

Music at MIT Oral History Project

Everett Longstreth

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

with **Frederick Harris, Jr.**

March 30, 2011

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library**

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Contributors

Everett Longstreth (b. 1930) was director of the MIT Concert Jazz Band from 1968-1995. He is a well-regarded trumpet player, arranger and leader of the Everett Longstreth Orchestra. His credits include performances with bands led by Woody Herman, Herb Pomeroy, and singers such as Nancy Wilson, Tony Bennett. He has taught at the Boston Conservatory, Lowell State University and The New England Conservatory of Music.

Forrest Larson, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has attended training workshops in oral history methodology and practice at Simmons College and by the Society of American Archivists, and is a member of the Oral History Association. He is also an active composer and violist.

Frederick Harris, Jr. has been the Music Director of the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble and the MIT Wind Ensemble since fall of 1999. He was a student of noted jazz drummer Alan Dawson.

Interview conducted by Forrest Larson on March 30, 2011, in MIT Academic Media Production Services. Duration of the audio recording is 1:55:11.

Music at MIT Oral History Project

The Lewis Music Library's *Music at MIT Oral History Project* was established in 1999 to document the history of music at MIT. For over 100 years, music has been a vibrant part of the culture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This history covers a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and choral musical groups, as well as jazz, musical theater, popular and world music. Establishment of a formal music program in 1947 met the growing needs for professional leadership in many of the performing groups. Shortly thereafter, an academic course curriculum within the Division of Humanities was created. Over the years, the music faculty and alumni have included many distinguished performers, composers, and scholars.

Through in-depth recorded audio interviews with current and retired MIT music faculty, staff, former students, and visiting artists, the *Music at MIT Oral History Project* is preserving this valuable legacy for the historical record. These individuals provide a wealth of information about MIT. Furthermore, their professional lives and activities are often historically important to the world at large. Audio recordings of all interviews are available in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

1. Family and early musical experiences (00:00:16)

FORREST LARSON: It's my pleasure to welcome Everett Longstreth. He was director of the Concert Jazz Band from approximately 1968 to 1995. There seems to be some controversy about that, but we'll get into that. He is a well-regarded trumpet player and arranger and currently leads the Everett Longstreth Orchestra.

It is March 30, 2011. We are in the studio of MIT Academic Media Production Services. Thank you so much for coming. Also with me, participating in asking questions, is Frederick Harris, who is the current director of the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble. And thank you, Fred, for coming.

So Everett, tell me where you were born and what year.

EVERETT LONGSTRETH: [laughs] Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1930.

LARSON: And tell me about your parents. Your father was Albert, and your mother's name was Ruth? Is that correct?

LONGSTRETH: Right, yep, exactly.

LARSON: So first tell me about your mother. Was she a musician?

LONGSTRETH: Both were musicians, and my whole, basic family was in show business. Early on, Vaudeville. My grandfather, my grandmother, and my mother, when she was growing up, all were in Vaudeville. And when we were—when we were kids my—my folks had a radio show in the morning on one of the local stations.

LARSON: Do you remember the station name?

LONGSTRETH: No. WB—I forget what it was—BNS maybe?

LARSON: Oh yeah, right. WBNS, they're still—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, Columbus, yeah. Yeah, that—that's a long time ago. Yeah, but they did it every morning. I think they did like a 6 o'clock AM show. [laughs]

LARSON: So what kind of stuff did they do in the show?

LONGSTRETH: It just was like, probably, what'd they call a variety show. A lot of talk, and play, and skits—things like that.

LARSON: So your mother, she was a singer?

LONGSTRETH: Mother sang. Everybody, basically, sang a little bit, so... But yeah, it was just typical Vaudeville thing, you know, play, tell stories, you know, talk, whatever.

LARSON: And your mom probably played piano as well?

LONGSTRETH: No, she didn't.

LARSON: No?

LONGSTRETH: No. My mother actually played bass.

LARSON: Oh interesting!

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah. My father had a band that—and a dance hall, like a ballroom, out in West Jefferson, Ohio.

LARSON: I will ask more about that in a little bit.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, okay.

LARSON: So how long did this radio show go?

LONGSTRETH: It went several years. I don't know exactly. But because they were up and out so early, we always had a lady that stayed with us, with the kids. So—didn't get left home alone. [laughs]

LARSON: So you told me your father was a sax player. Did he play other instruments as well?

LONGSTRETH: He played violin and—

LARSON: Oh, interesting.

LONGSTRETH: —basically, reeds. But as far as—most of the time it was alto and soprano.

LARSON: Oh, interesting.

LONGSTRETH: And then, with the ballroom, we had what they called round and square dancing, and he played violin on all the square dance things.

LARSON: Well, there was a real kind of dance-band tradition in Columbus coming out of that. There was a guy named Earl Hood, who was a violinist and band leader, and so there's a real tradition there.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, there were several bands around. I—my mind—I can't tell you who they are.

LARSON: Yeah, I got some more we'll get to later about jazz in Columbus, and then I got some names that I'll run by you to see if I can jog your memory.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, okay.

LARSON: Tell me about any siblings you have and...

LONGSTRETH: I had a stepbrother and stepsister. I never considered them that. You know, we just grew up together. We were young, and it just—I never thought of them as stepbrother, stepsister. [laughs] It was just sister and brother.

LARSON: Right. Were they musicians? Are they musicians?

LONGSTRETH: We all played growing up. I played trumpet. My brother played, like, reeds, usually tenor sax.

LARSON: And your brother's name was?

LONGSTRETH: Robert, Bob.

LARSON: And your—

LONGSTRETH: And my sister's was Betty. And she actually played drums.

LARSON: Cool.

LONGSTRETH: And she did a little bit of singing, you know, growing up and all that. And at one time, we all played, you know, with my father's band. It was basically where I learned how to play.

LARSON: And your father's band, the name of the band was?

LONGSTRETH: Just Al Longstreth Orchestra. Yeah.

LARSON: Did your father teach as well?

LONGSTRETH: He taught some privately, not in any structured place, you know, but just private lessons.

LARSON: Was he teaching both saxophone and violin?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, he taught a little bit of everything, you know. When I started, I, you know, started with trumpet with him. So...

LARSON: So he could play enough trumpet that he could—

LONGSTRETH: He knew enough about it, you know, to, you know, teach it, yeah.

LARSON: Were there other teachers—private teachers, you had as a child?

LONGSTRETH: Pretty much not 'til I got to college. And when I got up here—

LARSON: At Berklee [College of Music]?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, Berklee. I had a guy named Fred Berman, at one time. When I first got here, it was Fred.

LARSON: And there was a trombone player—

LONGSTRETH: There was a guy named—

LARSON: I forgot his name.

LONGSTRETH: Well, another trumpet teacher was Harry Fink, for a while, and then John Coffey. So...

LARSON: I'll ask you more about those in a little bit.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: So with your family of musicians, it just wasn't—probably for your father—probably wasn't a choice as being a musician. It was just kind of in the blood?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, well, we all grew up with it. My sister and brother didn't stay with it. I'm the only one that actually ended up staying with it. But when we first—you know, he told us to decide what we wanted to play, you know, 'cause we always—as kids, we were always around the dance hall, you know, listening, and we were always exposed to it. But he said, "Think about it." He said, "Because once you pick something you're not changing it." [laughs] So, you know, whatever you pick, that's what you were going to do. It wasn't going to be, "I want to try this for a week and that for a week." That definitely wasn't the way he was. [laughs]

LARSON: So how did you come to choose the trumpet?

LONGSTRETH: I don't know, I just, you know, the—I guess, the one that, you know, I liked the best. Although it was not a great choice. [laughs]

LARSON: Why do you say that?

LONGSTRETH: Oh, it's just a hard instrument. Keeping in shape is ridiculous. People—you know, I say, "I gotta practice," and they say, "What?" You know, "You practice—you still practice?" I say, "Yeah, you better believe it."

HARRIS: Really!?

LARSON: So your father's orchestra, they played for dances, but did they also do other kinds of shows?

LONGSTRETH: No, well, at the ballroom we played dances all the time. Used to work, probably at least three nights a week, you know, Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday—sometimes four, you know, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. But on—basically on a steady basis. And they ran the dances and, you know, had a good following. So the, you know, the place was full most of the time. So...

LARSON: Was your father kind of a freelance musician who played with other pit orchestras?

LONGSTRETH: No, well, not—I think when he was young, yeah. I know at one point he had an offer to go out with Pee Wee Hunt, you know, the "Twelfth Street Rag?"

LARSON: Yeah.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. But he didn't do that because of, you know, family stuff. But he didn't play—mostly he worked for himself, and he didn't play with other local bands.

LARSON: Did he ever play for silent films?

LONGSTRETH: No, I don't think so. Yeah.

LARSON: There were some saxophone players that were active in Columbus in the '30s, '40s, and '50s. I want to see if any these names ring a bell. Rusty Bryant?

LONGSTRETH: I know the name. Yep.

LARSON: What about Louie Transue?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Paul "PC" Couser?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Phil McDale?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Or Milton "Doc" Payne?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Okay, just wondering.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, what... How early were they?

LARSON: Well, these were '30s, '40s and '50s—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, see, I wasn't born yet.

LARSON: — and I was thinking maybe your father might have known some of those men.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, no. Rusty Bryant, yeah, yeah.

LARSON: Yeah. He seems like he's the most well-known. And there was a guy, Lucien Wright, he's described in one book as the first person to bring the saxophone to the United States. Which, of course, I'm not sure if that's true or not, but he was certainly an early exponent. His family's band was called the Wright Saxophone Orchestra. This was in the 1920s.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah that's—

LARSON: Does that ring a bell?

