

Phone Interview with Phyllis Kessel
April 9, 2020

Gabbi: Hello! Welcome to our phone call, How are you, Phyllis?

Phyllis: Hello. I'm just fine. I don't see anything.

Gabbi: Let's see... are you joining. Ok. With your phone? Yeah, so. I don't think...are you on video call or are you just...

Phyllis: I have my computer on, I thought that it would come up on my computer.

Gabbi: Perfect. I know that we are not all on video, we are all just listening and talking so that might be part of it as well. So we weren't planning on showing our faces.

Phyllis: Oh, ok.

Riley: Yeah. You can join via web, I gave you the call instructions, but since you joined via phone I don't think there's a video option with that. There's just a video option with joining via the web.

Phyllis: Yeah. I don't understand you. I want to tell you all right now: I'm hard of hearing.

Riley: Alright.

Phyllis: And, sometimes I'll understand you and sometimes I won't. I am going to take my hearing aids out right now, because sometimes it's easier to hear on the phone. So, one second, ok?

Gabbi: Sounds good.

Phyllis: K, I'm back.

Gabbi: Wonderful. Can you hear me ok?

Phyllis: Yeah, I can right now. I'll tell you if I can't. Who am I speaking to?

Gabbi: So this is Gabbi. I am one of the team that has been working on...

Phyllis: Ok.

Gabbi: Yeah. So we are so honored to have you join us today...

Phyllis: I wanted to ask..

Gabbi:...What was that Phyllis? I'm so sorry.

Phyllis: I wanted to ask you all—I sent Riley the answers to the questions on the Microsoft attachment yesterday. And, have you all got that?

Gabbi: We did, thank you so much! We really appreciate you taking the time to do that.

Phyllis: Ok, yeah. Well, it was easier for me, is why I did it. And I have those answers in front of me. And so, do you want to go over any of them? Or what are we going to do here?

Gabbi: That would be great. If you wouldn't mind, I think, the way we envisioned things happening, is we would just ask our questions and you could either read the answers you provided...I think a couple of us had some small follow-up questions. And then we'll just kind of go from there, if that works for you.

Phyllis: Yes. Whatever. Ok!

Gabbi: ...Perfect...

Phyllis: The first question is, "**Did Barney believe he had any responsibility in terms of being an ambassador for jazz?**" Well, I'm sure he did. I am sure he was very pleased about it. He was already travelling all over the world for many years, and I don't have the dates in front of me, but I think it was something like 1981, maybe that that happened. And, I'd have to look it up. Most of the records about Barney that I have are still in boxes in the garage where I'm living. I

moved from San Diego last year to live with my daughter and her husband, and I've never unpacked most of my things to bring into the house. So, I don't even remember which countries it was. I do remember he was in southeast Asia. And it seems to me that this started during the Carter administration, so I got my years right. But he enjoyed the travel to promote the style of jazz that he played, that he believed in, which was straight-ahead traditional jazz. Any other questions?

Gabbi: No, that gives us a lot of insight. Nick, did you have anything else that you wanted to follow up with on that question?

Nick: No, that's...

Phyllis: Well, actually,—somewhere in like Maurice Summerfield's book or in the special *Just Jazz* guitar magazine on Barney, somewhere this information is in there in a biography...that's a short biography that I wrote. You have to be careful. I mean I want to tell you this right now. You've gotta be careful of picking up your information from other people's websites. I have over the years found a lot of things have been misquoted. So the best place to look, you know, the material in your school's archives, or, ask me, by email, OK?

Gabbi: Perfect. We really appreciate those words of caution. And we'll be sure to watch out for those things, and we'll look up those interviews as well for the further information.

Phyllis: 'Cause we don't have an actual Barney Kessel website. You know, I've never made a website or done business on there. I look him up under his name also and to see what other people have put out there. There is an enormous number of performances that have interviews and performances that have, over the years, and most recently, been put on YouTube. I never know about those until my good friend Maurice Summerfield in England tells me about it. Which is,—ah thank goodness for Maurice. Because he knew Barney many more years than I did. And he's very sharp about it all. He's a little younger than I am, I think he's 70 now, or something. I'm 87, or I'm not yet, I will be later this year. But, my memory is very sharp considering. But, Barney had been gone long enough and I haven't really been writing anything about him recently, so I have to go back and look up, you know, dates and names and everything, too. But, you, you can rely on me. I'll tell you if I'm not sure. (*laughs*) Should we go to question number two?

Gabbi:...perfect....absolutely...

Phyllis: **"One of my teammates found hand-written notes from after *The Guitar* was published referring to a book Barney planned to write, but I am not sure what they are referring to. Was Barney working with Maurice Summerfield on his biography, or do you know if he planned to write another book?"** He never did. He really wanted to write another book and he kept notes all the years until he had his stroke. And they were—he had little pieces of 5x7 cards. He cut them up sometimes in half, whatever. And that was, those things were in his pocket, all the time. Whether he was flying, you know, no matter where in the world he was, he was making notes as they came to him. And after his stroke—well, he couldn't write at all in the beginning. One interesting thing about Barney's stroke, and I don't know that I covered it in here on the written answers. But, he did not lose his memory. He had a massive stroke. He lost the ability to play, because he never regained the use of his right side. His right side was always paralyzed. His mouth drooped a little. He lost his speech in the beginning. And it was only through his—he was so good and doing repetitive things—which is how you come back in therapy. You have to keep doing the same boring thing over and over and over for years to

make any progress after a stroke. And he did, eventually, manage to learn how to speak. It wasn't as clearly, as he used to be, and it was limited, but that was wonderful. Barney, and I, this was not something I told you in the written answer. Barney always said over the years that he never missed more than seventeen days in his whole life practicing—that he had practiced every single day of his playing life, which would have been like from the age of twelve. Every day.

