

Doris A. Fields aka Lady D

Where: At her home in Beckley, WV

Date: April 8, 2016

Location: Beckley, WV

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 44:05

Doris A. Fields aka Lady D

Doris A. Fields, aka Lady D, known as “West Virginia’s First Lady of Soul” is an R&B, soul, and blues musician and songwriter living in Beckley. She is the founder and organizer of West Virginia’s Simply Jazz and Blues Festival and previously hosted the weekly Simply Jazz and Blues radio show on Groovy94 in Beckley. In 2008, Fields’ original song “Go Higher” won an online contest sponsored by the Obama Music Arts and Entertainment Group. She performed the song as a headliner at the Obama for Change Inauguration Ball with President Obama and the First Lady Michelle Obama in attendance.

DF: Doris Fields

EH: Emily Hilliard

00:00

DF: ...don't have to look good (laughs)

EH: I know. (laughs) I interviewed my grandma over Thanksgiving and she's, you know, she's in her 80s, and I think she thought it was—it was for StoryCorps um, cause they have an app that you can just send it directly to the Library of Congress and it goes in their archive, but I think she thought it was video because she got all dolled up.

DF: (laughs)

EH: And then when she found out it was just audio, she was like, "Oh! What a relief!" (laughs)

DF: (laughs)

EH: Okay. So I'll just hold this here. So could you tell me your name and when and where you were born?

DF: My name is Doris Anne Fields (laughs) and I was born in... I was born in Charleston but of course I always say Cabin Creek. Kayford and Cabin Creek but I was born in Charleston General Hospital. But yeah, I'm a coal miner's daughter so I was born in the coalfields. My father always... "you were born in the coalfields, not in Charleston." (laughs) But I was.

EH: And what—could you tell me about your family and what they did?

DF: Well like I said my father worked in the coal mines for like 50 years. He was—he was a lot older than my mother and so he started working in the coal mines when he was like 10 years old. His family came from Selma, Alabama and he worked until the late 70s in the coal mines and then he spent another 20 years as the Senate doorkeeper and my mother, she always worked in state and local government in the assessor's office, county clerk's office, those type of jobs. Nobody in my family was musical at all. I was like... odd to them! (laughs)

EH: Do you have brothers and sisters?

DF: No, I was an only child.

EH: Okay. So how did you start singing? Was it in church?

DF: Well yeah, I started singing in church, although my earliest memories were like when I was about 3 years old, my grandmother, she lived with us, and she used to of course, be there at the house and babysit me all day, and we would watch American Bandstand on Sunday afternoon and I just knew then—that's what I want to do. And she would always have me dance, you know, while the show was on and I would sing along, and so I've always known that's what I wanted to do but I never got the chance until I was probably 7 years old and I was in the choir at church and I just was in choirs and sang since then.

EH: Okay. And do you also play piano?

DF: (laughs) I tried—I taught myself to play and then I took piano in college. I played clarinet from the 5th grade through college as well but now I leave the instruments to the people who really want to do that (laughs)

EH: (laughs) But it's probably helpful just to have some background.

DF: Yeah, it's nice just to be able to read the music anyway. (laughs)

EH: Yeah. Yeah. Um, so after choir how did you continue singing? How'd you kind of follow that?

DF: Um, I was in a couple of R&B bands later in college and then there was a big gap in there for a few years when I moved to Mississippi actually and then I moved to Japan and then came back and joined another band and um from that time, the late 80s, I've been singing on and off with bands and then doing the musical theater and things like that ever since then.

EH: What were those R&B bands like and where were you—where did you go to college?

DF: West Virginia State, and the first band I was in was called Daddy's Delight. R&B band and then the same guy who put that band together years later put another band together called Midnight Magic. And so I was a part of that too and that went on for a few years and then everybody just sort of went their separate ways and I started doing musical theater and things like that and so that kept me involved in music but I wasn't part of a band again until I started my own band about... oh it's been about 16 years ago now. So that's where I am now, with my band, plus doing the same things.

EH: So who's in your band?

DF: Well you just met Robert, he's my keyboard player.

EH: Okay.

DF: He's from Jamaica by way of Beckley, West Virginia and Dan Bailey who is a guitar player, he used to play with, well he still does, with Taylor Made, the country group, and he also is a studio engineer, so he does all my CDs.