LONGSTRETH: No, before my time.

LARSON: Yeah, yeah. So tell me about some of your earliest musical memories.

LONGSTRETH: Basically, just, you know, playing with my father's band. Because I had to do a lot of, you know, different things because we—sometimes he had a big band, where we would have, you know, five brass, five saxes. Other times, it would—we'd be working, you know, like an Elks Club or, you know, one of those kind of places, and it would be a small band. Sometimes it'd be him playing alto, my brother playing tenor, and then I would have to play third alto parts.

You know, I'd have to transpose them. [laughs] You know, and I got to where I could, you know, I could sight-read them, you know, 'cause you gotta be—after a while, you know, it just automatically happens. You know, you just transpose it down a fifth, and it's like reading a regular part. [laughs] So—but I learned a lot, you know...

HARRIS: Great preparation for arranging.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, right, ex—you know. You have to do that. I worked up—up here, we used to work a—Bradford Roof used to have a show thing they brought in, and I was working there with Harry DeAngelis and this conductor. It just—we had three horns, and every night the conductor would come in and say—some time, some—some tune, he'd say, "Oh," you know, "well, let's do this when in F tonight," you know. Or, "Let's do this one." [laughs] He would change key on something every single night. Every night you had to transpose something, you know, and the whole band did. It's just [laughs]—you know, you kind of get used to it. So...

LARSON: So when you were growing up did you play in the school bands and orchestras?

LONGSTRETH: I played in high school band. My first year there was, like, a waste. We had a guy that came in and talked about his troubles with his wife for about 40 minutes and then he said, "Oh, well, we better play something." You play one piece, and the period is over. Then we got a guy in called Ralph Neer [spelling unverified] who really built the program, was very, very good.

LARSON: And what school was this?

LONGSTRETH: South High School, yeah. And he did a good job. We had—ended up having a pretty good band. And I had a, you know, like a dance band within that thing, and—

HARRIS: That you ran as a high school student?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, and we used to, you know, play a few dances and things. We played old stocks. But the only music that was available at that time were stocks. And I always had a trouble with, you know, Mr. Neer because he always insis—kept telling me I had to play in the marching band, you know, for the football games and stuff, which were all on Friday night. And I says, "I can't do that, because I work every Friday night." He says, "Well, you have to do it or you can't be in the band," and so on and so forth. And we used to go through that all the time. I said, "Well, I just can't do it." But, needless to say, I ended up playing in the orchestra, and the dance band—everything but the marching band. [laughs]

HARRIS: So, there was a concert band that you also played—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, oh yeah.

HARRIS: —like a regular high school band.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, they had a concert band. He had a nice program, you know. So, he always looked the other way with the marching band. [laughs]

LARSON: Are there any pieces that you played with the band that you remember, or any concerts that were memorable, or any experiences?

LONGSTRETH: Not, not really. I know, you know, a couple of them I had to play some solos or something, but I have no idea what they are now. You know, it was—my memory is not great for those things. [laughs]

LARSON: You said you also played in the orchestra.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah.

LARSON: And what kind of stuff did they do?

LONGSTRETH: They were like, you know, light classical, you know, typical school things, you know, things that weren't too hard, you know, but...

LARSON: So growing up did you listen to the radio much and hear music there that kind of influenced you?

LONGSTRETH: Not a lot, there wasn't a lot going on from that standpoint. I—we had a few records and things that I listened to. And I listened to, oh, the Washington, D.C., band—the disc jockey, what was his name? I can't take think of his name right now. Bill Potts was on the band. Washington, D.C.—Willis Conover.

LARSON: Oh, yes.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. We had an album of that band with, I guess, the Swope brothers, the trombone players, a lot of good players. And then Bill had done the album, the Porgy and Bess album that's kind of become a classic, so...

HARRIS: Bill Potts?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, and I actually met him years later down in Washington. Because I used to do clinics down there, and he was there. So...

LARSON: So it sounds like you were able to go into clubs and dance halls as a child when sometimes, some of those places, kids wouldn't normally be able to go, but because your father—?

LONGSTRETH: Well, we—what we did mostly—as a family, my father took us to concerts and things. You know, we—used to be a place called Memorial Hall that brought people in. And we saw everybody from Spike Jones, who came in, to Fritz Kreisler, vio—you know, at the time, really—you know, top, you know, classical violin player. So we heard all kind of different things. Bands used to come in to a place called the Deshler-Wallick, a hotel. And they had a room where they put bands in. And that was the first time I saw Maynard.

LARSON: Maynard Ferguson—

LONGSTRETH: He was 18, just came in from Canada, you know, to join the—it was the Jimmy Dorsey band. And they featured on—featured him on "Rhapsody in Blue" at the time. [laughter] That was a, you know—but they brought other bands in, you know, and we generally went to see the bands. There was a skating rink on the east side that they used to—a big skating rink and they had dances. Tommy Dorsey Band came in, Gene Krupa band. We always, you know, got to see those things.

HARRIS: [Duke] Ellington and [Count] Basie too?

LONGSTRETH: I saw Ellington, I forget where. I think at an Air Force base some place. That was later. Basie I didn't see. There was a place down in Cincinnati called The Coney Island, they brought bands in. Saw Stan Kenton down there. My brother and I went down. And then several places—Buckeye Lake, which is east of—yeah.

LARSON: Right, they had a dance hall there.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah, and they used to bring bands in. We used to go out there all time. Saw, like, Ray Anthony and, you know, all the bands at the time. So. Didn't go to many clubs. I did tell you, I think, the other day, there was a black club—sou—down in the south end and I saw Nancy Wilson down there, when she was, you know, very young, probably my age or close to it anyway. You know, that's the first time I saw her, but she was like, local. So...

LARSON: I have some other names of some Columbus area jazz musicians. This guy Harry "Sweets" Edison, he was a trumpet player who played with Count Basie later on.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, I don't—I know who he is, but I didn't know he—I didn't even know he was from Columbus, to tell you the truth.

LARSON: What about someone named Bobby Alston, a trumpet player?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: And I mentioned earlier, Earl Hood, the Earl Hood Orchestra?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: There was a keyboard player named Jimmy Carter?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: A trombonist, Tippie Dyer?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Heard about an organist, Eddie Beard?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Or Eddie Nix, a drummer?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: One last—Hank Marr, I think you said you knew—

LONGSTRETH: What's that?

LARSON: The organist Hank Marr?

LONGSTRETH: No, I don't think so.

LARSON: Oh, I thought you—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: Okay. And then there's some names of some groups. A group called the Keynotes of Rhythm Band.

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Or the Percy Lowery Orchestra?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, no, I left, I don't know—

LARSON: These are people—

LONGSTRETH: Early on?

LARSON: Yeah.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, because I left when I was 21. I went in the service when I was 21.

LARSON: Yeah, these are like '40s and '50s. So how about one more name of a group, the Raleigh Randolph Sultans of Swing?

LONGSTRETH: No. [laughs]

HARRIS: He just wanted to say that.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, right. Yeah. There was a band that played up—a place called the Valley Dale. I can't think of the name of the band. But they were popular.

LARSON: Yeah, that was a ballroom.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: That went for a long time. How about the Macon Hotel? It was famous for its jazz—for its jam sessions.

LONGSTRETH: The Macon Hotel?

LARSON: Yeah, M-A-C-O-N—

LONGSTRETH: No, I don't even remember that.

LARSON: It mentioned that it was famous for jam sessions. There was a place called the Palace Theater.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, the Palace, yeah.

LARSON: How about the Ogden Theater?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: Yeah. Any—

LONGSTRETH: The Loews—

LARSON: —theaters or hotels that you played—

LONGSTRETH: Well, the Loews theater used to bring in a lot of shows, you know, live, live shows. Palace did too. Those were the two main theaters that brought in live talent. You know...

LARSON: Were there shows at the Ohio Theater or was that—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, the Ohio Theater brought in shows. I saw—can't think of the guy's name, but Debbie Reynolds. And who was she dancing—

HARRIS: Eddie Fisher? No.

LONGSTRETH: No, dancing—a dancing guy—very, very, good, very popular—can't think of his name. He was in a movie with her.

LARSON: So when the—there is an area in Columbus called the Near East Side that back in the '40s and '50s it was very much a black neighborhood, and it was a real haven of jazz. Did you ever go down there for jam sessions?

LONGSTRETH: No, no.

LARSON: Yeah it sounded like in the '50s that Columbus was fairly segregated. Were there much opportunities for jazz musicians to intermingle that way?

LONGSTRETH: Well, when I saw Nancy [Wilson], I mean, that was a black club. And I had to be in my teens, so—and I think because it was music, you know, nobody, you know. Musicians have always been kind of, you know, open about those things, you know. You come to hear music—a—good. But, you know, in those years, you know, there wasn't a lot of mixing.

You know, that's what we were talking about earlier there with the Basie band and Duke's band. You know, I mean, the guy stayed for 30 years because they—where you going to work if you don't work with—or Lionel Hampton is another one. But, you know, you kind of had to stay with those things if you wanted to play.

2. Service in 1st Armored Division, US Army (00:23:30)

LARSON: Right. So you spent some time in the U.S. Army in the 1st Armored Division—

LONGSTRETH: Yes.

LARSON: —is that correct? And there was a band called the Old Ironsides Band. That's what I was reading up and they called the band that played with the 1st Division, Old Ironsides. Is that a name that came later?

LONGSTRETH: I never even heard the name before.

LARSON: Okay, maybe that's a later thing.

