).

RG: Uh-huh.

CF: What he would do, you see the reason why this was important was...those guys didn't really come from the U of I.

RG: Garvey was--he was a recruiter. Yeah.

CF: Yeah, you know, like Cecil and Ronny, they actually went there, they were born and raised here and they went through the school system. The guys I'm talkin about, they were hardcore. Garvey had, he was smart enough to realize, that hey...I'm going out here in this hood and get these guys that done already been through...what I'm trying to get these guys to go through, and put 'em in there with them. and that's what he did. And it worked big time. and it brought in other people, 'cause they heard that, like... and then you get Dee Dee... Like "Oh lord, I want to be a part of this."

So she came here. 'Course didn't help she fell in love in with the trumpet player. But... anyway I'm just sayin' that...and like Don Heitler and...oh man, some of the horn players...they, they learned a lot from them guys. Man they was--cause back then, there were some guys around here, that had horns that you couldn't even get ten dollars off the horn in the pawn shop. Was playin' horns with rubber bands on them, and they were blowin' people away!

RG: Yeah.

CF: (1:52:04) We had another one, that ain't in there, but any of these guys, old guys will tell you that guy...Norman Langford. He played with Lyle Hamilton and oh man, and...and 'round here, when he was around here always played for Pete Bridgewater and his trio, and Count Demon. But Norman, he was scary. I don't care what horn player around here anywhere in this... came through here. They look at him and like, "Oh man, where this guy come from?" He could play. But Norman had bad habits, he was a con man, he...he just had bad habits, you know, he drank, and all that stuff. So he would con people. And he'd pawn his horn and he'd do this, he'd run...So he just, he just wasn't reliable. But, was the best horn man around, but they just...here today, gone tomorrow, and he'd come pop up two days later..."Hey man, what we playin at this week?" "Well where were you at?" and all that kind of stuff, but Norman, you know, you got them guys like that, and some of 'em got drug habits, all kinds of habits... but they were awesome. Norman Langford. And then there was...who else was it. These are the guys...and if you notice...I know more about the jazz musicians than I do the blues ones.

Because back in the day, when I was comin up, jazz musician was the thing, man, I mean you know. And I went through a period you know, I'm goin' back there and started about that, they started tryin' to...everybody was fallin' out, and the Twist band...well, I would say eh...I can guess a job but I was tellin my, my roommate Count Demon, "Man, I can get some of these guys, sort of like, to play around with ya'll, to play for this band, we could do a lot better." "Yeah well, eh..." In other words, he finally told me, "Well, you know, some of them guys they don't want to play no blues. They think that's beneath them." Back in them days, they really did. They like, you couldn't, they was all "oh no, you can't play both. And this is crazy! I mean, I like both! I mean I be playing on my, I mean I be playin at home! So in other words, what they...

So I would sittin around there, and I first thought, the reason they wouldn't play for me is I was too young, you know, I figured they didn't want to play no young guy like me. But no, he finally he told me he said "No man they don't want to play no jazz, uh, play no R&B, or that rock music." I said, "Well that's stupid." I said "Man..." And I come to find out, even Ray Charles had trouble with it. Because when Count Basie, one of the six times he threatened to retire was...Ray Charles, he told Ray Charles he was gonna retire next year, or something like that, in one year, and Ray Charles said "Dang I'd sure like to have your band when you retire." And he said "Well, you can talk to 'em and find out!" They didn't want to play for him. And finally, one year he got them to do an album with him, back him up. That's that Mint Julep album. And they claim in the sessions, the practice sessions, they sat around like, you know, "Man this cat, the blues, he don't know what he's doin', he don't know how to play that", that's what they would say and like them mumblin' and grumblin'. And they, Ray Charles would put the music up there, and they just kind of go through the motions. So I think Ray Charles got mad!