EH: Uh-huh.

DF: And Demetrius Cross is my drummer and Phil Copney is my bass player.

EH: Nice.

5:18

And what did your parents think of this career path for you?

DF: They thought it was stupid. (laughs) I should go to school and get a degree and be like a nurse or something that paid and had good benefits—that was the whole thing about where I grew up. Get a job that has good benefits, you know, so my mother, she just passed away last year and I think probably um

up until maybe a couple years before she died, she thought that I would come to my senses and just get a regular job (laughs)

EH: Yeah. And is your dad still around?

DF: No, he passed in '96.

EH: Okay. So when you were in Mississippi and Japan was that for music?

DF: No, my ex-husband he was in the military, so he was in the Air Force and so that's how I got to kind of travel around then and my son was born. So, like I said, it was a big gap in there, where I was, you know, raising a family and that type of thing. So now I'm unencumbered. (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Were you playing out at all when you lived there?

DF: No, no. I was just really I was taking vocal lessons while I was in Mississippi, I had a vocal coach, but I didn't really do any—I wasn't singing with any bands or anything like that. I'd do a couple of talent shows every once in a while but other than that I was just sort of an observer. We would go to—we were in Biloxi, Mississippi so we'd go over to New Orleans like every other weekend you know, and listen to the music over there and then over to Mobile and Pensacola and you know, just an easy drive along the coast there. So it was a lot of fun just hearing the different styles of music down there and I didn't—like I said, I didn't do much singing at all during that time.

EH: Yeah. Would you sing like, just around the house?

DF: Yeah. Yeah, to my son. (laughs)

EH: (laughs) And is he musical?

DJ: He's a DJ.

EH: Okay!

DF: Yeah, he doesn't sing at all but he loves music. So that's what he does. He's a DJ and he actually used to DJ with my band.

EH: Okay. Tell me about your repertoire. What kind of songs do you sing and where do you get inspiration from?

DF: Um, I guess I mostly do R&B. I do a lot of pop and jazz and blues of course. That's where I've gotten the label of being sort of a blues singer. But I do everything and reggae as well. When I was growing up, I listened to everybody. Like I said, I loved American Bandstand, anything that had... any show that had music on it, I was in front of the T.V. and I was like one of those television babies. That's where I spent all my time was in front of the T.V. and so to me there was no difference between like Ella Fitzgerald and Dolly Parton, you know, and anybody that was singing, I just loved it. So I think all those people really kind of inspired. Like I remember, I really loved Judy Garland when I was small. (laughs) I loved the way she held her microphone! I was just obsessed with that and that's the way I hold my microphone now to this day! (laughs)

EH: What is that like?

DF: I mean it's just, it's nothing, you know, special, but just the way she held the mic and would hold the cord and she would sort of caress the cord, then let it go and that's... I just do that not thinking because I always practiced it that way. And you know, that was just one of those quirks I guess. (laughs)

EH: Do you write your own songs?

DF: Yeah, I write a lot of my own music.

EH: Could you tell me about some of those original songs and what you write about?

DF: I have three, yeah, three and a half CDs of original music and the very first one I did was mostly like an R&B feel. We always do some reggae, cause like I said, my piano player Bob, he's from Jamaica, so there's always some reggae in everything we do. And so I've written a few reggae tunes. Some blues. I have a blues sampler. I really haven't done that much blues but because I do the show, The Lady and the Empress, I wrote this show about Bessie Smith as the Empress of the Blues. That's how I sort of got the label of being a blues singer. But I don't really do that much blues in my regular performance, but then I've written some blues tunes as well.

10:15

I've written a lot of music, and actually, I told somebody the other day, I just started writing again a few days ago after a couple years. I haven't written any songs in about two years and then just got in the mood the other day and then have just been writing which is why I brought my pad in here. I was waiting on you and I just thought in case I get an idea, I'll jot it down! (laughs)

EH: So why do you think you had 2 years of not writing anything?