LONGSTRETH: We were unique in that 1st Armored Division band was a jeep band. We played in jeeps. [laughs] I never had to march. [laughs] We had, basically, three guys to a jeep, a driver, and then somebody here, and then two guys in the back. And the jeeps were lined up, depending on streets, but either four or six jeeps across and then, however many deep we had to go. I forget how many guys were in the band. But that's the way we did parades, a jeep band.

And it was good, except if you got a bad driver. Because [laughs] the guy, like, lets the clutch out too fast, you're jerking like this all the time. So it needed pretty good drivers. I know one time we were way down in Texas. I forget the name of the town now. I'm terrible with names, but Lampasas, I think. Whatever. But it was a long, long drive. We did the parade, and you're driving home, like, at night, and the kid driving was falling asleep. And so I ended up driving home, [laughs] because he just couldn't stay awake at all. But we did parades all over Texas that way. You know, it was great. I don't remember the name Ironsides though, at all.

LARSON: So that might be a later thing after your tour there.

LONGSTRETH: It could be.

LARSON: So when you joined the band were you planning to be a musician or did they find out you played and had you play?

LONGSTRETH: No, no, every opportunity I got when—I, I got drafted—but every opportunity I got, I kept saying, you know, "I want to be in the band."

LARSON: Were there auditions or was it more kind of open, up for grabs?

LONGSTRETH: The audition was—I was the last guy to—to get into the band. I was, like, the last quota, the last guy. I had six weeks of basic training. I hadn't touched a horn in six weeks. The Master Sergeant was a clarinet player, so I go in for an audition, and he puts a clarinet book in front of me. [laughs] I says, you know, I said, "I can't play that." Because it, you know, was way too high. [laughs] He says, "Nah, nah, nah, just play a little bit, play a little bit."

So I did, you know, which was terrible, because I didn't have any chops and the thing was out of range, totally. I got in. [laughs] He said, "I want to see if you can read," you know. And that was it. So—but—when he gave—when I—you know, six weeks and he gives me the clarinet book, I thought, "Oh wow. I will never make this one." [laughs] Yeah.

LARSON: So while you were there in the service, you organized a dance band. It was called the Dance Masters.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, a friend of mine, a guy named Joe Solomon, and I—you know, there were—there were different bands within the Army Band. You know, there was actually a society band, like, what they called a tenor band, you know, three tenors, and, you know, trumpet and trombone, which was very good. Then we had the bigger band we called the Dance Masters. And we used to play this—you know, the officers' club, the NCO club, and the service club. We used to do dances. So, yeah, you know, that was good.

LARSON: So was there kind of big band dance music that you were doing? Or was there some—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, the same, same thing in those days. It was basically all stocks, you know, what you buy out of the store. A couple of guys in the band did some writing. You know, in fact, that's—for me, that was the best thing that happened. I'd always been interested in writing but could never—never had any structured study. And every book I ever bought, all they do is show you examples, and if you can figure out what they did, good. But if you don't have any background, you can't figure it out. You know.

And the amazing part is, I still see those books, you know. A friend of mine came across the Glenn Miller book, and he sent me a copy. And it's same thing. It's—here's like a two or four bar melody, and you can do it this way, or if you want to flush it out a bit you can do this. If you want to open it up and make it a little wider, you can do this and this, you know. Never tell you what it is. You know, what are they doing? So...

HARRIS: Which you rectified in your books.

LONGSTRETH: I hope so. Yeah. 'Cause that used to frustrate me no end.

LARSON: And that's—in that band, I read that that's where you got started in your interest in arranging.

LONGSTRETH: Well, I had the interest before. But what happened was I—I ran into two guys that were from up here, this area, who had gone to Berklee. One was from Springfield, Vermont, guy named Jack Carter, who's passed away now. And the other was George Jalbert from down around Hartford, Connecticut. And George and I are still in touch. We see each other occasionally, you know, and all.

But they used to sit up in the day room with me. And we used to sit up, like, all night. And they were showing me this, and showing me that, you know. And I was trying to write, you know, because you had the guys to play stuff. So, I was—I kept trying to write different things, and they'd show me different things, so...

And when I got out of the service, Jack came down from Springfield, Vermont, to show me around Berklee. Took me—introdu—introduced me to Larry Berk, Bob Share, and all that. And that's where I ended up going to school. So, for me, it turned out to be, you know, really good.

LARSON: Now you mentioned writing. Were you writing original tunes or were you do—

LONGSTRETH: No, I was just trying to arrange things, you know. I've always—it's weird, but I've always been curious, you know, when I hear things, to know what they were,

you know. And at that early age, didn't know what they were, had no clue, you know, basically, but... I was always interested in it, so... Berklee was a good school for me.

3. First year at Berklee College of Music, then touring (00:31:12)

LARSON: So at—you mentioned at Berklee you studied with this guy, Fred Berman. I guess he played with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, is that correct?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, I think so, yeah, yeah.

LARSON: Anything else you want to say about Fred and kind of what you learned from him?

LONGSTRETH: I wasn't with him that long. I was with him my first year up there. And then I got a—I got a call from a friend of mine that I was in the service with, to go on the road. And I had the GI Bill, you know, and I was working some, but I was still falling behind, money-wise. [laughs] And I didn't—I really didn't want to ask my folks for money. But it—at that—I didn't start school until I was 23. At that point I said, you know, I don't want to call home for money. [laughs] So I ended up going on the road for a year. And when I came back, Fred was gone.

LARSON: So what show did you do on the road?

LONGSTRETH: That's a long story. [laughs] I went out with a band called Leo Peeper's. He was a territory band out of Chicago. And it's a mix, but it's kind of like a Lawrence Welk band, you know, *bup dah dup dah dup dah deep dah dup*, you know, that style of band. And, you know, I get a really good lesson out of that one, because I had never even heard that kind of music before. [laughs] And when I got in the band, I was supposed to be lead trumpet player. There wasn't one single thing that was marked in the book, long or short. Not—just notes, nothing to tell you what style was. And I didn't know the style anyway.

HARRIS: And you're the lead trumpet.

LONGSTRETH: If—if—oh—oh—the first night was disastrous. I mean disastrous. And after the job, Leo [Peeper] and Norm Butler, the lead alto player who hired me, was sitting at the table and Leo says, he says, "Gee." He says, "Norm told me you could play." [laughs] You know, I said, "Leo, I can," I said, "but I just," you know, "don't know the style," you know. But it was a lesson. Never take anything you don't know what you're getting into. And I've told that to other people.

But anyway, we had a night off. Norm took the book. We came up to the hotel room, went through the whole book, you know. And from then on we were, we were okay. I stayed a year on that band. And I also wrote for the band, at the time. Because I'd been at Berklee for a year, and this was very simple music. In fact, there was not even, basically, a nine on a dominant seventh chord in the book, you know. No, it was just basic change—chord things. And when I started writing, I started putting in nines and flat nines. [laughs] And Leo is going, "Well, you know" [laughs]—but he came around, you know, because it sounded good. So...

HARRIS: But those were your first professional, really—writing for a professional group.

LONGSTRETH: Well, yeah, pretty much, yeah, yeah. Just, you know, I wanted to learn to write the style. I had a band, and I figured, why not. So, you know, we did that, and then he had me—I wrote some things for the girl singer. You know, diff—I just kept writing, because I liked to write anyway.

Then he had me do "Rock Around the Clock". [laughs] And we had two good jazz players in the band. The trumpet player was a good jazz player, and the tenor player was a good jazz player. So—gave them a couple of solos. And it—it was amazing because Leo loved it. And I wish I hadn't done it, because we played it two or three times a night. [laughs] He'd always come back to it. Yeah. So anyway, that's, you know, kind of that story.

The other—the other part of it is, Norm is a joker. So when he called me, he wanted me to meet the band. It was in Kansas, but I think it was Topeka, I'm not sure. Anyways, a reasonably small Kansas town. He says "Check into," you know, "this hotel, and we'll pick you up the next morning on the way through." And then he said, "If the hotel burns down or has burnt down, just go to one that's close by." 'Cause he—he was like a—kind of a joker, you know. If the hotel burned down, yeah, okay.

I got in there, and the hotel had burned down. [laughs] It wasn't there anymore. So I went to the next hotel, right. And I told the guy, you know, this is my name, be sure, I'm expecting a phone call. And every time I went in and out of the hotel, I keep reminding the guy. So the whole day goes by and nobody calls me, you know, and I'm waiting and waiting and waiting. That night I call home. And my mother says, "Where are you?" She says, "They've been calling here all day long." [laughs] So anyway, we finally got together. They—they had to play the job without me, come back and get me, and you know. But that was—that whole thing was an experience and a half. [laughs] So, anyway.

4. Resuming study at Berklee, association with Herb Pomeroy (00:37:35)

LARSON: So there was this guy, John Coffey, a trombonist. I guess he had played bass trombone with the Boston Symphony—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, John—John did a lot of things. He played, I think, something for Philly rings a bell with me, but I can't remember what he did. But he—yeah, he was a pretty well-known performer before he started teaching.

LARSON: What are some of the things you learned from him?

LONGSTRETH: John's famous line was just, "Tongue and blow, kid." [laughs] That was his—that was John's thing, you know, tongue and blow. It's—you know, that's pretty much what I can tell you about John. [laughs]

LARSON: So you're working on—

LONGSTRETH: Other—other than that he—

LARSON: —just the real fundamentals?

HARRIS: —the basics?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. Other—but other than that, he drank a lot. [laughs] So, you know...

LARSON: When you were at Berklee, you also studied with Herb Pomeroy, right?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, not trumpet, I studied arranging. Herb and I came back at the same time. I was on Leo's band in '54, came back to Berklee in '55. And Herb came back at the same time. He was—he was either on Kenton's band or Lionel Hampton. I think it was Kenton, at that time. And when I got back in school, they had me study with Herb privately, as, you know, as a private teacher. And, you know, I played in his ensembles and, you know, all those things.