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: I know he did, I got, I been around him enough to know. So, he kind of, after two or three sessions he got... He blind, but he got the ear! He said "The horn man in the section here the second section, the third horn...you're not playing that right, you need to check your music, and play that again. He like, "What!" He was like "you goin' tell ME..." And he was like "No, just check your music, go ahead brother,

just check your music. Now let's try that again," and they'd play and he said ... "If you don't know how to play that, bring your horn over here and I'll show you the notes."

RG: (laughter)

CF: And they like "what the heck?" They didn't know he could play the alto. And he kept playing harder. They saying, to make a long story short, they saying by the end of that session, them guys are callin' him Mr. Ray Charles. "Mr. Charles, you want..."

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: So, that was the end of all that, oh yeah.

RG: The R&B got at Mr. Charles.

CF: Yeah, yeah, they didn't... Niles, (()), Vincent, all them boys playing for him now. But you know, it was bad like that, so I, I remember that myself, but then later, they go and start seein the big boys do it, they like alright. But even later on, like around New York, New York still had a bad habit of that...cause George Benson went through that. George was playing...I met George when he was eighteen, nineteen years old. Met and signed up with McDuff. George was playin R&B music, you know, pretty much, he had a kind of R&B band, you know, playing the hits charts and playing New York, and then McDuff was living in New York at the time 'cause he had residence there, you know he's always on the road. And he'd... George would come down and hear him a lot of time and he said, "Man, I really want to play jazz, I want to play jazz, man".

And they fooled around, bought him a jazz guitar, and next thing you know, he came back there and he took him and the road with him, and he came through here, and, and that's the highlight of me and George Benson, cause like I said, Count Demon, anywhere it would.... McDuff was in a hundred-fifty miles he would always call our house and ... "blah blah blah, I'm gonna be in Champaign, I'm gonna be coming through, so y'all watch for me" and all that. And one week he said, "I'm gonna be in Milwaukee, and I'm gonna come to Champaign early, and hang out in Champaign for a week, and maybe y'all get me a gig, 'cause I'm breakin' in a guitar player." And George...nobody knew nothing about him. George was unknown, nothin. George was just another kid with a guitar. And he come there, and... they stayed at the Emmet hotel. And he was up in there practicing and everything, and it was gettin...trying to brush him up on stuff at the club in the daytime, and that evening...and they say, they'd go in that hotel in the mornin', and pickin' on that guitar, and they put him out of the hotel!

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: And they say, now you gotta go, man, we're getting calls all over the place about you. So Count Demon, my roommate, he had the records shop, down on First Street. That's where everybody hang out at. Now it's the barbershop. It's still, the building still there. Count Demon, he had a record shop there.

And the other musicians hung out there. They come to make contacts, and they lookin' for a drummer and lookin' for a horn player, or a guitar player, they come in there... "Hey Count, I need a, I need a bass player for the night."

RG: What's the name of the record store?

CF: I think it's Star Record Store. Oh no... oh was it C or CU Records or something like that. I think it was CU Records...It was good place, you know, it was a good hangout and the barbershop next door to it, it was a double thing, but he didn't have nothin' to do with the barbershop. And people would come in there and hang out and ... so they came down there and McDuff came down to the little place. Well, McDuff was fussin' and cussin'. "George just got kicked out of the hotel ((rab rab rab rab rab)) can't do nothing, I got all kinds of problems." So I came in there, I got off work, I came in there, I was working Park District. I said "Well..." I said ... "George, you can stay in my part of the, my room." and I said "I ain't never there." I said, "I work, I get up in the mornin', and I go to work, and I play, I do all this," and I said "You know, no biggie, let him stay in my room. He ain't gonna be there but another week." You know. And they said "Oh okay." So...George brought his stuff over there.