DF: Because my brain—as I get older I find that my brain holds less and less, and I used to be able to really multitask well, as far as, I guess emotionally be completely present in this—I'm doing this right now. But let me stop for a second and go over here and do this—I could do that really well but now I'm like, I have to do one thing at a time and um, I think probably the last couple years, actually since 2013, I've been organizing a jazz and blues festival, and that like takes all of my brain and um I think that really had me wrapped up, you know the last couple years, and I'm trying to get back to me now. I've been so concerned about this festival—finding money for it and finding the artists and things—in other words paying other people instead of me (laughs) you know? So... so now I have to really get back to you know, booking my own stuff and getting back out there because I took care my mother for about 3 years before she passed away and she stayed here with me, so that was like a 24-7 thing because she was bedridden and I wasn't able to perform as much as I wanted to so I was basically stuck here and then right before she died my car broke down. I haven't been able to get another car so... I'm literally stuck here a lot of times and so now because of finances and everything I have to get back out there, so that in itself has sort of gotten my creative juices flowing again as far as my own stuff. So I think you know, in one way it's bad but in another way it's kind of getting me off my butt you know, and...

EH: So what's your writing process? Do you get like words first or a melody first usually?

DF: Usually it's words. Um... it just depends. I mean anything can trigger something for me. A lot of times, I used to really get my melody a lot. Bob, my keyboard player, he's the one I write with, so when I get melodies and things like that, I tell him so he can, I can hear it. And then... he says "this is not gonna work. That's not gonna work." So then I figured, I need to get the whole song first before I take it to him. (laughs)

EH: Uh-huh. (laughs)

DF: So now it's mostly words are coming first and concepts and ideas because I'm realizing my head is in a completely different place than it was when I was writing a few years ago and the last couple of original CDs that I did were to me, kind of, I mean I like them, I like the work that I did but I think they were a little idealistic, I guess. So now, just with everything that's been happening in the world in the last couple years, I'm sort of... angry.

EH: Yeah.

DF: So now that's kind of coming out in things that I'm trying to write. So I'm interested to see where that's gonna go and what it's gonna sound like.

EH: So are any of the new songs sort of political or protest in content?

DF: Somewhat, yeah. But a lot of it's from, from just my personal point of view. Not so much as a, you know, world political view, but... like I've told a lot of people... I try to learn from everything that I do and even putting this festival together turned out to be so political. It went from "let's bring some good jazz and blues music into Southern West Virginia and it turned out to be so political, you know, it's like..." (laughs) Everybody's trying to make more of it than the original intent. And I think even that, you know, is like an underlying thing that I have of still being kind of upset about trying to do that even here. So it's more of a, I guess localized political protest that's going on in my head. (laughs)

EH: And is that because like, everyone has the person that they want to perform there or what is it exactly?

DF: Well no. When we started out in the first festival was in 2013, we started out with 7 people that said "yeah, we want to do this!" And so when we did it, I mean it was great. The festival turned out great, of course, we didn't make any money, but we said when we started that we weren't trying to make money, we knew we weren't going to make money for 3 or 4 years probably. Everybody understood that until it was over with and we were so deep in debt, you know? And everybody's coming out of their pocket to cover...

EH: Right.

DF: .this. Which, I told everybody at the beginning, I don't have money. I don't have money. This is all gonna have to be sponsorships and advertising and so then once it was over with and sort of the afterglow of how great it went...went away, now everybody's mad because they had to spend money.

EH: Mmhm.

DF: So now I'm down to me and 1 person puts this together the last 3 years.

EH: Okay.

DF: So that's not an issue about who's gonna come, it's just the pressure of trying to get the money to cover it. You know? So... but the politics of it came from the first year we did it, we did it actually right outside Hinton in... they call it Sandstone Drift.

EH: Oh yeah, okay.

DF: It's about 15 minutes from here and it's right over Summers County line. So then when it was over with and everybody was saying "this was great!" and everything, and then I hear rumblings here in Beckley, "why couldn't it have been in Beckley, why didn't you do it in Beckley?" Well because nobody here even wanted to talk to me when I was asking could we use this spot or that spot or can Beckley help, you know so, (it was like) we were trying to diss Beckley and Raleigh County by not doing it here. So okay, we moved it into Beckley and we still can't get the support that we need, so...

17:34

That's what still has me kind of upset.

EH: Yeah, that's a lot to take on. And could you tell me the name of that festival and what the sort of... what it is and the vision for it?