With Herb, he used to—you know, you'd go in for a lesson, and we'd be talking, and he would say, "Oh, well, you know that." Right. And I'd say, "Herb, wait," you know. [laughs] I says, "Maybe I do and maybe I don't," you know. "Let's go through it," you know. I always had to do that with him, because he just—because I'd been out playing, and, you know, I had done some writing, he says, "Oh, you know that, you know that."

HARRIS: You were the same age too.

LONGSTRETH: Pretty much, yep, yep. But, at that point, you know, he had a lot more experience than I did, especially from a writing standpoint. Yeah, but—

LARSON: But at the time, what were some things that you really learned from him that made a difference for you?

LONGSTRETH: The one thing, you know, was, like, when he started the band, he asked myself and Bill Berry, who—you know who Bill is?

LARSON: I don't know.

LONGSTRETH: You don't know Bill? Bill is a trumpet player. He's from Cincinnati, originally. He went to LA. He—he played on the *Merv Griffin Show*, when they were in New York, and then he moved to LA when they moved out there. And he also ended up playing with Duke [Ellington]. That was his ambition, to play with Duke, and he made that, you know.

But we were both students together. And we went—actually, went to school, same, same year, same classes, all those things. And Herb asked us both to play with the band. And playing with that band, definitely, is probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Because if you've—I guess you haven't, but playing with Herb—he got the most out of everybody I ever saw, man, every band he ever had. We used to do clinics together in Indiana and Illinois. And he just managed to—he'd teach, kind of, like, without teaching, you know. And if you listen to what he said, you know, you just really learned how to play. [laughs]

LARSON: Are there some specific examples of things you remember that—learning that made a difference for you?

LONGSTRETH: No, just from a playing standpoint, it—and at that level—you know, and we could play; we were all decent players at the time. But it was always the little things that count, that—that clean up things, you know, like—talk about separations

and talk—you know. Just, I've, I've known him, with his band, which was a really good band, I've known him to pull a chart out just to talk about, "I want this eighth note longer." Literally, he did that one day at rehearsal. [laughs] Pulled us out, "Okay, I," you know, "this eighth note I want to be longer." The only thing he fixed on the whole chart, you know, was that. What it was—you know, attention to detail, just, basically, how to play. Yeah. And the band had, you know, excellent time. It was just—we played one night, Jimmy Zitano was late—you know, the drummer—playing the Stables. And we played without him. It was just John Neves on bass and [Ray] "Muzzy" [Santisi] on piano. Playing a chart called, "Why Not." Which I just actually redid about a week ago. With a bright, [sings melody]. That kind of thing. Man, I was never so impressed with anything in my life when we played that. That thing absolutely romped from beginning to end, and no drummer. [laughs] And the time was impeccable. That has always impressed me with that band. But...

LARSON: When you were at Berklee was Joseph Schillinger's theory still taught?

LONGSTRETH: The first year I was there, yeah. When—when I left to go on the road and came back, they had gotten rid of it. We—it just became—he got—Larry [Berk] got tired of—one thing, he got tired of paying the estate for the use of the name.

And the other thing was, like, nobody understood it. I mean, even—even the people who were supposed to be teaching it. [laughs] You know, it was kind of like really out in left field, you know, as an approach. It's like a mathematical approach to writing or something, you know, it's too mechanical and too complicated. It had some good things in it, you know, naturally, but... The one thing I always remember is geometric inversion, you know, where you can take the melody that you're writing and turn it upside down, and you can write it backwards, and you know. [laughs] And it creates another melody, supposedly. But all those things—I don't think it's practical. You know.

LARSON: I have here that you graduated from Berklee in 1957, is that right?

LONGSTRETH: Yes.

5. Touring with the Woody Herman Band (00:45:24)

LARSON: And soon after that you joined the Woody Herman Band, is that correct?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: How did that come about?

LONGSTRETH: Again, playing with Herb's band, you know—all the bands that came to town—Storyville used to be right across the street from Stables at the Copley Hotel, not the Copley Plaza, but the Copley Hotel—and every time they'd get a break, they would run over to hear the band, you know. And they brought different bands in. Basie was in. Woody was in. And the lead trumpet player, John Coppola—with Woody—had been on Kenton's band with Herb. So they were good friends, you know. And I met John through Herb.

And at the time they had a trumpet player on the band who was really a juicer. I mean, he would—they were riding in cars, and he would get out of it and, actually, take a car and disappear for a week [laughs] or two—with one of the band cars. [laughs] So they finally were going to get rid of him. And at the time, they were working several places around town, and they asked me to sub. John asked me to sub up at Old Orchard Beach one night. And...

HARRIS: Sub on lead?

LONGSTRETH: Huh?

HARRIS: Sub on lead?

LONGSTRETH: No, but it ended up that way. But I was supposed to take Bill's. Bill [Berry]—I didn't want his chair, because he had the high note chair, go out in front of the band and play the high notes. And I didn't want to do that. But the night I subbed, John kept giving me lead parts all night long. And I said, "John, come on, I just want to play with the band and have a good time and relax." And he said, "No, no, no." Said, "I want Woody to hear you." So... Anyway, they decided to make a change, and they offered me, you know, the chair. But as it turned out, it was the high note chair, which I got stuck with.

So anyway, I subbed some—someplace else again, and they offered me the job. And, at the time, the pay was \$150, you know. And the managers would want to talk to me, not, not Woody or, you know, anybody. It was a manager. And he was offering me a hundred and a half. And I said, you know, "I'd love to go," I said, "but I just can't do it for that," you know, "because I'm making more money in town," you know, "without travel." Anyway, he went over to talk to Woody, was sitting at a—we were—we were in a bar someplace after the job. And I heard Woody say, "Pay him." [laughs] So they offered me \$175, and I took it. [laughs] Yeah, so...

LARSON: So that would have been \$175 per service or something?

HARRIS: A week, a week.

LONGSTRETH: Per week, yeah. Well, that—those days, it wasn't bad.

HARRIS: That was—that was—yeah, that was...

LONGSTRETH: You talk about the Leo Peeper's Band, I—the pay in that band was \$85 a week. I saved money. Those days, a meal was a buck and a half, hotels were \$3. And we only checked in every other night, because they had what they called a day-sheet. You could check in anytime from six in the morning. So we would—if we checked into a hotel, we'd play the job, maybe drive to the next town, which was always two or three hundred miles.

Get in in the morning, check in, stay, play the job, come back to the hotel. And the next night, you would skip checking in. You know what I mean? You would—you only checked in every other night, so you'd sleep twice for the price of one, you know. You can't do that anymore.

HARRIS: No.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. But all kind of things—but I saved money. \$85 a week and I saved money. So...

LARSON: So what are some of your notable memories of playing with the Woody Herman Band?

LONGSTRETH: My first one was great disappointment. After coming off Herb's band, Woody's band sounded like a high school band to me. [laughs] It was so different. It was unbelievable. And then on top of that, you had all the personality nonsense going on, which we never had.

You know, I never had that with anybody, you know, in Boston. Trumpet players weren't talking to each other, you know, and they had two—I got stuck, I told you, on the high note book, which I didn't like. But they had a couple of guys who would take some lead parts and get to the out chorus, and not be able to make it through, you know, just, you know. All of a sudden, the band is playing, and there's no lead trumpet going on. [laughs] Those charts were windy, you know. But they still took them anyway.

And, you know, just all kind of things going that I wasn't used to. The really good thing about it was Bill Harris was on the band. And I ended up riding with Bill in the car. And to hear him play every night was a joy. But he—

LARSON: I forgot, what instrument did he play?

LONGSTRETH: Trombone, good, you know, jazz trombone player. So, the thing with that was, [laughs] the drummer was Karl Kiffe, who was a child prodigy. And he and Bill didn't get along. Bill would say—and very politely ask him—he said, "Look," you know, "when I'm playing," like, you know, "just play time," you know. He didn't want him dropping a bomb, you know. And then Karl would say, "Well, who's he think—he can't tell me how to play," you know. And Bill would be playing, and Karl would be dropping bombs in. [laughs] This went on all the time, you know. I mean all the things that are non-musical, you know, all the nonsense. So that was very disappointing. The book was good to play, I mean, that part of it.

LARSON: Did you write any arrangements for the group?

LONGSTRETH: No, I didn't write for that band. Talk about money, the saxophone players—making a bill and a quarter a week. He had saxophone players lined up, like, forever, wanting to go on the band, you know, the three tenor thing. So he didn't have to pay any money to tenor players. Jay Migliori was on the band.

HARRIS: This is the period before [Stan] Getz and the guys were in I think?

LONGSTRETH: No, after.

HARRIS: After the period?

LONGSTRETH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

HARRIS: Okay, after, I'm sorry.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, but—you know, some good tenor players. Roger Pemberton was playing baritone. Joe Romano was on the band at one point, you know. But they weren't making any money. [laughs] They're just doing it because,

you know, they wanted to play with Woody. So it had its good points and its, you know, bad points, you know. The initial thing was kind of a shock, because I expected it'd be better. And the other thing that happened with that was at least ten or fifteen—10, 12 years later, I subbed on the band up here. They needed somebody for a night, called me. Playing Paul's Mall—remember the jazz club, Paul's Mall?

LARSON: That's before my time.

HARRIS: I've heard of it.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. It was on Boylston Street. I subbed. First tune they played was "The Preacher." And I said—Paul Fontaine was on the band. I said to Paul—I said, "Paul," I says, "you won't believe this," I says, "but it feels like I never left the band." Because we played it even—when I was on the band, played it all the time. And then to play the first tune as a sub, it really felt like I hadn't left—hadn't left the band. [laughs] So, after that, we played some other things I hadn't seen before, so, you know, hey, all right. But that was a weird feeling that night.