Gabbi:...Wow...

Phyllis: And every day, I saw this, I saw this in airports, I saw it in our home, I saw it in hotel rooms around the world when I travelled with him. He practiced AT LEAST three hours a day. And if he did not have a...

Gabbi:...wow...

Phyllis:..if he didn't have a gig that night, he'd practice five hours a day. And a lot of it was repetitive finger exercises that I had remembered from taking piano lessons as a child—for example the Czerny exercises, and I forgot what the other ones were. But, he had adapted those to the guitar!

Gabbi: WOW

Phyllis: And, I can't...and, and this is one of the reasons he, I think, was able to make progress—when he had to do all of these repetitive things after his stroke to regain his speech, you know, like say the same thing over a million times. And to learn how to write again. He filled books and books and books of paper with trying to write again—you know, his name or anything. He went to speech therapy, we had speech therapists at the house and physical therapists for, for several years, actually, off and on.

So, enough of that. Where are we with [question] number two?

Barney definitely for years, before and even after I knew him, he wanted to write another book. Everywhere he went, flying around the world, at home, he kept making notes on the tiny cards I told you about, that he wanted to cover. (*laughs*) And there were a lot of stacks and stacks of those things. I think you may have some in the archives. I don't remember what has happened to all of them. I think I still have some in a box somewhere. And, you know, they don't always make sense to us, but he knew what he was saying.

Gabbi: Well, we have been very inspired from what we've seen so far, with those notes that we've found, for sure!

Phyllis: Well, he was an amazing man. But don't just look at the early things you've found, from the 60s, you know, those date books and stuff, that you were talking about on the blog you sent me, the WordPress?

Gabbi: Uh-huh

Phyllis: Make sure you find things that are, you know, more recent. As I say, when I gave, all the papers that Barney had then that were in my garage in San Diego, they were a mess. They were a mess when Barney moved in with me. But, after his stroke, after he recovered enough, he would have me wheel him out to the garage in his wheelchair, and he'd rummage around in those boxes,...and he just messed everything up more. And I..think he, as far as I can tell, he was looking for certain things. He probably was thinking of something and he was trying to find it. But, the archives really were a mess when Chuck [Haddix] got them...I did the best I could to

throw away. There were empty boxes of music paper and stuff like that, that had never been written on. So, I got rid of things like that. But, I didn't get rid of anything else.

Gabbi: That makes sense. That's wonderful. I think, if it's alright, Bre had a follow-up question about the hand-written notes for the book? I think she's going to come on here.

Phyllis: Oh yeah, Maurice Summerfield's book on Barney was—she wanted to know if Barney helped Maurice with that. Well, I don't remember him as helping Maurice. Maurice Summerfield's book wasn't published until four years after Barney died. Barney died in 2004, and Maurice's book came out in 2008. And, he probably had showed us some of the, you know, emailed some early chapters or something he'd written, and Barney might have corrected something, but really Barney didn't write that with Maurice Summerfield. Not in any way. No.

Gabbi: Okay, okay, and I think Bre....sorry. Go ahead?

Phyllis: Question #3. "What had you heard about Barney before you met him for the first time? Did he live up to that? Was there anything that surprised you?" I didn't meet Barney, you must remember I didn't know him most of his life, actually. I didn't meet him until 1987...but I was a jazz fan starting around 1950, 1951, which is kind of interesting. This is like my life kind of came full circle. I first saw Barney play back in those days and then later I run into him! (*laughs*) I meet him and end up marrying him! I mean, that's kind of crazy!

Gabbi: It's like a fairytale!

Phyllis: Crazy, wonderful! Yeah, crazy wonderful! But, I was a jazz fan starting around 1950 or '51. I graduated from high school in 1951, but I had started hanging out, so to speak, going around with another high school student, Craig Kauffman. He went to a different school. We had met at a high school dance, and I probably met him around 1949 and we weren't married until 1952, but I was only eighteen when we first got married. But, the three of us, with his best friend in high school, Walter Hopps, who ended up being—you can Google Craig Kauffman, and you can Google Walter Hopps and you will see how well-known they became and they're both dead now. I've outlived everybody. But, Craig was only a couple of years older than I was, and—he has been gone since 2010 I think—but, anyway, Walter Hopps and Craig and I would go to jazz clubs because they were both big jazz fans, and you needed to be twenty-one to get in and legally drink in those days. But, I don't know, we were able to get in and order a Coca-Cola or something. So, from a very early age, I was in the jazz clubs, which is wonderful to remember back on because through Barney, later in both of our lives when I met him and was traveling with him I met many of the people as older musicians that I had seen when they were young musicians. (*laughs*)

Gabbi: Wow!