DF: It's called the Simply Jazz and Blues Festival and it sort of grew out of the fact that... I host a radio called Simply Jazz and Blues every Sunday evening, and I've been doing that for 6 years. And so after a couple years or so I thought, well maybe we should try a festival because we're building this audience here. I wasn't sure, I mean I didn't go looking for that job of doing this radio show and it was funny how I even got in that position but, the thing is... I mean jazz and blues is not exactly mainstream here, (laughs), in Raleigh County so... Tamarack was a sponsor of my radio show when it first started and they would let me do a live show there at Tamarack like every 3 or 4 months and so the audience grew from that because we were consistently doing that and so I thought a festival would be something to try. And now the festival is growing slowly and it's just... I mean it's been a great experience, you know, with the artists and everything, but like I was saying before with me in this position now where I'm sort of totally unencumbered, I have no reason that I need to stay put here, my mother's gone, my son—he's grown and married, so but now I'm stuck because I don't have transportation and the thing is, my head's in a different place so... (laughs) so it's just been kinda hard to stay on this page now. And I think a lot of people, especially performers, look at me as somebody who hires them not somebody else who needs a gig too like them. So it's like a you know, a mental fight with myself.

EH: You're wearing a lot of hats.

DF: Yeah! (laughs)

EH: And are most of those performers from West Virginia?

DF: A lot of them are, we like to bring, you know, out of state musicians in so people can hear 'em and mostly they hear them on my radio show and so then we bring 'em in you know, live, but a lot of 'em are from West Virginia 'cause I wanna give those people a showcase too. So it's sort of, it's pretty much half

and half. And it's a 3-day thing so we do jazz on the first day, blues the second day, and then gospel on the third day.

EH: Gospel on Sunday?

DF: Mmhm.

EH: Mmhm. And do you feel like you're part of a music community here?

DF: (sighs) It's weird because when you say music community here, you're talking about the rock and the country people who don't really see me as part of that group. I'm like on the fringe (laughs) of what's happening that is mainstream here in this area and southern West Virginia in general, I guess. I'm odd like reggae is ... like on that kind of fringe. When they want something different, then they'll call me, you know, or they, they're having a... cause you know, I'm labeled as a jazz singer too, which I really don't like singing jazz that much, it's not my thing, but I'll sing it if you're paying me to do it! (laughs) But um, yeah, I feel sort of the odd man out here, but at the same time, it's like when people want to know about musicians, they call me because they think I know everybody for some reason. I mean even country people or whatever when they want to know about someone, or do I know of any new places to play and things like that, I'm supposed to know, and here I'm looking for places to play! (laughs)

EH: Yeah, exactly.

DF: So it's kind of weird.

EH: Yeah. So you are sort of a resource in people's eyes.

DF: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. (laughs)

EH: Do you feel you're part of a trajectory or a history, you know maybe here or just in blues, jazz, r&b in general?

DF: Well I think even statewide I don't feel like... I don't feel like I'm connected to it. I don't feel like I'm part of it. And even talking to other musicians, I think the musicians who were like at their peak probably in the late 60s and the 70s—those people have history. They have the stories and things. People who are performing now, they have... they're here and they're just scattered. And they're just doing their thing. But I don't think any of them even really feel part of something. But I was telling you about Rabbit Jones—when he was performing, all those people knew each other. I mean from around the state, they all knew—they played jazz, they knew each other and so that's I think a big difference between then and now. Now everybody's just kind of on their own and doing their own thing but they're not connected in any way—there's no kind of cohesive um, force, there's no, there's no, well there is a musician's union, but there's nothing that brings everybody together.

EH: Okay.

23:45

Do you think—why was it there before? Were there more venues or more...

DF: I think there were a lot more venues then but, and this is just sort of the path that I'm on with this in talking to Rabbit, I mean there were, there were, how many did he tell me—30, maybe 33 Black-owned clubs in Charleston, and from the mid-40s to the mid-60s and he owned the first one that was licensed.

EH: Okay.

DF: So there was always some place to play. And I remember when I was growing up, when I was a teenager and couldn't get into the clubs, there were all kinds of clubs that people were going to, and I was like, Oh! I can't go hear this group or that group, but there were so many places to play.

EH: Wow.