LARSON: One last question about the Woody Herman Band. Igor Stravinsky wrote this piece called "The Ebony Concerto" for the Woody Herman Band. Did that—after the initial performance of that, was that in the band's repertoire?

LONGSTRETH: No, I never played it. Yeah.

LARSON: Did people talk about it at all, or was it—

LONGSTRETH: Well, I don't remember anybody even requesting it or anything. Yeah.

LARSON: I just wondered if there were any stories about that or anything.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, no, no. I know he recorded it. But I had never played, never seen it. It wasn't in the book, I know that.

LARSON: Okay. I have one more question about Woody Herman. What was he like as a leader, as a band leader?

LONGSTRETH: Woody was good. I remember when I first [laughs] went on the band. I don't know where we were. I joined the band in Indiana—at the Indiana Roof was one of my first jobs. But we were at a bar someplace, and I was talking to Woody, and I kind of asked him why, after all these years, he was still doing one-nighters? Because I was on the—I was on the band for a year, and we did one-nighters every single night. And the only time I had a night off was to travel 1,000 miles. If we were going on a long trip, we'd have the night off. Other than that, we worked every night. And he said, "I like it." [laughs] So, you know.

Why he wanted to stay doing it that long, but he—he did it long after I left the band, so... He really liked what he was doing. And he was a good leader. The only time he was the least bit bad, and it was very rare, was if he, you know, juiced a little bit too much, then he could, kind of, change personality a little bit. Other than that he was good.

LARSON: Musically, tell me about him as a leader.

LONGSTRETH: Woody had, and I didn't agree with it when I first went on the band, but Woody had a knack—we very rarely had a rehearsal. The only time we had—even

had close to a rehearsal was new charts came in. He had a knack of taking a chart and changing it. We'd play it down. Number one, we'd play it down, if he didn't like it, pass it in. It was no, "give it a chance," or anything. No, if he didn't like it, pass it in.

If we were going to do it, he would switch it around. He would say, "Okay," you know, "play the intro in letter A, and then jump to D, and then go back to B." And he would kind of change the form of the chart. And almost invariably it was better. [laughs] He just had that kind of a knack, you know, for structure, doing things that, you know, made the chart actually stronger than it was, so... But as a leader, he was good. He was no trouble.

LARSON: So what would account for—you were talking about the difference when you joined, coming from Herb's band. You're saying that you felt like that the quality was very different, but yet he was well regarded—

LONGSTRETH: The—the trouble with that was, like, personalities, you know. And I think from his standpoint, he, you know, he'd been through that for years and years and years, you know, with different personalities. So I think he just ignored it all, you know, and just didn't pay any attention to it. But it's—from a musical standpoint, you know, he was good. The band sounded good, you know. I mean they had some—certainly in the trumpet section there were some problems, more than any other section, I think, you know, by far.

But when I was on the band it was John Coppola, myself, Bill Berry, who all got along fine. Danny Stiles was on the band. I don't know if you know Danny or not. He, again, was on the *Merv Griffin Show*, and, you know, a good trumpet player around New York. And a guy named Andy Peele. And mostly it was Danny and Andy who were, you know, kind of disruptive. And also they had their wives with them, and the wives didn't get along, you know, typical. [laughs] But just basically those kind of problems. I think Woody just doesn't pay any attention anymore at all, you know, doesn't want to know about it. So...

6. Teaching at Berklee and playing locally (00:59:45)

LARSON: So after your tour with the Herman band you taught at the Berklee School of Music. What years was that?

LONGSTRETH: I was on Woody's band for a year, so it would probably be like late, probably the fall of '58 to 1963.

LARSON: And you taught theory and you ran ensembles—

LONGSTRETH: I taught arranging and had the ensembles, yeah.

LARSON: Any memorable students that you had, that you remember?

LONGSTRETH: Uh—at some point, I had Gary Burton, yeah [laughs] at 18, who, you know, had better ears than anybody around. [laughs] There were a couple of people. There was—actually there was a bass player—I was telling somebody the other night, uh—that came in one day. He wasn't a good student. And he came in one day and

says, "I'm leaving school." He says, "I'm going to New York." And just having him as a student, I thought to myself, "Oh, Jesus," you know, "here is another kid that, you know, is going to go down to New York and get eaten alive," you know. Because he was really not a good student.

And he did, he left, went down. Next time I saw him he came into Monticello playing bass for Tony Bennett. [laughs] But he, he didn't belong in school, because he wasn't interested in writing, he wasn't, you know. And that's what Berklee is, it's pretty much a writing school. So, he went down, he did the right thing, you know. He quit school, didn't belong there, went down, got himself a good teacher, learned how to play, you know. He's one of the best bass players in New York. But you never know about people as far as, you know—you got to find out what you really want to do, you know, and then do it.

And I've said for years, everybody doesn't belong in college. I think there's an awful lot of money wasted there for people that don't know what they want to do yet, so... I don't know. I can't—I'm trying to think of names again, and I can't. But I've had an awful lot of people that are professional, working, even around town here, you know. I got people that play with me that I had in school, that, you know, have done very well.

LARSON: So when you were back to Berklee, then you were playing with Herb Pomeroy's band again?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, I got back on the band again. I didn't think I would, but I somehow got back on the band again. Yeah.

LARSON: And who were some of the other bands you were playing with at the time?

LONGSTRETH: Local?

LARSON: Yeah.

LONGSTRETH: At some point, I used to work a lot with Ted Herbert out of Manchester, New Hampshire. In fact, Ted, when I was going to school, put me through school, pretty much, you know. 'Cause he was working about three nights a week. We'd always do—some of them were a horrendous distance. We used to work, I never forget, we used to work Burlington, Vermont, once a year. And that was before there were any highways. [Interstate] 89 didn't exist. [laughs]

We used to leave at 9 o'clock in the morning. And it was like an eight hour drive to play a four hour job, turn around and come back the same night. And I would get back in time to go to class the next morning. [laughs] That was a terrible trip, but when you're young it doesn't matter, you know. You don't even think about it. So...

LARSON: Any other groups, at the time, you were playing with that you want to talk about?

LONGSTRETH: No, there were—just—I usually play with bands. There were three bands that worked all the time. Ted, a guy named Freddy Sateriale, and then Bob Bachelder, who ended up working The Totem Pole steady for quite a while. And I used to sub on those bands, at different times, you know. I'd sub with Freddie once in a while, and with Bob once in a while.

Herb used to have work. Herb used to subcontract. When the bands came to town, they would pick up local players, the Jimmy Dorsey band with Lee Castle. Warren Covington used to come up all the time. He used to do some things with—oh, come on. I know him as well as I know my name. Accordion player with Lawrence Welk—oh, come on, I do. Because I used to love him. He's really a gentleman, really the nicest man in the world, Myron Floren.

Yeah, Myron used to come up and do things down at the Cape. And we used to do those all the time. And different things like that. People would come to town. We did Steve [Lawrence] and Eydie [Gorme] all the time. Did, well, Nancy Wilson when she came to town. Also did [Frank] Sinatra twice at Symphony Hall, Tony Bennett, you know, those kind of people. It would be extra work. Did Pearl Bailey at one point with Louis [Armstrong]. Louis was with her that time. So...

LARSON: So you played this gig with [Herb] Pomeroy band at the Birdland jazz club in New York.

LONGSTRETH: Yep.

LARSON: Anything you want to say about that? I guess they did some of your arrangements there, right?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, we—well, that's when we did a recording, *Life Is a Many Splendored Gig*. The band played Birdland, and then we recorded while we were there. Not so much about Birdland, you know, it was a typical club, as far as clubs go. But we did do the recording there for Roulette. And that, you know—that is, you know, to my mind anyway, you know, the best band I've ever played with, at that particular time, you know. There were later bands, so on and so forth, but I think that band was as good as it gets for me. So...

LARSON: So in March of 1958 there was a concert by the Herb Pomeroy Band in Kresge Auditorium, and it was an event called "Living History of Jazz," and there was a commentary by John McClellan who had a jazz program on WHDH called "Top Shelf."

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: Do you remember that gig, and kind of what that was about?

LONGSTRETH: I'm not sure I remember the—the gig itself. But we did that history of jazz thing different places, you know, sometimes in schools, and as a concert type—type thing. I don't know who put it—put it together, whether John did—well, it's a combination of John and Herb, probably. But there was somebody else. A guy named Irving Schwartz who used to be in education a lot, and he was into history-type things. I know we did—we did a lot of concerts through him at schools. I'm not sure that was the same thing or not, or, you know, a different—you know, a different history program or not.

LARSON: And then there was something on Channel Two called the Jazz Educational Series, was that related at all, or was that a different thing?

LONGSTRETH: That was different, I think.

LARSON: And did you play? Were you involved with that then?

LONGSTRETH: I did, well I did the—yeah, I can't remember, you know, dates or anything. I also did it with a couple of other bands. One other band was Joe McDonald's band. He had a band. We did a couple of things with him. We did some concerts in the Boston Garden—not the Boston Garden, the Boston Common. They had some programs down there. And I played with Joe. They had Jimmy Rushing in one year. I know we played Jimmy, which was great, you know. [laughs] Talk about being enthusiastic, he was something else.

7. Leaving Berklee, touring with the Dorsey Band, teaching at Boston Conservatory (01:09:29)

LARSON: So you were doing a tour with the Sammy Donahue-Tommy Dorsey Orchestra from '63 to '66, and then you came to Boston Conservatory.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: How did you get the teaching job there?