So George stayed in our house, in my bedroom, for three or four days, whatever. And I mean, I met him and we knew each other well, but we wasn't friends, 'cause I wouldn't see him that much. I see him about four or five times... but I remember, 'cause I had no idea this guy would turn out to be what he was, and it wasn't long after that he got famous! You know and ... oh... all I knew is he could play his butt off! Like this kid, this kid can play! And at that time they didn't even know he could sing...McDuff said...and I said something to him about it later on, I said, "Man, who was that over on that records that I heard?" They had one of the LPs, they did a ballad, and at the ballad at the very end of the song, when they ended it, they did a four-part harmony on their voices. The group did. They modernized, like, Four... like Four Freshmens or something. A real jazz mellow thing and the one on the top, I said "Who's them that hit the high notes?" And he said, "Oh man, that's George, kid can sing. He just won't sing! And I said "Man, that guy got a good voice!" and "I know it, he can sing, he just want to play his guitar."

So McDuff didn't bother him, 'cause he was...by the time they got to California they was kickin' butt. And George, he was layin' it down, boy, he was makin' a name with that guitar, and they said "Well leave him alone he's goin' good!" And...but, evidently when they got back to New York when he got back on his own, when the tour was over with, he start playing in one of the neighborhood jazz clubs, and people would come in, according to George he said they would come in, and the place, the supper club would get kinda full and everything and he start playing, and he would play a set, and 90 percent of them would start leavin'. "Now I got another whole big set!" And they would say "Well, you play alright, but we wanna hear some singing." And so the guy that owned the club said, "Man you wanna keep playing here you gotta bring a singer in or somebody got to sing, something." So that's when he starts doin' a little singing and that's when he came out with the...On Broadway, he started singing that one at the club, and they started singing... [uh-oh, here they come (outside noise)]... and so they have they fixed it up like... So what happened was that he started doin' that and next thing you know, they recorded it and it was big hit. And they was like, "Who is this guy singing?" So after that, he started singin, and they kept "Keep singing, keep singin, keep singing", and then he said "Eh, you know what happened? Man, the jazz critics started on me."

RG: Right.

CF: "They started talking about, write stuff on me. 'So George sells out.' You know, he 'sold out.'" And I'm like "Come on, here." and the guy's still one of the best guitarists in the country. And I said that's just ridiculous. But that only happened round New York. Alright, this is Beth.

Beth: Hi

RG: Hello

Beth: Hello, how are you?

KN: Good

CF: Yeah so but ... that was kind of the thing with that but George did stay at our house but George was always a good friend. I tell you what, George, he never forgot McDuff. McDuff got sick and all that, he always looked out for McDuff. McDuff more or less discovered him and...course McDuff didn't have very much... yeah alright, McDuff mad some money in his lifetime, but he also throw a lot of money away. Like most of 'em do. And I understand...that George...when he was on his deathbed and everything, George come there and takin care of everything, and to the time he was gone, and paid all the, made all the arrangement ...everything but...that was great, yeah so...That's a good story about that.

So I always have a lot of respect for George. He always wanted a house in Hawaii, and he made enough money, bought him a house in Hawaii, yeah but...he always lived-- he loved New York, he always lived in New York, but he always wanted to go to Hawaii. "I want to go to Hawaii." So...but eh, there's a lot of things I've run across and a lot of good stories in the blues world. There was...my big thing was opening up for B.B. King and Bobby Blue Bland. I can't say before I let stop I'd have to say in my blues success, and just in Candy Foster success, period, one of the things that helped put me in the spotlight for as entertainment-wise was a man I met--he's one that had the Malibu Lounge, and he's one that was the first one to ever bring B.B King here. And he was a promoter, that's what he really--really did... you know. One of the things he's known for, promoting shows and all kind of different acts and people that...some of 'em come out of the...lot of 'em come out of the south. And he always he had the other club, the Blues Creation, right there in Urbana--downtown Urbana, which is now Iron Post.

RG: I remember Blues Creation.