Phyllis: I mean, as I say, the circular aspect of my life is kind of interesting.

Gabbi: Amazing!

Phyllis: Barney was a big name in L.A. anyway and was something—he was a big name farther than L.A. When I first saw him play at The Haig in 1951 or 52—and you can Google The Haig. I found some very interesting things online about that little jazz club, it was a tiny little place. It was just off of Wilshire Boulevard, but the address is not Wilshire Boulevard, but that's where it was, across from The Ambassador Hotel. And we went there a lot and some of the other famous jazz folks of the time—also The Tiffany Club is another one I can remember. There were others. At The Haig I saw Chet Baker the first night he ever played with Gerry Mulligan. And he was only like—Chet Baker was only maybe nineteen at the time.

Gabbi: Wow...

Phyllis: Anyway, so all that aspect of my own history is interesting to me, too. And, “**Did Barney live up to my expectations?**” Well, I didn’t meet him in person until 1987. It was kind of a fluke. I was in Seattle, Washington for another reason, and there was a jazz festival there that weekend and I decided to go to it. It was an outdoor festival that lasted three days, and oddly enough, I still have the program for that festival.

Gabbi: Wow!

Phyllis: I had a lot of the musicians autograph it for me. And, I was a writer, and interested. I loved to interview people, and I didn’t know what I was going to do with it, but I decided to interview Barney, Herb Ellis, and Charlie Byrd at halftime. They were appearing as The Great Guitars, which was a group that they had traveled as for a few years. Well, Barney loved to talk, and so when I approached them he was the one that, you know, really wanted to talk to me—about himself. I was asking questions that—he knew that I appreciated jazz, or knew enough about it to ask the right questions. So, he told me after seeing him at the festival just at halftime talking to him that he and Herb Ellis were traveling to San Diego that weekend and would be performing for a week in the San Diego area. And I said, “Well, I live there!” So, they said, “Well, come see us play!” And I can’t remember without looking it up, I can’t remember the name of the club—oh, I do! Bella Via. It just came to me! This is what happens when you get older: you can’t think of something and then all of a sudden it shows up.

Gabbi: (*laughs*)

Phyllis: The Bella Via. And it was in a little beach town, it was practically on the beach. It looked out on the beach. And, the building is still there, it’s something else. But it was upstairs and there was food and drink, as I remember, there was some kind of food. And I went, I went alone. I happened to be out at another event that evening in La Jolla, California. I don’t know whether these names mean anything to you, but La Jolla’s another beach town. So, I was at an event there and it wasn’t very far on the freeway to the Bella Via so I decided to go to hear them play. And, I got there the same time they did and the three of us walked up the stairs together. I do remember that. And, I interviewed Barney again at halftime, and I went back once or twice that week. I was there the first night and I was there the last night and I can’t remember whether I was there in between at all. But, so I talked to him at least twice, and —you gotta remember, I pointed out in here somewhere—this was before email and the internet and everything. We were—you just exchanged phone numbers (*laughs*), fax numbers. It seems like, you know, the Middle Ages right now! But, it wasn’t that long ago to me. It must seem like—you know, what?—to you people. (*laughs*) Anyway,..

Gabbi: Fantastic!

Phyllis: Oh how times have changed! Barney would not believe the internet and what’s out there. He wouldn’t believe that; he never saw it. So, anyway, um, I tell you that it was in a beach town called Leucadia, where the Bella Via, if you want to write that down. (*Spells out*) That was the start of the relationship between Barney and I, really.

Gabbi: Wow...

Phyllis: But getting to know him beyond the music was amazing. And, I don’t think it comes up in my notes here, but I went to see him play, I knew he was playing in San Francisco. I don’t remember exactly how far, how long that was after the Bella Via, after the San Diego engagement. But, my brother lives in San Francisco so I was going up there all the time anyway

and I sought out wherever they were playing. And, at some point I ended up driving The Great Guitars to their gigs! *(laughs)*

Gabbi: *(laughs)* That's amazing!

Phyllis: Barney didn't drive. Herb didn't drive. And, Charlie, sometimes he went on his own with somebody else. But, I drove Herb and Barney around to more than one gig up in northern California. Which seems so funny now! *(laughs)*

Gabbi: *(laughs)* That's wonderful!

Phyllis: Yeah, well, I was, you know, still driving and very active, and going out on my own and that sort of thing. **"Did anything about Barney surprise me?"** Yes. How naive he was about things beyond music.

Gabbi: Oh?

Phyllis: He was a world traveler, but his whole life, ever since he had been a young boy, had been focused on playing the guitar and I told you how much of every day he was playing the guitar.

Gabbi: Right, right.

Phyllis: So, there was a lot of common knowledge about, just things about life and people and everything that he lacked. It took me a while to catch on to that. But, I could understand it, and I'm a great reader of biographies, and I saw that repeated in other artists and writers or whoever who had achieved some fame. How focused they were for most of their lives on the one thing, and they weren't paying attention to all these other everyday things that you and I do. And, Barney also never went farther than the ninth grade and he was also conscious of that and always trying to educate himself in some way. And I told you that he never read fiction. He claimed to have read Shakespeare, but he never read fiction otherwise. That didn't appeal to him. And, he mostly read self-help books and philosophy and stuff like that. A lot of it I didn't think much of, but he had a huge library of that...