LONGSTRETH: A friend of mine was—I think, he was dean at the time. He did become president. But he—

LARSON: And who was this?

LONGSTRETH: Well, George was a—George and I taught at Berklee together.

LARSON: George, what's his name?

LONGSTRETH: George Brambilla. We taught at Berklee together. Pretty cl—in fact, we ended up teaching all of arranging for the first two years, you know, two full years of arranging. And we got along really well, and we had the same views on everything as far as teaching, and what we were teaching.

And it worked out really well, because it—somebody could have me one semester and then get George the next, and it would be a continuation. It wouldn't be, "Okay, forget all that, and start here again." It just—we had the thing down together where, you know, it became continuous, as far as teaching.

And he went over to the conservatory, became dean. And I was back in town, one time, and he asked me, you know, to teach arranging, because he wanted to start a program at the conservatory. And I just said, "George," you know, "I'd love to, but I would," you know, "I don't want to quit the band yet." Because we were just going overseas a lot, and I wanted to do that.

And he said, "No, no, that's fine." He says, "I'll do it 'til you get back." You know, "whenever you want to come back," you know, "you got a job." So, [laughs] I didn't have to worry about when I quit the band what I was going to do, you know. I was going to be teaching.

But the funny part about the band. I had been teaching at Berklee in '63, and a show came in, a Broadway show came in, with a week of rehearsal. The week of

rehearsal was the first week of school at Berklee, you know, the start of a semester. It was in September.

And, you know, I went to Larry [Berk]—usually they say "Fine," you know, if you're working, they want you to work. For some reason, he just said, "Oh, no, it's the first week of school," you know. I said, "Larry, I have to do this, because if I don't take it, somebody else will, and I'm out," you know. Because once you don't take a show, they'll get somebody, and they won't call you again. Because the next show comes in, they'll just say to the guy, "You want to do the next one?" And, you know...

So anyway, we went back and forth. I offered makeup classes. I said, "Look, I can make them up during the semester, no problem." Because you do that all the time. You have to take a day off or something, you make up the class. "No," everything was "no." And then I offered, you know, subs, I said, "I'll get," you know, "so and so to take the week for me, the class," you know. "No," everything was "no."

And the weird part is, I offered everybody I could think of except one guy, who was just fired the semester before, Dick Wright, who was a great writer. So anyway, I offered everybody but Dick. [laughs] It finally came down to it. Larry said, "Make up your mind," you know. He says, "You do one or the other." And I said, "Okay." I says, "I'm going to take the theater, because I don't want to quit playing. I want to play," you know. So he said, "Okay." So, number one, they hired Dick Wright back. [laughs] And I had offered everybody but him, I figured they're not going to take Dick.

And the show canceled. [laughs] So I'm out of work, totally. [laughs] Now it's funny. Then it wasn't so funny. [laughs] But when I look back on it, I say, "Jeez, that's really ridiculous." Anyway that's when I went on the Dorsey band. They were up at Blinstrub's [Village]. I went out to see some people I know. And they were going to Europe. And I says—couple of guys—I said, "Jesus," you know, "I'd love to go to Europe." Nobody's going to quit before Europe, right?

A couple of weeks later I got a call from Sam. He says, "I hear you might be interested in going out." I said, "Yeah?" He said, "I got a trumpet player I'm not happy with." He says, "If you'll—if you'll commit to it," he says, you know, "we'll do it." I said, "Fine." That's how it—

But I expected to quit after three months. Figured I'd go to Europe, come back, you know. I didn't want to go on the road again. I stayed three years, because every time I—every time I turned around we were going someplace. Came back from Europe, went to South—went to Puerto Rico for two weeks, then they go on to Japan. Come back from Japan, we're going to South America. You know, come back from South America, we're going to Japan again. You know, it just—

And we're doing good work. Did all the TV shows, did Ed Sullivan, Johnny Carson, Mike Douglas, all the TV shows, all extra money every time. Did recordings in between. So, anyway that's that thing. But being out of a job [laughs] wasn't pleasant at the time.

LARSON: And then you came and you were at Boston Conservatory, and Fred Harris was a student of yours at some point. What courses did he take from you?

LONGSTRETH: He took arranging, and he played in the band.

LARSON: Any comments about him as a student that you remember?

LONGSTRETH: He was terrible. [laughs] Yeah, no, no, Fred was always good, he's, you know, like he is now, conscientious, you know, takes care of business. And that's, you know, in this business, that's priority. So, yeah.

8. Coming to MIT (01:16:45)

LARSON: So tell me about how you got hired at MIT by Herb Pomeroy?

LONGSTRETH: When Herb started the program, they contacted him, and, you know, he told me. When they first contacted him, he, you know, wasn't really sure he wanted to do it. And I think part of it was probably because of the level that he thought he was going to get, you know, part-time players, not mainly music students, you know, so... But just in general, he wasn't sure he wanted to do it one way or the other. But he ended up doing it.

And what happened was, he had—they only had one band, and he had to turn so many people down. He auditioned everybody, and then just, you know, took the best players, which is what you always do. And he had so many left over who were good players, but if they didn't get in the band, they weren't available, you know, a year later or two years later, when he needed somebody.

They weren't there, you know, so... He was turning so many people away he decided to start, you know, like, a feeder band. So that when somebody did leave, he would have people to choose from that had been playing, you know, and still interested in it. So he just kept it going.

And, you know, basically, the reason he hired me or recommended me or whatever—you know, we talked a little bit about this earlier just walking over here, but I am not necessarily jazz orientated. Everything I've ever done is—you know, oh, I play with bands, and some of the bands are jazz bands, and, you know. But I am not a jazz player. I'm more—and he, and he—Herb told me this. He said the reason he hired me was because I could teach mechanics of playing, you know, and get the people, teach them what they needed to know to get to the next level. So, that's basically the reason.

LARSON: So, tell me just a little bit more about kind of your role, and how you worked with Herb on that. You must have talked about, kind of, a musical vision for what you were doing, and how it worked with him.

LONGSTRETH: We—from my being with him—I'm sorry—over the years, you know, and we, we did—I mentioned we did clinics, we did the Stan Kenton clinics in Illinois, Indiana, Connecticut for a number of years. And Herb and I would always audition the brass players. And from me playing with the band, and, you know, like, just being close friends all the time, we had the same approach to things.

So he definitely knew where I was coming from, you know. And I knew what he wanted, and what he's looking for. And we were just kind of on the—it was kind of like George Brambilla and I with the arranging thing. We were on the same page, you know. So, it just—one of those things that worked out well over the years.

LARSON: When you were at MIT with Herb, did you ever get a chance to work with his band?

LONGSTRETH: I rehearsed the band a couple of times when he couldn't do it, but, you know, basically, just as a sub once in a while. My, my stuff was mostly with the second band.

LARSON: So tell me about working with MIT students. As we know, most of these students aren't music students. But do you have any comment about working with them, because you've also worked with conservatory students?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, the—the big difference for me was with the MIT people, I mean, they didn't have, sometimes, the technique that a major music student had, you know. If that's his major, you know, they're pretty good technique-wise and all this stuff. The big difference for me was when I told them something, I only had to tell them once.

And they couldn't do it all the time, because maybe they didn't have the technique to do it all the time. But they understood it. Whereas with other people, you have to tell them, you know, you had to keep harping over and over and over again, you know. Do this, do this, do this. [laughs] MIT is different. They really get it the first time around, most of the time, you know. Can't always do it, maybe, physically, because of technique or whatever. But they understand what you're talking about, and you don't have to keep repeating it over and over. So, that was the big difference I noticed with them.

LARSON: And you must have had some good players to work with who actually had some good techniques.

LONGSTRETH: Oh yeah, there were good players, yeah, yeah, yeah. For part-time players, you know, we played some hard music over the years. It wasn't—you know, you didn't water it down necessarily. You might have some problems range-wise trumpet, or this or that, you know.

And a lot of times, I'd be playing something, maybe they have a high F on the end of the piece, and, you know, I would say to them, "Hey, so we'll make high C the high note. There is not one person in the audience that knows what that's supposed to be," you know. [laughs] "They don't know the difference, and it sounds just as good," you know. "It's just a different ending note." So you could adjust things as you went.

LARSON: Any particular charts you remember doing that you particularly enjoyed working with them on?

LONGSTRETH: No, over the years we played an awful lot of music, you know. But I—I would try to pick things, you know, for the band I had that particular year.

LARSON: And how would you describe the repertoire? You seemed like you had a particular kind of focus to the repertoire you were teaching them.

LONGSTRETH: I—I played, as opposed to the first band which, you know, played certainly more progressive music, I played more middle-of-the-road things that I could teach them how to play things. You know, it wasn't—when I say straight-ahead or middle-of-the-road it's, you know, pretty straight up and down music. It's not busy music, although, you know, some of things are notey when you get into them.

But, but they were things that you could teach people, collectively, how to play. When you play some of the busy things, there are so many lines going on you can't talk about—collectively, you can't say okay, this should be short, that can be long, you know, and, and separate here and all those things. So I basically tried to do things that I could teach how to play in a band.

LARSON: You seem to have an affinity for a certain kind of blues charts. Is that just something I'm misreading or something but it's—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, you know, a lot of the jazz material is blues. I mean, you know—

LARSON: I just wondered if that was—

LONGSTRETH: Blues changes—no, just—you know, I think I played a variety of things, you know. Played some—you know, a lot of Bill Holman things, with a lot of lines in them and things. You—he really wrote a lot of unison things. I try to play different people.

LARSON: Any bebop charts?

LONGSTRETH: Over the years, no, not very many. I can't even think of any right now with that band.

