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John Cade and James Lynn, 2012

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Interviewer: All right. We appreciate you guys coming out today.

John Cade: Oh, pleasure.

Interviewer: First of all just say your name for the camera.

John Cade: My name is John T. Cade, Jr. I graduated from Manassas High in 1956.

James Lynn: I'm James Lynn. I graduated from Manassas in 1956 also.

Interviewer: All right. Well, we'll kind of just do – kind of just start with it and we'll go to each one. So can you just tell me a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up, where you went to school, just kind of background information, things like that?

John Cade: Okay. I joined elementary school in 1946, which was considered St. Augustine High, and that's when I first encountered Charles Lloyd. And St. Augustine was kind of an elite school because if you really want to get a good, solid education, that's where most young people were sent there to get started in life. And so that's what happened-

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-to me. But we moved out of the area. It was called LeMoyne Gardens at the time. And I moved to North Memphis after four years there, and then I attended Manassas in the fifth grade. And afterward I attended two years at Grant Elementary School, which don't exist anymore; it's been torn down. And then I went to Manassas again in 1952 and that's where I hooked up with Charles Lloyd again, from the time period of 1952 to 1956. And – okay.

James Lynn: Okay. I went to St. Augustine also. I left there in – I finished the ninth grade and went on to Manassas in '53.

John Cade: '53, yeah.

James Lynn: And that was, I run into John again and there was also Charles Lloyd.

Interviewer: Got it.

James Lynn: And we graduated in 1956.

Interviewer: '56.

James Lynn: Mm-hmm.

[0:02:00]

Interviewer: All right. And you said you had a career in the Air Force, right?

John Cade: Yeah, I left Memphis in '56 and joined the Air Force in August, and I remained in the Air Force for 29 years 1 day. I retired in 1985.

Interviewer: Got it.

James Lynn: I went to the Navy the second week school was out, stayed four years, and I came out, I worked for Bell & Howell a long time and Shelby County Schools.

Interviewer: Shelby County Schools.

James Lynn: Mm-hmm. I retired from there.

Interviewer: Are you a teacher or-?

James Lynn: No, wasn't a teacher, no.

Interviewer: And you said you worked for the mail. You did the Postal Service after you graduated?

John Cade: Yes, I did. Matter of fact, I worked for the post office for approximately three months, and one of my deliveries was here at Rhodes College back in the day.

Interviewer: So you guys have seemed to make Memphis your home.

James Lynn: Correct.

Interviewer: Do you have any-

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-special reason why you guys chose Memphis as the – I knew you grew up here, but you could've gone anyplace to go. Why did you come here?

John Cade: I returned back to Memphis after being 7.5 years in the Washington, D.C. area, and it was real costly. And Memphis was more affordable. I returned here and I bought a house in '81 and rented it out. And then in '85 I really made my mind up that I was

going to, you know, return to Memphis and continue my retirement. And afterward, like I said, I worked for the post office, I worked for FedEx, and I attended Shelby State College for, well, a few years off and on. And I'm real pleased about being back in Memphis. Very affordable. We've got some little quirks that I don't like, but on a whole Memphis is a good city.

James Lynn: Particularly if you're retired. You know, 'cause there's not too much to do in Memphis.

Interviewer: Can you guys give me a little bit of a-
[0:04:00]
-sense of what Memphis was like in the 1950s? Just kind of a brief-

John Cade: In the '50s Memphis was a real pronounced city because we had a lot of industry here. We had Firestone, we had International Harvest, we had several big trucking companies, and good school opportunities. Most of the time, from my recollection most of the parents were either teachers, the women mainly was teachers, or nurses. And most of the men, they worked at one of the industry places, like International Harvest or Firestone. And people lived very, I can't say wealthy, but very comfortable back in the days. We didn't have to want for a lot. Opportunities were great. If you just applied yourself as an individual you could do well in Memphis.

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But I discovered that most of the time when people received their education they went elsewhere, mainly Chicago, a lot of them went to Detroit, some to St. Louis. But I love Memphis, that's why I returned here to live in '85, after my retirement from the Air Force.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have anything to add to that, or-?

James Lynn: No, it's just cheaper to live here, particularly if you retire. The jobs are not that great and most people with education leave Memphis. 'Cause there's nothing here for you.

Interviewer: Right.

James Lynn: It needs to change, though.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. And you said that back in the day you used to go to a lot of the jazz shows and things like that.