DF: And the thing now, there are fewer places to play, but the places that are hiring are paying the same money that they were in the 60s and 70s! (laughs)

EH: Wow. And is that population decline or what do you think has—why have all these clubs kind of faded away, not able to pay musicians as much?

DF: I think a lot of it... from my personal experience, I think a lot of it is that the people who own these clubs, music is not, is not the focus. It is to, you know, the bar is usually the focus. Or if it's a restaurant, the food is usually the focus. So there's not very many places that even focus on music being a draw and so music always in any situation is the last thing people think about. I mean, even if they're getting ready to plan a family reunion or some kind of event or whatever, the last thing—"oh we need some music!" you know? Or "let's get a DJ!" or "let's get a live performer but they can't cost more than a hundred bucks!" you know? (laughs) So it's always the last thing so people just, they don't stop to think about what would your thing, whatever it is, your venue or your party or whatever—what would it be like if there was no music?

EH: Yeah! Right.

DF: So... (laughs)

EH: And your feeling like the old man out sometimes, do you think that is—is it tied to a specific preference for genre, is it tied to race—why isn't jazz and blues recognized as much here?

DF: Well I think the venues are not there that are willing to feature that kind of music. Here in West Virginia, and I've noticed now, and I feel like I can say it because I was born and raised here, I've been a lot of other places, but West Virginia is sort of spoon-fed by the masses of whatever they feel like is—these clubs, if they have a big night with a country group, then they feel like they need to do country every weekend then so we can fill this place up. And so if everybody feels that way, then everybody is opening a country bar. And that's all they're gonna hire. And they don't want to take a chance on something else that might not keep those people coming in, and I think that that's, you know, a lot of it too, I mean when you get to a city like Morgantown and Charleston and Huntington, of course, then you have enough variety of venues that you can have different styles of music, but still it's like, you know, are those venues really promoting whatever the music is, because they're not really into the music, they just want to fill the bar up.

EH: Right.

DF: You know? So I think there's a lot of different things that go along with making it successful, and it has to be—I was just reading an article about the 35th star over in Fayette County, they used to be Cantrell's, a white water rafting bar, and the guy is saying he and his partner, they just took this place over a few months ago, they're focused on the music. They want to be a music venue and they have all these acts coming through, and I'm thinking, well that's cool, but give it a few more months and I bet you won't be focused on the music because you got to pay the electric bill! (laughs) And that touring band that you got in there didn't draw because nobody's heard of 'em! You know? (laughs)

EH: Yeah, sometimes I think with that stuff, especially building a local music community or venue, you know, to make it viable for musicians get a little forgotten because they want to bring in the touring bands.

DF: Yeah.

EH: Did you feel like you had any mentors over the course of your career?

DF: Not really. I... there were people that I had always looked up to when I was growing up and they were mostly in the gospel field like um, Bishop TD Jakes, I mean I've known him... he introduced me to my 1st husband and I was in his choir for years, and he was a great singer and piano player and he and Ethel Caffie Austin, and there were lots of gospel people that I always looked up to, you know, here in the area, but as far as the music that I really wanted to, people like Chaka Khan and Roberta Flack and Natalie Cole, those are the people that I wanted to be like. But there wasn't really anybody local that I really saw as a mentor.

EH: So you kind of carved your own niche in this area.

DF: Yeah. Yeah.

EH: Could you tell me how your radio show came about?

DF: (laughs) that was funny too, um, back in... it was 2010 when I started the radio show, but a couple years before when I, I wrote a song called "Go Higher." And that was when Obama first ran for president and I was trying to get it in his hands 'cause I thought, he needs this song I notice whenever he was campaigning he was using Stevie Wonder's "Sign, Sealed, Delivered," and I thought, "This is the song he needs." And he came to West Virginia a couple times and I had a couple people say they got it into his hands, or one of his aids or whatever, and so anyway a friend of mine, Bonnie McKeown who's originally from the Charleston area, she moved to Chicago and um, she's a musician too, blues musician. She called me and said, "There's a contest online for the best Obama inaugural song. You should submit your song." And so I went to the site and I didn't know how to upload music at all, it just happened—my son was here that weekend that she called, so he uploaded the song for me, and it won!

EH: What!

DF: Yeah it won, so we got to go to Washington, D.C. for the inauguration and everything, blah blah blah...