CF: Yeah, that's what it is. And I actually won a big contest there and uh, went on to Buddy Guy's and do a big show there and they had a big bus, and they took all kind of people up there. That was a blast. But Jeff and Victor Feldman, you know, played Sorghum, the tenor man, he played with me. I had a heck of a horn section, and so we was...oh man that was great, so but I played around with Clarence Carter, Koko Taylor, all them--Tyrone Davis, Otis Clay...shoot. We was--and the main man was Bobby Rush. I open up for him a few times, he and I got to be pretty dang good friends, Bobby Rush. He used to give me some pretty decent advice. That guy got about seventy somehow.

RG: Right.

CF: Yeah and that guy, Eddie Shaw...I talk to him... One guy that I got a chance to meet on one of the cruises that I sung on and did some things with his band -- Gatemouth Brown, and I enjoyed him. I

enjoyed Koko too, 'cause, well, we was on there, we got to gamble together, but, you know I picked their brain a little, but you know--

RG: Right.

CF: Well I had a chance to, but I wouldn't try to bother 'em too much, cause they tryin' to enjoy themselves. But it was really good having that kind of musicians behind you. You know they had some of the best musicians, I get all (())... they'd be kickin' it. Woo! And blues... Rhythm King Blues thing in Chicago... they played down here to the... blues, and blues barbecue. The Rhythm and Blues... say, Chicago Blues Kings, think that's what they were named. And...used to be ... Big Twist and the Mellow Fellows.

RG: There you go.

CF: Yeah. See, I didn't --I used to go back to back with them a lot, me and the Soul Brothers... be on the same shows, you know, they play one night, we play the next night, stuff like that. Sometimes they even come in and then join in with, 'cause Larry was a drummer and he sang--he had a really good voice and a lot for the time he didn't get too sing much with the Mellow Fellows at first, cause everybody sang, and...he played with Ray Charles for a year on drums, so when he got shed he come down here with me. I learned a lot from him 'cause he knew how to sing the blues, you know...there's blues singers and there's...got that gospel twist to it, you know what I'm sayin?

RG: Mm-hmm.

CF: (2:16:42) And he had some of that and then I said "Well, I still have a little of that." I had a little bit too much of a Lou Rawls thing in me. When I wanted to sing the raw blues, well, it was kind of hard for me to do that, cause I was more on the Lou Rawls -- "Oh you know, I'm talkin about that, and I just, I mean that just--Woo, I'll be," that was my style. but when it comes to talkin about singing Jimmy Reed and Muddy Waters, and all that, well that was little harder for me to do. But then Al Green came along and I picked up another twist there. So I was in between the blues and R&B and gospel, you see what I'm saying? So I stayed within that mold so that means I don't have to be like, gettin down low with that gutbucket blues and all that stuff. So I never tried to go there, cause that wasn't exactly what I wanted to do anyway, but I listen to it and all that, anyway. I said, that's the one thing you have to learn how to do is stay within your means. You don't have to... And the other thing is, what I learned more than anything, is now I can copy things, I get stuff from Al Green and Ray Charles and whoever and B.B. King and Bobby Bland and Lou Rawls, but don't try to be like them. You know. What you need to do, and what I learned to do when I first start doin' it, people told me I was doin' the wrong thing, they were saying, "Well, that ain't the way to do it, that ain't the..." In other words, what they were tellin' me, "that ain't the way Sam Cooke sound, that ain't the way Ray Charles sound that ain't the way --"

RG: Doesn't sound like the record.

CF: Yeah, don't sound like the record. That's what everybody saying. Well I was like "Yeah..." My roommate kind of, "You don't have to do that, do what you feel. Like, that's what they do in jazz. It's expression. And they come out, you know, it's what's within you in you." And finally I started doing

songs, and one of the best compliments I ever got was, you know, one of the best, was for me for people to come up and say "Well, sing that song that Al Green--the way that you do it."

RG: (laughter)

CF: You know, and I thought, I'm like "Yeah, that's it!" That's it, she knows, and I know, and they know that I'm not trying to be, I ain't trying to sing it like Al Green, I'm just singing a song that Al Green sung. And, I like it, we all like it, but I'm goin' to do it Candy Foster style.