James Lynn: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: What was it like when, back in the 1950s, when Memphis was such a big music town? It still is today, but I know it was a very different scene. Can you talk to me a little bit about that?

CUT ONE at 00:05:57
BEGIN SEGMENT 2

James Lynn: Well, it was quite a – a lot of people loved jazz-
[0:06:00]

-back in those days. It was the cool thing to do. With the music you could talk and hear yourself talk and enjoy. People want to dance nowadays; it's more exciting to them.

Interviewer: Right.

James Lynn: But jazz is not a _____ in Memphis; you go to other cities and you've got all kinds of jazz clubs. You're lucky if you find one in Memphis.

Interviewer: Back in the day how many do you think there was back in the '50s? How many clubs _____?

John Cade: You mean clubs or-?

Interviewer: Jazz clubs, yeah. Opportunities for musicians.

John Cade: I remember Currie Tropicana Club, which I remember growing up as a young man. And we had one called the Hippodrome. I think that's the one that's on Georgia Avenue. And then we used to have one down on Beale Street and – it was upstairs, what was it?

James Lynn: Flamingo Room.

John Cade: Flamingo Room, yeah.

James Lynn: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's where Floyd Newman and _____ -
[0:07:00]

-made their career.

John Cade: Yeah. Right. And those was about the three main club scenes that we frequent a lot growing up.

- James Lynn:* They had Hawaiian Isle, but – what’s the other one down on Belleview? The Music Box.
- John Cade:* Yeah.
- James Lynn:* They played plenty of jazz there.
- John Cade:* Yeah, those was two primary jazz clubs.
- James Lynn:* Jazz, mm-hmm. Club Handy had some too now, upstairs there.
- Interviewer:* Right. And all of this has been very good. If you could tell me a little bit about your experience in particular with Charles Lloyd. What was he like? What kind of interaction did you have with him? And did you guys know the potential he had I guess for success back then?
- John Cade:* Well, we recognized that when we were attending Manassas. We had a band that they put together called the Rhythm Bombers, and they consist of about nine-
- [0:08:00]
- band members. And Charles was like the forefront; he was like the leader of it. And his main influences was coming to Manassas was to get better educated in music, because we had a good reputation from the different music teachers that taught at Manassas. But as far as me actually having a private encounter with Charles, I did not; I just saw him on a daily basis. His parents were well-pronounced in the neighborhood. I think his father was a doctor and his mother might have been a teacher. And one thing stood out about him; Charles wore real nice clothes. I mean back in the day he had suits, matching shirt, matching tie. I mean he was real stylish; he stood out. He wasn’t real gung-ho, but, you know, those opportunities existed for him, so naturally he took advantage of them.
- James Lynn:* Right.
- John Cade:* And I was pleased to-
- [0:09:00]
- see him at the last concert, because I hadn’t seen him since ’56.
- Interviewer:* All right. I’m sure that was good to see him.
- John Cade:* Yes.

- James Lynn:* Yeah. Mm-hmm. Well, we didn't even act – Charles, if you wasn't into music, he was kind of off to himself. Yeah. Quiet, but studious, but still off to himself.
- Interviewer:* And you said that was the Rhythm Bomb – Rhythm Bombers?
- James Lynn:* Rhythm Bombers.
- John Cade:* Rhythm Bombers, mm-hmm. It was spelled R-H-T-H-M Bombers. Mm-hmm. And they was real popular. They pretty much provided all the music for events. They played at Currie and other surrounding clubs in the area at that time period. And I understand he left and went to California to pursue his music career further.
- Interviewer:* Right.
- James Lynn:* At UCLA, I think it was. Mm-hmm. Yeah.
- Interviewer:* And also could you – I was reading about an-
[0:10:00]
-event called the Annual Show. Was that around when you guys were there? It was an annual event that they put on for musicians. I don't know, that might've been put on after '56.
- John Cade:* I think it was.
- James Lynn:* I think it would have to-
- John Cade:* Because I don't recall it.
- James Lynn:* I don't either.
- John Cade:* A type of program of that type while we were attending Manassas.
- Interviewer:* Okay, because the people that I talked to were very adamant about it, so that must've been put on after you guys had graduated.
- James Lynn:* Mm-hmm. Yes.
- John Cade:* Apparently so.
- Interviewer:* All right. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience at Manassas? Anything that you would like to talk about?