EH: Oh my gosh!

DF: Yeah, that was lots of fun, big crowd.

EH: Did they play it, at the inauguration?

DF: Yeah, well we played it at one of the... there was like 33 inaugural balls and we played at one of 'em.

EH: Wow.

DF: And...

EH: This was the first inauguration?

DF: Yeah, the first inauguration. And that was really cool you know, everything that happened from that, so I got a big boost, my reputation got a big boost from that—people all over West Virginia wanting me to come and perform FOR FREE. Because of course, that must have been a big pay day to go to Washington! (laughs) So they assume that I didn't need any money—"why don't you come and sing that song for us?" Like I was singing that song for a whole year! (laughs) But anyway then the next year, a man who lived in Hico, his name was Butch McClung. He was an old-time radio guy, he had done a radio show in Charleston back in the 60s. And he also worked for the radio station here, Southern Communications, and he was friends with Shane Southern (sp?). He had a friend in Chicago cause he had lived in Chicago, worked on the air there and around Chess Records and everything, so he played organ. And he was a big jazz and blues lover and he wanted to, he wanted somebody to write him some blues tunes and he was talking to some friend in Chicago who happened to know that I won this contest, and he told him, there's a woman somewhere there in West Virginia that you should get in contact with and maybe she could help you. So he calls the radio station up there—this time I had no connection with the radio station at all, and asked them if they knew how to get in touch with me and somebody said yeah and so he connected with me and told me who he was and would I collaborate with him on some music. "Well sure!" So then he introduces me to the guy at the radio station and then I do... I write him a couple of tunes and we record 'em and then he says "Well, Shane says he would like us to do a jazz and blues radio show." And so he was actually my cohost when we first started.

EH: Okay.

DF: Now he was older in his 60s and he was a really, a hypochondriac too. (laughs) So we started the show in February and of course the roads were bad sometimes and he wouldn't come. So I sort of had to teach myself the soundboard and all that at the station, and then he just stopped coming!

EH: (laughs)

DF: (laughs) So from then on I had the show all by myself until now. So that's how that came about! That's a roundabout way of telling you that story! (laughs)

EH: And so where does it broadcast?

DF: It's in this area. You can pick it up in Charleston—It's 94.1 fm but it does stream online—94—yeah, groovy94.com.

EH: Cool.

DF: So you can listen on the internet. And that's why I've got a lot of people around the country that listen to the show so that's kind of cool too.

EH: That's great! And it's jazz and blues from all over?

DF: Yeah. All over. Yeah.

EH: Do you ever play any of your own songs on it?

DF: Uh, yeah. Not very often but my granddaughter, my step-granddaughter, she was listening last Sunday and she told my son to text me and tell me that since it's my show, why don't I play all of my music?! (laughs) Well, that's not quite how it works! (laughs)

EH: Cute.

DF: Yeah (laughs)

EH: Do you...have you taught any others? Are you a mentor to any other musicians?

DF: I don't know if mentor is actually the word, but I've kind of gotten close to Melissa McKinney—she has Stages Music School down in Princeton and those kids that come through there, I mean, are great! All of 'em are gonna be like top notch musicians and singers and I started a talent competition back in 2006 called West Virginia's Finest.

EH: Okay.

DF: And she was part of that competition—probably the 2nd year, and then she started bringing kids when we started taking kids the 2nd year, she started bringing these kids that she was teaching and so I sort of got connected with these kids and so her, especially the girl group that she has, they're called Change, now, um, I guess I sort of feel a special connection with them. I use them as much as possible, you know, on different things, shows that I do. And Melissa too. They came and they opened the festival the last couple years. And um, yeah, I just see a lot of potential in those girls down there.

EH: Cool!

DF: But all the kids that she has in the school, they're just, they're really good.

EH: I'll have to talk to her too.

DF: Yeah.

EH: Are there other people you think I should talk to in West Virginia? Musicians and...

DF: There's a whole bunch of 'em! (laughs) Yeah Melissa, she was actually Nat Reese's protégé right before he died.

EH: Okay, okay.

DF: She was really learning a lot from him the last couple years.

EH: Did she learn guitar?

DF: Well she played guitar, but he was teaching her blues.

EH: Cool!