I didn't mention this in the written answers that I gave you, but I thought of it this morning. He had all of these—he was always a clothes horse when he was traveling. He bought a lot of stuff in England, for example, during the sixties. He still had all those Carnaby Street shirts [in the 1980s], with these funny long lapels on them. He had all of these jelly platform shoes. Some in red, blue, yellow, green...he had the biggest collection of bow ties I've ever seen! And, FYI, I still have most of them. Not all of them. I gave—when Barney died—I gave a little memento, a bow tie, to many of the musicians he knew. But, he would buy the bow ties in multiples. If he found one he liked—there was a velvet one he liked to buy in England, Marks & Spencer I think, in London—and, he'd buy it in every color. There were red ones, there were blue ones. There were green ones. And there were two or three of each color!

Gabbi: *(laughs)* That's wonderful!

Phyllis: And this went on and on and he also had regular four-in-hand ties, but I always think of him in a bow tie. And, if you'll notice in many of the photographs, that's what he's wearing. And he always wore one when I knew him. He was buried in one of his four-in-hands. It was one that M. Summerfield had sent him and I buried him in that. And, I don't know whether you've looked up—have you looked up his grave stone?

Gabbi: I have not personally, no.

Phyllis: Yeah, okay. Well, I'm trying to think whether it comes up under his name or not. It's in my hometown in western—he wasn't buried in San Diego or in Oklahoma. People thought that he probably went back to Oklahoma to be buried, but he wanted to be buried where I would. And, I already had—my family plot was in this little town in western New York where I grew up. So, I actually took him back there and buried him there. So, our—his headstone is mine also. I'll find a picture of it and email it to Riley.

Gabbi: Perfect. It looks like some of my colleagues have looked it up as well, so we would love to add—

Phyllis: Okay. Yeah, yeah, I'm not surprised. I can't remember, but it's gotta be in more than one place on the internet. That's the way those things go.

Gabbi: Sure!

Phyllis: Okay, how about question #4?

Gabbi: Absolutely.

Phyllis: “**What would you say Barney would say is the most important, most defining moment of his career?**” Well... I didn't have a problem with that and I think Barney would agree with me. He also might answer that question with, well, meeting me—Phyllis—'cause he found that very important and he always said, at the end of his life, but-

Gabbi: That's so beautiful!

Phyllis: Barney had always said the most important event for him was when he found his own voice on the guitar, and as musicians, I'm sure you can understand what that means.

Gabbi: Absolutely.

Phyllis: He had grown up emulating all these other old-time guitarists, and it's written down in the biographies who the guitarists were. But the most recent one was Charlie Christian, because Charlie was also from Oklahoma. And, Barney was about sixteen years old, he was playing with a band from Oklahoma[...], and Hal Price was the band leader. He's somebody I met later when I met Barney; he came to see us in San Diego. So anyway, there's a famous picture, and I know you've got it, and it's in Maurice's book also—but. there's a picture of Barney with [the band]. You can see him on the guitar up front there, and that was the night. That picture was taken in Oklahoma City, and that was the night one of the waiters in the club where they were playing went home and told Charlie Christian he had to see this young guitar player. "Come on over," so Charlie Christian came to see Barney play that night.

Gabbi: Wow.

Phyllis: This is a famous story that has been skewed on the internet, 'cause Barney didn't go to hear him play, he came to hear Barney play.

Gabbi: (*laughs*)

Phyllis: And because the word was out, "Hey, there's this kid on the bandstand that can really play!" and so Charlie Christian went to hear him, as I remember, he sat in with them—with the band that night—and then he and Charlie went off for three days...

Gabbi: Wow!

Phyllis: ...and you know, restaurants and things around there, just to play together. To sit and jam together. And that is the point at which Barney said that he realized that he had to find his own voice, that he shouldn't be just emulating Charlie Christian or any other guitar players. So it was a big turning point for him, and it was something that he repeated later in life whenever he was teaching, or giving a seminar. He always gave that bit of advice to any guitar player.

Phyllis: So, that one was easy—that question was easy to answer. One of the side notes to that was—this was still in the days when Charlie Christian, as an African-American, could not go into many restaurants. So he and Charlie, to get something to eat, would have to go into the kitchen or, you know. There were a lot of places that he couldn't go with Barney, just for them to jam together, which is a sad thing to remember.

Gabbi: That's...that's crazy...Wow...

Phyllis: Yep! Well it was a different time...and I think you've read somewhere in the biographies that when Barney in...*Jammin' the Blues*? The video? Have you come across that? About how they dyed Barney with, some kind of like, walnut skin juice or something? They dyed him brown and put him in the shadows to play, when they were...in certain areas, and I forget, you know, how that went, but when he was traveling with bands back that far— going to the South was a—you know—was another whole thing. If any of you saw the movie-

Gabbi: Right.

Phyllis: *The Green Book*. Yeah, you'll know something about that.

Okay, where are we? Number 5: “**Did Barney have his own private studio? What did he emphasize with his home students?**” Well... not really. Barney had—he was always either traveling or, in the beginning, it was with big bands. He played in, like, almost every big name band back in the '40s. Benny Goodman's, Artie Shaw, you name it, and so he was very busy all the time and he was playing gigs and jamming with people and everything, when he was not on the road back in those days. So, it wasn't like he was teaching and having a studio, it wasn't like that. Barney lived out of a suitcase for most of his life.