John Cade: Well, Manassas, like I say, was a very elite high school. We had excellent teachers; they stressed education. You know, if you didn't come there to get a good education you had to go elsewhere, because they were very adamant about students coming there and adhering to programs, doing what was right. We educated a lot of students who-

[0:11:00]

-later became doctors, lawyers, musicians, naturally. And I didn't realize how fortunate I was until I left Memphis in '56 and then when I joined the Air Force I felt I was very well educated, 'cause I surpassed a lot of my fellow military people. And that's when I really knew I had grasped the best of education while the four years at Manassas.

James Lynn: Same.

Interviewer: Same _____?

James Lynn: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And the final question I had for you guys, and then we can kind of build off this, the main question that I'm researching in my project is that there's a sense of musical tradition that was cultivated at Manassas and, you know, whether that – you know, there's just tons of musicians that graduated from there, and, you know, I'm trying to figure out how and why this happened. Do you guys have a sense of living it firsthand,-

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-any reasons that you think so many musical geniuses came out of one high school?

CUT 00:12:07
Begin Segment 3

John Cade: Mainly we had good musical instructors during the time, '92 to '96. And they were very pronounced; they strived to make good musicians at all times. And when you came there you had to have your head on right; if you didn't then they would cast you aside. There was a lot of time in the music room or out on the stadium grounds, when they were preparing for football games and things like that. But the teaching I think was the main factor that we had so many good musicians, 'cause they were very dedicated, the teachers were.

James Lynn: And if you would stay late they would tutor you even more. Yeah, if you showed a promise, yeah. Oh, they were good

[0:13:00]

Interviewer: All right.

John Cade: But like Isaac Hayes, he was behind us. I think he came out in-

Interviewer: '61.

John Cade: Yeah, '61, exactly. Mm-hmm. And he was raised by his grandmother. He was very poor. Very poor. Didn't have a lot; didn't have shoes, didn't have clothing. And the teachers, I remember, would band together and collect money to help aid him in his need for clothing, food, or whatever the case may be. It was very unified at Manassas. Everybody stuck together; everybody assisted each other as needed. And that's one of the best things that I can say about Manassas; it was very unified, very together.

Interviewer: All right.

John Cade: And one of the things I can say about the teachers, I don't know how it happens nowadays, but they would call your parents in a heartbeat.

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After you screw up or do something that was inadequate your parents would hear about it through a phone call. And that's what I guess put fear in all the students, because once you left there, the school at say 3:00-3:30, it didn't end.

Interviewer: Any of you guys got any questions to ask them? You all good?

Female: I'm good.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you what – is there anything you guys want to talk – are there any other musicians that I've left out that y'all remember?

John Cade: Well, James probably have a bit of knowledge.

James Lynn: No, not at the moment. I think – no, at the moment I can't think of it. I've got so many albums, I have them put into years.

Interviewer: Well, I think that's pretty much the-

Female: You were going to ask about like the Civil Rights movement and everything.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, the Civil Rights movement, I was talking about before, you know how there was only three high schools-

[0:15:00]

-to choose from?

John Cade: Yes.

Interviewer: Could you talk a little bit about that?

John Cade: Well, depending on the part of town you live in, like south was Booker T, Orange Mound area was Melrose, and then naturally North Memphis was Manassas. And all three schools were very competitive; football, track. One of the things that I liked about Booker T. was the fact that they had vocational schools, which was rare back in those days. Manassas basically focused on auto mechanic, woodwork, drafting, and the rest of it was all academic. We had a great program for biology and chemistry, had some of the two best teachers in the city. And they really impounded their knowledge into us-

[0:16:00]

-as students and prepared us well for the outside world, going to college. Like me, I went into the military. And we were very competitive, like I say, all three schools. Later on the last school that came on the horizon was Douglas. And I remember we all had to chip in to assist Douglas in buying uniforms for their football team, their band. There was not a lot of money, but there was more unity; people really stuck together to give each other aid and assistance as needed.

Interviewer: Right.

John Cade: Yeah, those are my remembrance of that time period.

Interviewer: Gotcha.

James Lynn: Mm-hmm. I agree.

Interviewer: All right, there we go.

James Lynn: Yeah.

Interviewer: Let's see; make sure I got everything down.

All right. I think that's-

[0:17:00]

-pretty much all we've got today.

John Cade: I don't know if you was aware of this or you were told this when you went over to the archive. There was a teacher who became the principal of Manassas in the early time period. Wherever she was in the past, she and some other teachers went and got bricks from an old location and brought them over to the site over at the original school on Firestone. And that's how it got built; that's how it became a reality.

Interviewer: Do you know where the bricks came from?