RG: That's right.

CF: What Candy Foster's doin, I feel it, and you listen to "Let's Stay Together" by Al Green, and you listen to listen to "Let's Stay together" by Candy, and they ain't nothin' alike. Same song, but they're nothin' alike. But it's my way. It's my arrangement, the way I felt it. And that's what I do. I... that's been one of the biggest things in my career far as my style, and the kind of band, and the people used to get mad at some of the musicians because other singers and some... "Well how come you don't play that--play the way with me, the way you play with Candy?" And one of the musicians told 'em, he said "Because this band was set up for Candy Foster, this is Candy's band. This band was set up to complement him." And they all looked at him, "Well that kind of makes sense."

KN: (laughter)

CF: And it kinda was, you know, my band can play for people, and they good enough, but they're not, but...but if the entertainer or singer think it gonna go or take him somewhere else, then they're not gonna go, because they already set in their way of playin', how we do things, and how they complement me, and if you can't do that, then just want to leave the song alone. So I...you know. And don't get mad at the band if they don't follow you into where you want to be identical to the record. They don't play identical to the record. We don't, I don't even think we do Mustang Sally the way they did on the record. I don't think we do! But I know most of the stuff that I do, just about all of it's been changed one way or the other because I got my niches and I got my...and I got my way of selling a song, and that's the way that I do it. They catch on to that. They understand that's the way... if I say "Brick House" then they goin' play it Candy Foster way. So that's what it is but...and that works with me and you know I don't hear, you know, people tellin me it ain't like the record...they don't say that no more .

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

RG: They caught on.

KN: (laughter)

CF: Finally caught on. So, you know, the only other thing I can say to all this is that I felt like when you get to certain point in this career, you talking about little over fifty years...I been pretty lucky. I been pretty fortunate to be around a lot of good musicians that helped me, kept me out of harm's way, you

know, when I could have been, I don't know... I like to think I would have been smart enough not to get caught in the some of the things...some of the other ones got caught up in, like drugs and, you know, just doin' all kind of things, doin' a lot of drinkin' and doin' a lot of things. But I know for a fact that a lot of 'em just kind of kept me away from it. They kind of... I had musicians and I know for a fact that...people tell you, "You know what your some of your guys do, don't you?" I'm like "What do you mean?" "They go drink and blah blah blah..." You know how people talk like that.

I said, "I don't follow on them drinks, I don't know what they do and don't care long as they show back up here and play." But you know, the thing is that what I come to realize is that they never involved me. They kept it aw --whatever they was doin', if they was doin' what people say they were doin', they kept it away from me and I think that was a really compliment. Because they cared...I could have been put in a position where even if I wasn't doin'... I would've had to carry the burden of what's going on, and ohhhhhh, you know, be nervous about gettin' in trouble or gettin' a reputation. They never embarrassed me with that. Every now and then a guy would go and get drunk, get sick you know... but, you know that's not anything, but...nothing. I been blessed by that too. And only negative thing I can say about my experience with entertainment, in the entertainment world and all that, is that...and it goes with the territory, 'cause like I told you, I try to pick the brain of lot of the pros. Been around long time and they tell me...that part of it, you just don't even deal with. You just... is, you know, people, they're musicians, they try to...they want to go, you want to take 'em, they don't want to go the way you want to go, they get to the point where, "Well we doin' all this, he just gettin all the credit," or this or that or you know, it's nitpicking. Or "Oh I can do this just as good as he I can do this or I can do that" that kind of thing. And at one time, it used to kind of bother me, when I'd see 'em. Or you had a promotional thing where, all this stuff like you seen lately in the last ten or twelve years where "Candy Foster did this, Candy Foster did that, well, Candy Foster..." At first I think there was a lot of, some resentment from that. I can... you know, you kind of feel in the air sometime, but fortunately if you got six guys and if you got two guys who don't understand it and they around, well you know, "Well we, we doin' more than he is we blah blah blah," then maybe the four guys and maybe would say "Hey...this is not about you. This is about--when you--when we put him out there in front, the bigger he gets, the bigger we get." They don't understand. They couldn't understand that for a while. He gets over, then we get over.