Gabbi: Wow.

Phyllis: ...He did have his own shop for a while. It was just for three years apparently, and I didn't know him at the time, so I never saw it. He was also, like in the 50's—mostly the 50's but a little of the '40's, a little of the '60's—he played on over 500 movies.

Gabbi: Wow, that's a lot of movies!

Phyllis: Yeah, well, that's a lot of, you know, sessions, and you'll come across that in some of the date books of where he was. But, he did— according to everything I've been—well, he told me about it; but, also I've looked it up, Googled it recently...He had a shop called Barney Kessel's Music World on Vine St. in Hollywood, and there is something on it on the internet, and it supposedly existed from 1967 to 1970. One of the things that I found on the internet the other day was actually written by somebody who had worked in that shop as a technician, so I've gotta believe that dates are pretty accurate.

Gabbi: Mm-hmm.

Phyllis: Anyway, the shop existed from 196[7] to 1970, but, one of the things that tends to show up in the history of that is...all the famous rock stars who went in there to—I don't know what—they were having their instruments fixed, or maybe they were buying a new instrument, or, you know, some strings...or, who knows what? I don't know. But, you know, a couple of The Beatles, and Eric Clapton, and people like that, and those were people who were very aware of Barney...

Gabbi: Mm-hmm.

Phyllis: ...and were, in different ways, influenced by him. And some of them, in later years, would definitely give him credit for something. Some of them didn't, but there [are] some interesting quotes from some of the more famous rock musicians. Have you come across the

album by Pete Townshend called *Scoop*?...On it there's a song he wrote called "To Barney Kessel." I always thought that was kinda neat.

Gabbi: It is!

Phyllis: Those kinds of, yeah, those kinds of things did not mean much to him. Somewhere it's been written in a biography or something about how one of Barney's sons—Barney had two sons by his first wife—and one of his sons, this was in the '60s, was telling him about, he ought to go see these guys playing. The Beatles were, you know, performing somewhere or recording somewhere, and told their father he ought to go see them, and he said, "What for?" (*laughs*) He was definitely not interested. He always claimed he was never interested, but you knew he knew everything that was going on, there wasn't much that he missed. Anyway, I doubt that he was around to teach out of that Barney Kessel's Music World much. I did find information that he and Howard Roberts used to perform there on Friday nights or something, sometimes for people to come and hear. Howard Roberts worked in the studios also, and he was somebody I met on the phone before. He died before Barney did, and Barney knew his daughter also, who was a musician. She's still alive, Madelyn Roberts. I think she lives in Arizona. When I sold Barney's guitars and his little traveling amp, she bought his amp, which I thought was interesting.

Gabbi: That's great!

Phyllis: Madelyn Roberts, yeah, must have been a sentimental buy. But, I believe he—teaching—what he particularly liked, you know, was the seminars he gave and I think Maurice Summerfield put together the first one he did in the UK. If you're in touch with him at all, he can straighten that out for you; but, they eventually were something that Barney did in many different places in the United States and in some places in Europe. I know he did some in Italy. Then as far as the only other teaching I can really pinpoint for you is after Barney's stroke—and after a couple, I don't remember now, after two or three years of therapy—one of the things that I always encouraged was his staying involved with music...Somehow people hearing about his stroke, some former students emailed him—not email, didn't email in those days—called him or sent letters and wondered if they could come have a lesson, and we tried doing a little of that in our living room in San Diego. It didn't amount to a whole lot, but I can remember one fellow flew in from Chicago, one lady from San Francisco and they had had a lesson with him before—and they, you know—wanted to see him again. The other way he stayed in touch with music while he was recovering was, after morning therapy—I was working full-time as a magazine editor, and they were wonderful about letting me work at home and keep my job even while Barney was in the hospital and I was running in and out of my office all the time—eventually we had three or four local San Diego guitarists that would come. It was one came on Mondays, one on Tuesdays, one on Wednesdays, one on Thursdays. (*laughs*) And every week. And this went on for a long time; I think a matter of years during his good time in the twelve years he lived as a stroke victim. But these people became practically part of my family. I keep in touch with a couple of them still; one of them he was close to died about a year or two ago now and he lived in Monaco, he had gone to France and married a French woman. Art Johnson was his name and you can find him online, too. He was a good friend. These three or four guitarists that came every week on their specific days, they were there to sit with Barney to babysit, so to speak, so I could run to my office for a few hours, like three hours. They loved coming and they would bring their guitars and one of them was also a banjo player—such a great man—and they loved the

opportunity to play something for Barney and then ask him questions. He couldn't speak much then, he couldn't talk very well, but he could gesticulate and show them things. And he mostly would pull out—I had him set up in front of the table with a radio, VCR, you know, whatever—and he could play his old records and examples of other musicians that we had on tape, people he played with, [...] comes up immediately, and he would use those as, you know, he was teaching these local guitarists. He was helping them with their own guitar playing. So that was absolutely wonderful for him, just that being able to have that in his life at that time when he was having trouble communicating and not really going out much was really good for him. I told you most of that in what we wrote.