DF: Basically, she's a great blues singer. So yeah, she would be somebody that you could talk to. And Rabbit Jones of course, uh... Ethel Caffie, if you can run her down! (laughs)

EH: Yeah, I'm trying!

DF: Um, there's also let's see who else... Um, in the Charleston area, people like Marshall Petty, who's a saxophone player.

EH: Is he... does he play at the Empty Glass? Friday?

DF: No, he doesn't play—you're thinking about Dugan Carter—yeah, he's another one. His, both of his parents were well-known musicians, jazz musicians.

EH: Okay.

DF: Too... Dugan and Bob Thompson of course. Bob Thompson knew a lot of the people that was... he was sort of like one of uh, Rabbit Jones had like a following of young musicians you know that would go all over town with these after parties and... and sitting in clubs you know after these shows, you know he would tell me about Count Basie and Lionel Hampton and these people coming in to play in the Municipal Auditorium, and uh, this was before segregation was over and so they would play for these, the white audiences at the Municipal and then they would leave there and go to all these clubs around town, just bar hop all night until like 7 o'clock in the morning...

EH: Oh my gosh.

DF: And people like Bob Thompson and Vince Lewis, the guy that was here a couple of weeks ago, he would take them around to all these places, you know, so they could sit in with these people, you know? So... (laughs)

EH: That's really cool.

DF: Yeah!

EH: Yeah, I'll have to... maybe some of them I'll get their contact info from you.

DF: Yeah, I have some, some people that you definitely should talk to.

EH: Yeah. Well is there anything else that you'd like to add?

DF: Well, I don't know. Depends on what it is that you're looking for specifically or... 'cause I don't see myself as... somebody to go in the history books yet, but... (laughs) I'll tell you whatever you want to know!

EH: Well what would be your sort of I don't know...your ideal for what happens in your music and career?

DF: I just want to keep doing what I'm doing but on a larger scale and getting paid more money. (laughs) Which, you know, I'm feeling right now like I do need to go and leave here at least for a while. I mean I like West Virginia. I've always... I spent my first 18 years of life trying to get out of West Virginia. You know? (laughs) But then I kept coming back, you know? But it's not an ideal place for somebody that likes to perform or who has to perform. You really need to go somewhere else and even though I'm getting older now, I mean I feel like everybody's got an audience somewhere. You know? And I need to go and find more audience because it's not here anymore.

EH: Yeah. Yeah, that's really too bad. Because we need you here!

DF: (laughs) How much you gonna pay me?

EH: I'll pay you the ticket! The ticket cost!

DF: (laughs)

EH: But yeah, I just lost my train of thought, yeah, I think it is a challenge to stay for a lot of people, but I think especially um, you know, local musicians because those venues are you know, not as popular and on the other side of the state there's the Mountain Music Trail, but it's a specific genre and a specific area. But actually the study I was looking at from 10 years ago was research that they did to try to make a... like a West Virginia Music Center that would sort of be like a tourist... kind of like Tamarack but specific for music.

DF: There was a guy, and it's probably been like 10 years ago, that came an interviewed me too.

EH: Was it Matt Meacham?

DF: Matt. Yeah. Yeah.

EH: He's... he actually went to school ahead of me at UNC and so we had a bunch of the same teachers and stuff, but yeah, that was the study I was looking at. But nothing ever came of it.

DF: Okay I wondered about that. Cause he and I are friends on Facebook now and he's in Missouri or something?

EH: Yeah, he may be in Illinois now. In Chicago, well outside of Chicago. But I think it would have been great and you know, maybe it will still happen. But Virginia has the Blue Ridge Music Center and Crooked Road and so the state is working to create all these opportunities for musicians but we need that similar help here I think.

DF: Well the way it seems that things are going with the legislature and everything, it's like they don't want anybody to stay here, they want everybody to get up and move! (laughs) It feels like it has to be me too.

EH: I know, I know! They're not making it easy at all.

43:28

Well, at least you know that bill didn't pass um, but anyway... Yeah. It's been frustrating.

Well, thank you and I'll hopefully can come to an upcoming show.

DF: Well I hope so!

EH: But I'll get your info when we can figure out when I can come take some photos.

DF: Okay. That'd be great.

EH: I'm going to turn this off.

44:05

END OF TAPE