LARSON: Did any of the students write? Do any arrangements for the group?

LONGSTRETH: Had a couple of people write. I'm trying to—I know we did. I can't remember who they were though. I know we did a thing. Well, it was an original that Charlie Marge played, the tenor player, and clarinet player. He played clarinet on this. And I know we went down to Connecticut to play, and—he did a nice job on it. And they raked him something terrible, you know, with critique.

HARRIS: You mean, you went to a festival?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah, and I forget who it was. It was an alto player, Cannonball [Adderley] or somebody, and they just raked him terrible, you know. I mean, I was upset. I know Herb was extremely upset. [laughs] Yeah. But that was an original piece that somebody had done, you know, for the band. There's been a few, not a lot though, but a few people write.

LARSON: Was your experience with the group that some of the students—some of them new to jazz, and you were kind of teaching them kind of basic things about—

LONGSTRETH: I think they all came out of some kind of music program in school, you know, so they wanted to continue playing.

LARSON: But would you would you get anybody who was say, a classical player who was interested in jazz but didn't know how to play? Was that not—

LONGSTRETH: No, not too much because you ended up auditioning everybody to get in. I've had times when, you know, I've had some flute players that wanted to play with the jazz band. I had a couple of French horn players that wanted to play that I used actually. And I would scratch out some, you know, some French horn parts for them to play. But generally speaking, not too many. Yeah.

LARSON: So looking back at some old concert programs, you often performed with the Festival Jazz Ensemble but also other area colleges like Harvard, and University of Lowell, and Westfield State College, and Brandeis.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, we had a—they had a series going where one of the concerts, we would invite two other bands in. It would be both MIT bands and then two other bands. It would be Harvard, like you say, Harvard, BU sometimes. Each band would play approximately 20, 25 minutes. And that was just, you know, to give other bands a place to play also, as much as anything. Yeah. But we did that for several years. There was one time I had my—I was teaching up at Lowell at the same time, and I brought my Lowell band down. So I had two bands going that night. [laughs] So...

LARSON: So tell me about rehearsing with the [MIT] Concert Jazz Band. You were telling me you rehearsed on Sunday mornings. [laughs]

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, Sunday mornings and Saturday mornings were the two times over the years, you know. When I was working at Monticello, I remember doing Sundays, because we would do 10:00 to 1:00. I would go out to the club, have a 3 o'clock show and then an 8 o'clock show on Sundays, and that ended up being a long day. But it was—for some reason, it was the only thing available at the time.

Other times, I was working the theater and had to do the same type of thing with matinees on Saturday. You know, I'd have a Saturday matinee, so I'd end up doing Sunday morning 10:00 to 1:00 and running down to the theater for 2 o'clock show, and those kind of things. Seemed to be the logical time to do it was on the weekend, as far as they were concerned, because you had people that, you know, always couldn't make the times—and room availability also.

LARSON: So how many concerts a semester did you usually do?

LONGSTRETH: We did two, I think, for the year. We did one—we would do one in December or something and then one in spring.

LARSON: Right, that's what I'm finding out with back programs. I just wondered if I was missing anything.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah, we did two, I think, as far as over the years go.

LARSON: So after Herb Pomeroy left MIT, the band was taken over by Jamshied Sharifi, who had been a former MIT student, class of '83. What was it like working with him? Quite a different musician, to say the least.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, I didn't have a lot of contact with him. The purpose was the same, you know, to move people up when, when there were vacancies. You know...

LARSON: And you did auditions together and stuff like that, so you had to—

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah.

LARSON: Any thoughts about Jamshied, and him as a musician?

LONGSTRETH: No. Well, he was, you know, different, musically, you know. He's—he did a lot of writing, you know, of his own things, which, I guess, he studied, you know, at Berklee with Herb. I didn't know him that well, as far as, other than MIT. And then we rehearsed on different days, so I actually didn't run into him that much except for concert things. But he certainly carried the music on in the direction that Herb was going, you know.

Because when I first met Herb, years ago, everything was Basie. You know, we used to run over to Storyville to see Basie all the time. And then he got into Duke, you know, and—became Duke Ellington. And then he, you know—even with his band, it progressed, you know, certainly into more contemporary music. That last album we—that I did was *Pramlatta's Hips* with, you know, a lot of John LaPorta things, and, you know, time changes, and all those things. And Jamshied was into those things too.

LARSON: So then Jamshied left in 1992, and James O'Dell, everyone always knows him by Jim, came. Did you know Jim before that?

LONGSTRETH: Just vaguely, from the BU band, because he used to be at BU.

LARSON: I just wondered if you had done any gigs with him or anything prior to that?

LONGSTRETH: No, no. Well, he was a tuba player.

LARSON: So he had done some jazz playing around, and I just wondered.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, but I hadn't run into him other than the, the BU thing.

LARSON: Any thoughts of working with him here at MIT, or any thoughts about that?

LONGSTRETH: No, pretty much the same thing, you know. We're all on different schedules, so other than auditions and concerts, about the only time I saw him.

LARSON: So Jim had established the, what was called, The New England Collegiate Jazz Festival which ran for nine years. Did the MIT Concert Jazz Band participate in it that at all?

LONGSTRETH: I don't—I didn't play that, no.

LARSON: I didn't find your group listed, and I just wondered if something got missed or something.

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: So tell me about what—how it came about that the MIT Concert Jazz Band stopped and then what was the—

LONGSTRETH: The only thing I got was budget cuts. They went through, supposedly, and I—I don't know, just... But it was a time when everybody was cutting back, you know, all the schools and, and everything. And they decided to not have the second band.

LARSON: And it was not because of lack of interest as far as number of students?

LONGSTRETH: No, I don't think so.

LARSON: The last concert that I find that you had done was May 12, 1995. Does that sound right?

LONGSTRETH: It could. I tell you, I'm terrible with dates. [laughs] I have no idea.

LARSON: Because looking at the concert program for the fall of '95, then it was just the Festival Jazz Ensemble.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, okay, that's probably right.

LARSON: Any other thoughts about working at MIT, and with students, and just the experience of being here?

LONGSTRETH: I always found, for the most part, you know, everything to be, as far as MIT goes, very professional. When I used to come in, and I, I can't remember his name, there used to be a custodian that would set up, you know, come in and get the room ready, and—I mean he was absolutely great, you know. Anything—you know, you never had to look for any—he had the piano out and unlocked. Everything was done professionally, you know. It was, like, no—no chasing anybody to find keys, and this and that. He'd have the band room unlocked, and all those things, you know.

And the students have always been good. I've had a couple of people, over the years, you know, that—they would have overlapping things. You know, like, in the morning, a guy, come in late, "Oh," you know, "I," whatever, "I had baseball," or—I had one guy, "I had frisbee. I couldn't come," you know. "I was late for rehearsal because I had frisbee," you know, some—whatever, I don't know what he's doing. [laughs] But I used to tell them, I said, "Look," you know, "I need you here for rehearsal." I said, "Now, you—all you have to do is make up your mind which you want to do most."

And I said, "Whatever that is, that's fine with me. I—I'm—don't want to press you into anything, whatever you want to do." I said, "But you can only do so much. You can't do everything," you know, so... Outside of a few things like that, where, you know, I mean, the kid he wants to do this, he wants to do this, he wants to do something else. Hey, if they all meet at the same time, you can't. So—but outside of that, you know, and that wasn't really a problem in that, you know, I'm mad at somebody or something, you know. It's just, make up your mind, that's life, you know. [laughs] You can't do everything.

LARSON: There was a jazz clarinet player at MIT who was professor of English, Roy Lamson. Did you ever play with him?

LONGSTRETH: I know the name.

LARSON: He was a—

LONGSTRETH: I haven't played with him.

LARSON: — well-regarded jazz clarinet player.

LONGSTRETH: He's a clarinet player?

LARSON: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, okay.

LARSON: People say that he knew all the tunes in the book, you know, the standards?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: I wondered if you had made—

LONGSTRETH: No, I know the name. I have heard the name. I don't know him.

LARSON: What about a piano and vibraphone player, Warren Rohsenow?

LONGSTRETH: No.

LARSON: So you've worked with Professor Samuel Jay Keyser, a jazz trombonist—

LONGSTRETH: [laughs]

LARSON: — who is a professor emeritus in the linguistics department here.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: Tell me about working with Jay. He played with you in the [MIT] Concert Jazz Band for a number of years, and how that came about?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, when I first came over, Jay came in and wanted to play with the band. And, at the time, I told him, I said, "Look, if—if I have enough trombone players, student-wise," you know, "I can't do it, because I can't take a faculty member over a student. It's for the students, to begin with," you know, so... I said, "But if I don't have enough trombone players, and I need somebody, yeah, I'd be glad to have you come in and play." And, as it turned out, I did need somebody.

So, I had him come in and play. And I ended up thinking and believing that it was a good thing that he was there, because I think it was good for the students to have somebody, you know, from faculty, who's down to earth, and sit and play, you know.

And, and he wasn't, you know, he wasn't much better than they were, at the time, because he hadn't played in a long time. So he came in, and, you know, the reading is not great, and you know. So he's not a—he's not coming in as a great trombone player that's going to show everybody up and everything, so... But anyway, I kept him all those years just because I thought, you know, number one, it was good for him. He was very interested in it. I, you know—and we've been friends for years. But I think it was good for the, you know, for the kids to have somebody like that.

LARSON: So what was it like seeing Jay really blossom as a musician, partly under your tutelage?

LONGSTRETH: Well, he always asked me questions. [laughs] And he still does. [laughs] It's good. He—I've always told Joe—Jay the truth, you know. I mean, he has asked me some questions that are pretty, you know, straightforward, you've got to give him an answer. One was, "If I practice an hour a day, can I be a good player?"