Phyllis: “*Did Barney share a lot of stories from his interactions with stars of the 1960s? If so, did he have any favorite moments or encounters he liked to share?*” I have trouble answering that. By stars did you mean movie stars or jazz stars?

Gabbi: Lacie, did you want to clarify?

Lacie: Sure, yeah. Either really. I just noticed when I was going through his date books he had a lot of interactions--appointments for movie studios like working with Dean Martin and some of those other big names of the era.

Phyllis: Yeah, Jerry Lewis and all those people. He had a lot of anecdotes—I can't really tell them all myself—about people like Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin. The fact that he was on 500 movies—he wasn't always with the movie stars in those cases. You know, when they did the music lots of times the musicians were in the studio by themselves and they were just looking at the film, doing it that way. In many cases, yes, he met ever so many people. Barbra Streisand is the one I can think of off the top of my head. I couldn't come up with a lot of names. In terms of big names in jazz, he played with about everyone—and sure, he had stories he would tell me about people like that. One of the things...he did a series of radio programs in the 1980s for an Oklahoma jazz station and we had all of those—there were sixty one-hour programs.

Gabbi: Wow.

Phyllis: Have you come across those?

Gabbi: I haven't personally, and I don't know if any of my other colleagues have either, but that's definitely something we'd like to look into.

Phyllis: Yeah, no, those were tapes that I'm sure went to—there were 60 of them, there were duplicates of some of them in fact—I'm pretty sure they went to Chuck at UMKC.

Gabbi: Perfect.

Phyllis: Those are valuable because Barney made these, he was trying to get back with his third wife at the time, the wife before me, and it was before I met Barney and he made these radio programs because he was just staying in Oklahoma City a lot. They were one hour and he would choose a different artist or a different band for each one and he would play examples of their music, and then he would talk about it, and he would tell you anecdotes about those people on those radio programs. Those programs were fabulous; I used to love to listen to them and when Barney was—let's see, it was before his stroke—after he'd moved in with me, I'd be driving him to L.A. to see people and it took us about two-and-a-half hours for that trip depending on the traffic and we would always take along some of those radio programs and we'd play them on my car, the stereo, and talk about them. (*laughs*) That was so fun.

Gabbi: Great! (*laughs*) Wow!

Phyllis: I heard some more than once, and that's about all I've got to say about the stars. It was all long before me. There's stuff I don't know about that, probably.

“What was the most interesting part of conducting business and correspondence on Barney's behalf after his stroke? Was it particularly difficult?” I wrote rather at length about this and I'll read it. The twelve years I cared for Barney after his stroke until his death from 1992 from May when he had his stroke to May of 2004 when he died were certainly some of the most difficult times of my life—the word “times” is missing, I made a typo!—looking back, I don't know how I did it all, I truly don't. It's become stranger and stranger to me that I was able to do what I did—keep my job, just everything I did, travelling with him in a wheelchair—I kept my job until well after he died. I didn't retire until about four, five years ago. Anyways, I don't regret any of that, all the effort I must have put into it. I kept working as a magazine editor the whole time with lots of paid and volunteer help at home so I could run back and forth to the office, but also most of the time I was able to work at home thanks to my employer; the other editors of the magazine were so helpful—everybody—and they never cut off my salary or anything, it was absolutely amazing.

Gabbi: Right.

Phyllis: In the beginning he was actually in the hospital and then in a rehab facility so I was running up the freeway there all the time and I was actually taking home-cooked food, and they let me take it into the rehab to him because he loved the things I'd cook for him so I'd take him favorite things when he could, you know, start to eat. And right away after his stroke I bought a Sony Walkman—it was this thing that you plugged into your ears that you put a cassette in—and I played his own recordings to him from the day he had his stroke. I don't know how I even thought to do that but I knew how much he loved to listen to himself and I knew it would connect to him the songs, the chords, whatever. I think that was a really important part of that—he'd lost his speech and it must have helped, even a little bit, with the long road back to speaking and just all the years it took him to get up on his feet and walk again, it was not easy. Anyway, he never recovered the use of his—oh! This is incorrect in my notes: I said he never recovered the use of his left, the paralyzed side. He was paralyzed on his right. Yeah, that's wrong. Anyway, after he came home with all his speech and physical therapy, every day, constant repetition—as I said, which I think he was able to do because all his years practicing—the repetition of words and arm and leg exercises. After he died I kept all of his books and materials he used. I finally trashed them all, there wasn't anything that really—I don't think that any of those books with him repetitively trying to write his name or anything, I think anything I didn't trash went into the archives. After he came home, in addition to working with him and his therapy, I developed breast cancer and had a mastectomy and I chose that rather than radiation or chemo-therapy because I thought I'd get it over with real fast, and because I had to take care of him. I was only in the hospital one night, I came home and the daughter I live with now, she took care of me for the first few days and fed me and I made a big effort to recover quickly because he was there and I needed to take care of him! In the beginning I couldn't drive and then the doctor said I couldn't drive my standard-shift car and I had to get an automatic, so that's when I got another car with the automatic gear shift. I had that car, it was a Mazda 626 four-door, and I had that car until I stopped driving because my eyesight got bad.

Gabbi: Wow.