You know? It works that way, you know...all you have to do, all he has to do is make sure he takes of care of the people who are taking care of him. That's my job to do that. And that's what you know and...you see in the movies that--where James Brown...some people doin' all that--can always take care of his people, and they made it big well he still was "One for you, ten for me."

KN: (laughter)

CF: And you know, "Well, I got expenses, you know," he got them, you know but then he wants them to look the best on the stage and everybody in the business...but they had to buy their own uniforms, and stuff like that, and say, I don't do that. I got uniforms, I find a way to pay for them. So I would just...whatever somebody would say, I would counteract it, with you know, because...but what they didn't realize is that I was trained that way from a young blood. Remember I was tellin' you that one thing I learned from Danville is to take care of your musicians and eventually they will take care of you. And it's been true and it worked. And for every one that didn't, there was five or six that did. So it didn't count because I don't even worry about that one, you know, and he just got mad and jealous whatever

you know, or he was just incompetent anyway. (laughter) You know he wasn't gonna go take care of nobody.

RG: (laughter) right.

KN: (laughter)

CF Or some of 'em just wanna play, they don't care, they don't care about...and I accept that too. Some of 'em just don't care, they just want to play. But then some realize that, "Hey you better realize, this is a business. It's a business. in some cases, may not be a very big business, but it is a business and if you don't treat it like that, you gonna lose out. You not getting your bang for your buck, cause you cheatin' yourself, you know, just that way, man. 'Cause when you start, you know, cause it's one thing goin' downtown and all goin' over there bookin a gig with Paul, you know, he throw you in there and let you go for yourself. But then you turn around and the university call you and say, "Mr. Foster, we'd like to talk to you about...dun dun dun," well then all of a sudden it ain't just about playing, it's about business, and (laughter). 'Cause they don't wanna hear--they want to take care of the business, then they listen to you playing. And everybody got to be on the way, cause them contracts, you know, so you know it's...I spent a lot of time back in that little office there and it's certainly...I'd say 75 to 80 percent of it is doing this kind of stuff, you know, if I'm not trying to keep up with the contracts and whatever, and the bookings, and have the musicians in the right place at the right time, and then you thinking about what you gonna do this fall, who's gonna...I got people sitting there waiting on me to tell em what's gonna go, which way I'm gonna go for New Year's Eve, and I'm having a hard time thinking about that, New Year's Eve.

You know, but I'm gonna have to think about it, because they don't want to hear about no come September or November, they already know half the time what they gonna do. Especially ones that, you know, gonna pay you. Nah, if it's just a night thing, that's different. And you know... so you guys, and a lot of guys that come in the band, they have no idea. I try to explain to em. A lot of the new ones especially, one that just gettin' out of music school and all that, playing around music a lot...hey man, start payin attention to the other side of this stuff. Cause it's the flip side, it's not just climbin' on the bandstand and everything's alright, bring your horn, set it up, nah...that's the, the dream world. But I'm trying to take you to the real world, where real things go... so you need to pay attention. Do you know Nick Schroeder, trumpet player. Nick is a very enlightening kid, he's a young man, he's teaching over in Kansas now, Kansas State or one of them places, but he got his master's and his doctor's here, while he was playin' with me...did a great job. Nick used to, you know, last four or five years, now you start payin' more attention. You need to pay attention if you wanna get out there, and you wanna tell students, you wanna have a band...So now things happen on the bandstand, "Oh what we gonna do Candy, what we gonna do," "Calm down Nick, calm down." Always tell him, I say "One thing you gotta remember, Nick we gonna play the gig. I don't care what go down, we gonna play this gig."