And I said, "No." [laughs] I says, "You'll get better," you know. "Every —" you know, "you do an hour a day, you're going to get better." Are you going to be, you know, "Urbie Green or Carl Fontana or somebody? No, not at an hour a day." So, I've always given him a direct answer when he's—even if it's, like, kind of bad

news. [laughs] And I think he appreciates that, you know, so... But he's done well, you know. And he still practices every day. To this day, he still works at it, you know.

LARSON: He mentioned he's playing in what he called a rehearsal band with you these days.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, right, I have a rehearsal band, meets every—on the second Wednesday of every month, you know. And I put Jay in there, because he's reached the point where he definitely needs to play with better players. You know, because that's the way you learn how to play is, you know, when you get in with good people, you usually play up to them. When you play with bad people, you usually play down to them. They just yank you down if you don't look out. So this way he gets to play with some pretty good players, and it's good for him. Yeah, so...

LARSON: Have you done any other kind of playing out with him?

LONGSTRETH: No, I never played a job with him or anything. He does a lot of Dixieland things with a Dixieland band. He plays with Mark [Harvey].

LARSON: Right, the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, yeah.

LARSON: Speaking of Mark Harvey, the director of the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, and who teaches jazz harmony, and arranging and composition here, have you had any contact with him, kind of, professionally?

LONGSTRETH: No, like I said before, the only thing I did was he had me over one day for his arranging class, you know, to talk to them. Which, you know, I did. It was good. When it was over he said, "I'm glad I had you." He says, you know, he says, "Maybe when they hear it from you, they'll believe it." [laughs] As opposed to listening to him all the time [laughs] say the same thing.

9. Thoughts on arranging (01:45:07)

LARSON: So you're well regarded as an arranger, and you've written a two volume book on jazz harmony and arranging.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah.

LARSON: You have some particular ideas about this. Can you, I know it's hard to kind of summarize, because there's a lot of detail, and you can't really water it down, but what are some of the main kind of points that go into your ideas about harmony and arranging? Because you have some very specific ideas in these books.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, but the thing about arranging is it's mechanical as far as, you know, writing goes. There are—you can teach voicings and you can—you could teach all the mechanics of writing. What you can't teach is somebody to be musical. So when you start teaching, I just broke it down. Like I told you before, when I was trying to learn to write, I'd read all these books. And they don't tell me anything.

I've just managed to, over the years through teaching, put everything in an order that is logical and works. And I don't ever talk about anything that won't work. I

don't want to know what doesn't work. I want to know what works. So my whole approach to that has been, like, on a positive, you know. I tell the kids, when I was teaching that I will never take anything away from you. Everything I say to you is good. All I'm going to do is keep adding to it. I'm never going to say, "Okay, you can forget that now, we're not going to use that anymore." So, it just—you know...

But you can teach mechanical voicings. They are mechanical, you know. You can do other things as you grow. You know, you want to experiment and this and that. Trouble with music is there's nothing that you can say is wrong. If somebody wants to take their arm and hit it on the piano like this and say, "Hey that's what I want to hear," it's right. If that's what I want to hear, that's it, you know? [laughs] It doesn't matter what it is. But as far as basic writing, you want to write for bands or whatever, certain things they do. Classical music is the same thing.

Classical—everything is—classical music is styles, you know. You want to write like Beethoven, you've got to write—you've got to do what he did harmony-wise, you know, and line-wise and all that. You want to write Mozart, it's a style. Notes don't change, same notes, you know, just different harmonies at different times.

It's like the Leo Peeper's Band, I told you. They—the whole book didn't have a nine in it 'til you got to the last note of the tune—of the last tune. Lift you out of the chair, literally. When the first time I played that, I thought, "Oh my God," you know, sounded wrong. The only nine in the whole book. But that's—it's style.

And I'm, you know, like everything else, I'm probably pretty conservative in everything. But I believe in writing—at least from my standpoint, I'm never writing for myself, I'm always writing for somebody else. You know, if I'm going to write a chart for a band, got to be what they want, you know. They can't tell me, you know, note for note what they want, but it's got to be a style of some kind.

LARSON: Are you taking into consideration certain individual players and stuff like that?

LONGSTRETH: Only if you're writing for a band you know who it is. I write for Herb's band, I knew all the players, you know. So you know, you don't have the limitations. A lot of times—I wrote for a girl singer, several, but for one for years, and she traveled around the country. And I wrote from one to nine horns, you know, you keep adding. It's a hard way to write. And—and not good for the players, but in the end, it sounds okay. Sometimes she would have a trio. Sometimes she'd have one horn. Sometimes she'd have two. Once in a great while, she'd have a band, you know. Well, she could use the same charts.

Because—you know—but you also have to write, because you don't know who the players are going to be. And she would get guys that couldn't read. You know, a piano player that couldn't read, he just played, or a bass player, you know, a horn player, whatever. You never know what you're going to get. So you have to write, number one, that—you assume anybody that can play can play it, you know. You can't write off the wall and expect some kind in a club someplace to play it, because they're not going to. So you have to write for a purpose all the time. Yeah.

LARSON: So in your books on arranging, you're not mentioning particular styles. But was there a kind of implied style that you were teaching the students?

LONGSTRETH: No, it's just pretty much what is normally used in basic writing.

LARSON: And you're thinking—

LONGSTRETH: Anybody.

LARSON: — thinking, kind of, big band?

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, big band, yeah, you're teaching big band writing, yeah, yeah. You know, the small—when I wrote the books—the second book is 300 pages, and I had to stop. And I didn't—I didn't get to small band writing. I didn't get to vocal writing. I didn't get to string writing. You know, [laughs] I didn't get to any of that, and the book is still like, you know, 300 pages. So I just stopped at big band writing, so... But there's all kinds of, you know, things you can do. But the basics are the same, you know. You have to know—you have to know chord progression for one thing, because if you write the wrong change, it's going to sound wrong no matter what. [laughs] You can voice it any way you want, but it won't work.

LARSON: March 4th, 2011, just a few weeks back, you were guest director of the [MIT] Festival Jazz Ensemble. Fred [Harris] invited you back.

LONGSTRETH: Yes.

LARSON: Would you like to talk about that experience?

LONGSTRETH: Uh—It was a little strange in a way, because it's the first time I've been in front of any kind of a school band for a little while. [laughs] So it was kind of like going back, you know, from what I used to do. But, but the—

LARSON: So how did it feel like working with MIT students now?

LONGSTRETH: Well, the kids did a great job, you know. Fred had, you know, run some of the stuff down before I, you know, got there. So I didn't have to do too much rehearsing at all, just, you know, let them play and then talk about a couple of things here and there, and... But they did a, you know, a real good job. And it was—it was enjoyable, you know, with the concert and all. You know, that's... Yeah, but the—you know, the level of student is still—still pretty good as far as players go.

10. Current work (01:51:13)

LARSON: So tell me about what you're currently up to these days. You have a group [Everett Longstreth Orchestra], uh—

LONGSTRETH: I do a tribute to Benny Goodman and Peggy Lee that I've been doing—I used to do Benny Goodman for a number of years. Did a lot of summer concerts, and, you know, did a lot of work, actually, with that. And then we added the Peggy Lee thing. A girl named Amanda Carr is the singer. She does a really nice job on that. But we put the program together. She came over, and we, you know, decided what tunes to do and all that. Then I had to, naturally, write the whole thing. [laughs]

So that was a project and a half. But it, it works really well. People love it. We travel with it. In '08 we went—did a live—we did a thing for a company called Live

on Stage, and we traveled around the country. We were in Texas, and Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, East Coast, Maryland, and New Jersey, and all those places. But we did a whole tour, then we ended up in California. It was the last trip we made.

But I've been doing that, which has been going very well. Do it locally. In fact we're doing it May 8th at the Regent Theater in Arlington, doing a concert over there. And I got another date in Pennsylvania. These are isolated. They're kind of hard, because you—you spend three days to work two hours. [laughs] So... And then a date up in Vermont. So, there sp—

HARRIS: Uh-oh, Vermont. [laughs]

LONGSTRETH: They're spread out, but they, you know, it's, it's what I do now, so... And—and I don't care that there's not quite that much work, because I'm—traveled all my life, so it's... I still like it, you know, because it's enjoyable, but it gets a little bit harder—from year to year. And I do, you know, a few things locally, you know, when somebody calls. Don Pendleton has a Hal McIntyre book, and he does some things in the summertime, and I play with him, you know, when he does those things. So, just, you know, local things, whatever comes up. And still writing, mostly for myself, just—I'm into Finale now, so...

LARSON: That's the computer program? Yeah.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah. And I didn't want to get into it, but—it's weird, I have a lot of ex-students that I'm still in touch with. And this guy is in upstate New York now, but he insisted I get into—and he's into computers, so he's—he said, "Oh, I'm going to—I got stuff in the basement. I'm going to put it together for you and ship it up to you." [laughs] And that's kind of how I got started. And then I have friends around that, when I need help, I can call. But I'm actually doing well now, so...

LARSON: That's great!

LONGSTRETH: I didn't think I would learn that at this age, but—[laughs]

HARRIS: You did it.

LONGSTRETH: Yeah, I did it. Surprised a couple of people, I'll tell you. [laughs]

HARRIS: I bet.

LARSON: So I think we're going to end here. And I want to thank you very, very much.

LONGSTRETH: My pleasure.

LARSON: It is just tremendous to have you here.

LONGSTRETH: My pleasure.

LARSON: Just fantastic, so thank you.

LONGSTRETH: Thank you.