Phyllis: It was an old car by that time. So, that's just a little side note, but the fact that we went through that but I was only in the hospital one night and the careperson I had with him for that one night brought him to the hospital to see me so he would know I was okay. The other thing that helped him through this with me was—my best friend was a doctor, and her husband was a doctor—they had been coming to the house all during Barney's stroke. They'd been wonderful friends. She's dead and he's still alive in a nursing home and I'm still in touch with him, so that's another story. But, this woman-doctor-friend of mine would come to see me at the hospital and then go back to the house always and give Barney a full report on me. And this was from a doctor, so it gave him a lot of confidence that I was doing okay that one time, that one night. It was a wonderful thing. Anyway, I got back to driving really fairly quickly. I don't remember anymore how long I worked at home, but I do know that the magazine was wonderful. The other editors would come by the house and bring my work to me. As I say, this was before the internet, before email, and I managed to keep on writing, and editing, and everything all during that time. So, that's terrific. And, it's amazing, also, to think of the travel we were able to do. His fans all over the world—and I'm sure some of the letters are still in the archives there in Kansas City—they all wanted to see him. They all wanted to do benefit concerts in their towns to raise money so that I could pay for the care people to come to the house and stuff like that. And, one particularly close couple in northern Italy, up in Torino, they got Alitalia to fly us over.

Gabbi: Wow!

Phyllis: And we were there for, I think eight days. And, during that period, they did a huge concert for Barney in Torino, and musicians from all over—from Germany and all over Italy and everywhere—came to play for Barney.

Gabbi: That's amazing.

Phyllis: It was one of the most heart-rending, fabulous things I have ever seen—outpouring of love for that man. And, we sat in the front row, I remember. I don't know whether there's videos of that. I don't remember anymore what still exists of that. But that was, I think, nineteen... I'm not sure the date even. I'd have to look that up. That might've been like two years after his stroke. He was still in a wheelchair. He wasn't very ambulatory at that time, and he couldn't speak much either. But, they put us up in a wonderful hotel called the Grand Hotel Sita in Torino on Via Carlo Alberto, 35. I've still got a pad of paper from that hotel. Anyway, what an experience that was: traveling over there, trying to get there, trying to get help in the airports, and oh my god. I write a little bit about that in here. This was before all-gender restrooms. It was before the ADA for wheelchairs—the hotel rooms were not set up for the wheelchairs and trying to get him to into a plane, oh my goodness.

Gabbi: You work magic, Phyllis. That's amazing.

Phyllis: Well, listen all the amazing people and all the funny situations when he'd have to go the bathroom and there was no place to go, I won't go into it...TMI (*laughs*) After the year after my mastectomy, there was a big concert planned for him in New York City, and Charles Carlini was the man who put it together. And there's a wonderful picture, and I'm sure you've seen that, of all the musicians standing and Barney is standing and Charlie Byrd is on one side—and I forget who's on the other—but they're both standing with Barney in the front row. Now, I'm just off camera. I'm not in the photograph, but there are some photographs, I think on the internet with me and the musicians and Barney that same night. Well, what about another fantastic experience that was and he'd had enough speech therapy that I wrote a speech for him and he practiced it...Now, let's see, is that where he got out on the stage?...Hmm...let's see, in New York City...No, I'm remembering wrong and that was in Concord, California. At one point I actually got him out on the stage and he was able to say a few words of a speech that I'd written

for him, but then I finished reading it for him afterwards. But that was a big turning point, and he was so proud of himself and everybody was just screaming in the audience.

Gabbi: I believe it.

Phyllis: I can't remember which concert that this was. Yeah, you see this is what happens—but it's all in the boxes in the garage here. So, I've been meaning to write something about my travels with Barney and a lot of those things are in boxes that never went back to Kansas City. I held on to them because there's a lot of photographs and a lot of notes of my own about traveling with him and the different experiences and the different hotels and it really was my first experience traveling that much in a foreign country. And I still would like to do it. I haven't gotten around to it, since I moved up here. Having to move and everything has taken up a lot of the last couple years of my life.

Gabbi: That makes sense.

Phyllis: But, I'm hoping that I can live long enough to still dig enough into that material. Well, there's also—and I tell you this in the answer to number 7 that there was a fundraiser for him attended by the big names from Hollywood that he had worked with in the studios. That was another fantastic night after his stroke. I drove him to L.A... and that was amazing. He loved it; he got to see so many people—musicians and groups of singers—like the Maguire Sistersall these different people from Page Cavanaugh and his trio—oh, all kinds of people and that was put together by Maynard Sloat. And he had owned clubs in L.A.; he was an old, old friend of Barney from way back, and I got to know him also. He was still alive in Las Vegas—in his nineties, the last I knew—but I haven't talked to him for a couple of years anyway. Oh, and I mentioned there's a whole book—the story of trying to travel with Barney and the hotel bathrooms that weren't aligned with the ADA and the elevators and the escalators that didn't work. I can remember in one airport that the person pushing the wheelchair with me picked Barney up and carried Barney and the wheelchair up a down elevator—*up a down* elevator!—because the elevator wasn't working. And I can see that now and when we landed in maybe Milan, there was a crane lifted that lifted us off the airplane! Oh my god, that was scary. And I don't remember why that was necessary. (*laughs*) And I'd never seen anything like it. Anyway, this was so important to take him traveling when these things happened because he loved an audience; he loved to be out in front of an audience; he loved to hear the applause and the cheering. He loved hearing his own music, but these other musicians were playing his renditions of these things—his arrangements and stuff—it meant so much to him to still be involved even though he couldn't play any longer. And that,—I know that that was a big part of our last years together for sure.