John Cade: Not at this time. I probably could look it up and tell you the name of the old school. But that was historical, because we had a hundred year celebration a few years back and we had the best time. We had students going all the way back in the '40s was at this hundred year celebration.

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And it was very historical, that event, because we got to see some of our older students and what they got out of Manassas. So it was very interesting.

CUT at 00:18:15
Begin Segment 4

James Lynn: Manassas has a strong alumni group. That's how they got the new school built.

Interviewer: Right. I'm sure it still does, too.

James Lynn: Yeah.

John Cade: Yeah, they still do today. Because when you go back and meet students in the '40s, they were still active, they sharp upstairs and they would hold your interest, you know, whenever you was in the midst of them and they was telling you about things, how things were when they was growing up as young students.

So the history of Manassas has continued, but nowadays I think that attendanceship is falling because that area around Manassas is sort of deteriorating, and then when they built North Side High, that took away some of the-

[0:19:00]

-population of students that used to attend Manassas. So our attendanceship has really fallen to the point they say the school

may have to eventually close. I don't know how accurate that is, but that's some of the scuttlebutt that's going around.

Interviewer: Yeah. Could you talk about the neighborhood back-

John Cade: The neighborhood?

Interviewer: Back around _____.

John Cade: Well, back in that day – you mean the neighborhood that surrounds Manassas?

Interviewer: Right. During your time back then, like Klondike and New Chicago and things like that.

John Cade: Yeah. It was territorial sometimes; the guys didn't like you coming over on their turf to date their girls that live in the neighborhood. That was one bad situation. But on a whole, neighborhoods was like a village; if you were outside and one of the neighbors told you or saw you doing something that was inappropriate, they corrected you and they told you what to do and how to do it, and you obeyed them because-

[0:20:00]

-you knew that if that got back home you were in trouble a second time. So I remember that we used to have party lines back in the day, and you would have a certain ring which signified was your – someone calling you or like if you know somebody was on the line you could pick up and listen or you could ask them if they would mind shortening the call 'cause you had to use the phone. It was real unified back in the day. Everybody loved their neighborhood; there was a lot of pride.

Parents took pride in their students. You sit at the dinner table as a family. Nowadays everybody go separate ways; they get a tray and go here and there. It wasn't like that growing up; you sit down and you talked about what your day was like. Your parents engaged in conversation with you and listened to you. And when you knew that your family cared, you best do good when you got out there, because it would-

[0:21:00]

-come back home in a heartbeat if you were out there not being good manners or, I should say striving to do good at all times, because the eyes from the neighborhood was on you at all times.

Interviewer: It seemed like there were a lot of businesses that, from what all the reading and I talked to-

John Cade: You're right, we had a lot of mom and pop stores coming up.

James Lynn: Well, we had Firestone right across from Manassas.

John Cade: Yeah.

James Lynn: It had Bruce Upstreet.

John Cade: Yeah, Bruce _____.

James Lynn: Yeah, we had a lot of – and Stewart Potato Chips. There was a lot of things right around that area.

Interviewer: So like it supported-

James Lynn: Supported the neighborhood.

John Cade: It supported – yeah, right. It supported the neighborhood, 'cause we had baseball, which was real active during the summer months, and every little store sponsored the team with equipment, uniforms, and all. And there was a lot of activities going on. You know, you didn't have time to get out and be too-

[0:22:00]

-mischievous, because you had different programs that was there for you to engage in, and that was real helpful.

Now when we use the word "beer garden" back in the day, which was Café Beer Garden, if you stayed clear of those places on Friday and Saturday you were okay. That's where all your trouble brewed back in those days, when you engaged in going to beer garden, as they called it. So those were the vices. And the pool room; we couldn't go in pool rooms, that was a no-no. So pool rooms and cafés and beer gardens, that was off limits. Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Let's see here. I think that might be it. I appreciate you guys coming out today and sharing your stories and your experiences.

John Cade: We appreciate you having us.

Interviewer: It means a lot to us.

James Lynn: Correct.

John Cade: I hope that we provided you some-

[0:23:00]

-good information.

Interviewer: Absolutely, you very much did.

John Cade: Yeah.

Interviewer: And the crossroads team is going to put this up on the archive for the college, so you guys are okay with that?

John Cade: Okay, great.

James Lynn: Mm-hmm.

John Cade: Yes, most definitely.

Interviewer: All right.

John Cade: All right.

Interviewer: _____ appreciate it.

John Cade: Thank you.

[End of Audio]