RG: Nothing goes wrong. That's what we say--nothing goes wrong.

CF: Yeah, nothing goes wrong. We play the gig. Now he "Oh okay, man". So we's in Danville that uh, Day's Inn or something, couple years ago, I mean we played about three, four songs into the gig and the PA head starts smokin'.

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: Like "Ohhhh!" He start pullin like, he was like "Oh lord oh! Oh!" Everybody's lookin like uh oh, uh oh, and Nick say, "What we gonna do?" and Nick, "Oh we done for, oh this ain't..." I said, "Calm down Nick, calm down, y'all calm down." "Boy, I don't know Candy, we came, we came here..." I'm like "Look, we gonna take a break folks, we'll be right back." And so I said, "Nick, we gonna play the gig. Remember, we gonna play." "Okay Candy, okay, whatever you say." So I go around, in the meantime, somebody come up and he tryin' to say, well he can do this, and he can do that and to get started, did half of it, did all of it blew up? "Nah, just smoked some of the circuits." And they got it, and they put some cellophane paper around it and they did this and we got three, four more songs before it started again.

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: And I said okay...meantime, I'm doin' a little scoutin' and I was talkin to... and they say, "Well this guy over here got one of them bands in Danville here. I said "Can I talk to him?" and I was like, they might have some stuff close by. He said, "I don't know, I don't have it," but he said, "Let me make a phone call." So he makes a phone call, and I'm like, "Said they out of town, the guy got some stuff." OK, so his girlfriend was sitting there, "Well what are you trying to do?" and he's all, "Yeah, yeah." She said it again, "Well Candy, what do you need?" She went around him again. I said, "Well I need some kind of head, so we can push--hook some mics up. I don't need a whole lot, just something, you know, a PA head or a thing like that." Said, "Well, my son got one." So one of the musicians like, "Well I never knew that." (Laughter)

CF: So she said, "I'll go get it". I said, "Okay." I said, "Well, thank you." I thought she meant down the street, you know. This woman went to Westville!

RG: Wow.

CF: Drove to Westville, picked that thing up, and came back.

RG: And you played the gig.

CF: Yah! And we played the gig!

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: And Nick said, "Candy, I don't know how you do it."

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: He said "Wow." I said... but you know, you just... gotta stay focused. Somebody, somebody will help you. But I was impressed with this lady.

RG: Right, right.

CF: When I found out, I didn't know that she was--later she says "Oh yeah I live there in West --"You went to Westville to get..." (laughter).

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

RG: Well listen Candy I hate to cut you off--

CF: Oh, that's alright--

RG: I could stay here for hours, but we got to get the company car back. (Laughter)

CF: Oh, you got a company car, might be lookin' for it!

RG: But...thanks a lot for your time. You've been very generous with your time and your home. You gotta let us come back and do this...I feel like we could do this for hours more.

CF: Oh yeah.

RG: We didn't even get to all the questions yet.

CF: Yeah. Maybe, maybe next time I could even bring in--call Russell, cause he's got...well he'd probably tell the same, but he's got some, you know, things--

RG: That's a good idea.

CF: And...I'm just saying there's a few more that's...round here can help out with this. If can get 'em on board, and so we can do it again, and it gives you a little different twist too.

RG: Right.

CF: And might be the same stuff but see they might have a little stories.

RG: Get different pieces of it.

CF: Yeah.

RG: Yup.

CF: That, that even I hadn't got, you know. And so each person got their only experience with the same thing. Like, he used to be on Winter Frolics and all that but his experience was different from mine. Because he was doin' as strictly as a musician's...back, backin' up people. I was coordinating shows and, and helpin' young people put it out there you know and...being critical, when the right time and wrong times, like they did me!

RG: (laughter)

KN: (laughter)

CF: And like ma –

AUDIO ENDS