He was so loved by people all over the world that spontaneous fundraisers were how I was able to have any help at home. It's an outpouring that still brings tears to my eyes. Doing business for him and correspondence was before the email and the internet. We did it by fax and international phone calls—and, what I discovered looking through things, was that those faxes were on this kind of rubbery paper, and they have faded. So, I've even lost a lot of that material, but some of it I was able to put it on a copy machine. But I actually lost some faxes I wished I hadn't lost because I saved all of that material, because it told me where we were and what we were doing, where he was playing and everything. And, after his stroke, it wasn't unusual that after any given day I might be talking in person and then holding the phone to his ear so he could hear them, with people like Julie London, Oscar Peterson, big-name band leaders,... Norman Granz—he wasn't a band leader, but he was the head of the Jazz at the Philharmonic, I mean, he was a wonderful man. And some other big names, like Phil Spector, do you know who he was? The "wall of sound?" Yeah, he's in prison now, a very sad sad thing. But as a kid he had idolized Barney and he was always a fan and kept in touch after Barney's stroke. And, in fact, when we were in New York City.....this is when Barney was still playing though...when Barney was playing at the Village Vanguard, this was like 1991. It's one of the last times he

played in New York City. Phil Spector came every night. And sat there through all three sets....EVERY SINGLE NIGHT! And like at two o'clock in the morning, he took us out for hamburgers and so I rode around in Phil Spector's limo. And went out for hamburgers at PJ Clarke's, a famous place in New York. (*laughs*) This is something you don't need to know, but it was before poor Phil went nuts.

Okay, we're down here to number 8. I hope you're not getting tired.

Gabbi: No! This has been so fun and fascinating! And so inspiring!

Phyllis: Well, let's do number 8 and then see if you have anything else you need to say.

Number 8. "**Did Barney ever talk about what he wanted his legacy to be? What impact he personally want to leave on music?**" Well, let's see...This is a short answer. I don't remember anything specifically like that. He certainly knew how important he was, you know—what an impact he had made on music. And he was definitely aware of his contributions to jazz and—this is where I mentioned to you, you know, about Pete Townshend writing things, but that's just an example. There were other artists who wrote things and did things to honor him. What he spoke about at whatever chance he had—and this is very important because I heard this so many times, you could repeat it in your sleep and it was kind of rote for him, I think by that time—it was one of the things that came out when he got speech back. Because people were always asking him, you know, about how important his guitar was to him and things like that. And that interview I told you about that you must see that's on the Stephan Grossman *Rare Performances* video. There's an interview with Barney about his guitar and everything he did do to his guitar. It was no longer an ES-350 and how he had put all these funny things to it and had done stuff to it. But, it wasn't the guitar that made the music, it came out of his heart and his head and he always made that clear. But his priorities that I say were—this was something he repeated every chance he could—his mantra was "God is at the top of the list, then family, then music, and then the guitar." His priorities were very important to him and he tried to pass that on to his fans and musicians and no matter who....And I think that's the end of my answers.

Gabbi: Yep.

Phyllis: I have a question for you all.

Gabbi: Of course.

Phyllis: How long do you keep working on the project? Is it just until the end of the semester?

Gabbi: Yes, so we are working on the project through the end of April and hopefully, at the end of April we'll be able to kind of roll out the resulting website with all of our findings and some of the documents organized, things like that. So our project should kind of come to a close at the end of April. But we're definitely—

Phyllis: Oh, the end of April! Oh, ok. We're already in April. (*laughs*)

Gabbi: Yep! It's coming up really quickly.

Phyllis: Oh, well, just the fact of the, self-isolation and everything, we've all had to change our lives and it's been a real challenge to all of you, I know, and it's wonderful that you have pursued it with all the technical things that you know how to use. (*laughs*)

Gabbi: It's been our honor, for sure.

Phyllis: Oh, well, I can hardly wait to see the results, and you're welcome to e-mail me any more questions and I will answer. That is the quickest, easiest way to get me. I haven't had any trouble understanding you, Gabbi, once I took my hearing aids off. There's something about the microphone on my hearing aids that gets in the way of talking on the phone.

Gabbi: Makes sense.

Phyllis: Well, I don't know whether I did mention. I haven't lost all my hearing, it's only partial, but it has necessitated wearing hearing aids. Oh my, that's the one thing that made me feel old. I never felt old until I had to do that (*laughs*).

Gabbi: Oh no! Oh, my. (*laughs*)

Phyllis: Well, I'm behind you all the way. And, as I said, do not hesitate to email me anytime, ok?

Gabbi: Perfect, we'll do that. Thank you so much!

Phyllis: Well, you're most welcome and thank you. Thank you all for what you're doing.

Gabbi: Of course. Have a beautiful day. I'm sure we'll be in touch.

Phyllis: Alright, thank you. Buh-bye.

Gabbi: Thank you. Bye.