

The following recording took place on August 31st, 2015. Carole Cadarette and Cindy Kus are interviewing Jerry Ruczynski. Towards the end of the interview, Don Deadman enters the room.

This is August 31st, ah, 2015, we're at the Alpena County Library, I'm Carole Cadarette, and I'm getting ready to interview Mr. (inaudible) Jerry, thank you for coming.

JR. You're quite welcome.

CC. So, we'll start out talking about when you got started in the music business. How old were ya?

JR. I started ah, at St. Bernard's, grade school, and I ah, took clarinet lessons for a year, and then I took, ah, piano lessons from Mainville? I believe her name was. For three years.

CK. That's at St. Bernard's?

JR. At St. Bernard's. I was . . . I started young. And then, the first day I got into class, and I forget what grade it was, ah, I was sitting there with, I think I took a trumpet that time, and Bobby Riggs (sic) was standing behind me with a snare drum, a blue sparkle snare drum, and I knew right then that I had the wrong instrument. So I, I went home and told my mother, I said, "You know, I think this has been a mistake. I tried the clarinet, I tried the piano, trumpet," and I said, "I really think I want to play drums". And of course, that didn't go over well, so she just said no.

So, I lived next door to a fellow named Gilbert Rose and he had a pair of drumsticks and I remember buying those drumsticks for fifty cents. And I, I went next door to the Jerry's Beer and Wine Store and I got some cigar boxes, three of 'em, and I filled 'em half full of sand and one three quarters full of sand to get the different sound, and I started playing with those drumsticks. And ah, from there, it was just, that's what I wanted to play, and it just clicked. I ah, I remember cashing in a, my Dad left me a \$25 savings bond and I cashed it in at Montgomery Ward's or Sears, I forget which one it was, ah, for a street drum. And then I got into the, to the, ah, to the band, the marching band.

CK. Do you remember where you got the idea to put sand in a cigar box?

JR. No, but I had an erector set and after I ah, after I bought that street drum it was, ah, you know it's the kind you carry around with a strap? So I had an erector set and I took those cigar boxes and I, I made stands for 'em, I put 'em off that, that drum so I could get, you know. And that worked, and that's how I started and I used to practice on that. And then one day a friend of mine says, "I know somebody that's got a set of drums and he'd probably let you use 'em and his name was Clem Mason. And Clem came over and he heard me play on those cigar boxes and he says, "Come on with me" and we went over to his garage and got that old set of drums and that's how I got started and uh . . .

CK. How old do you think you were at that time?

JR. I was in grade school. We used to practice at my house with Jim LaCross and Dave VanNocker, ah, right across from the Karpus Funeral Home, and I was, I was telling Carole that I remember one time Bob LaMarre was a clarinet player, he, he married Stan Godfrey's daughter, and he said he remembered walking out of his house one day and he lived right next door to the, to the ah, funeral home – Karpus-Hunter Funeral Home – and he said they were carrying the casket out and I lived right across the street and we were all on the, on the sun porch out there playing "When the Saints Go Marching In." We, we had no idea what we were doing, we, we were just practicing. And Bob said he started to laugh and he – I mean that was quite a joke at the time, cuz we were just kids. But anyway, ah, he heard me playing with those guys and he said to me, ah, "Would you be interested in playing a job?" and I said, "Well, I've never played a job."

He said, "Well, I'm going to hire you. He said, "Meet me over at Catholic Central". And I met him there and I played a job – I think Gary Keefer was the drummer and he couldn't make it that night so they, he hired me and we got all done playing and he said, "Well, here's your share," and he gave me \$11.

And I said "Well, I can't take any money for that", I said, "I just had a lot of fun."

He said, "No, you gotta get paid," and ah, that was it. He said "You know", he said, "you sound really good", he said, "how would you like to play with us, steady?"

And I said, "well, that'd be nice". So I started, I worked ah, several jobs with him. And then, ah, . . .

CK. What did your parents think about it?

JR. Just laughed, thought it was crazy. You know, my, my stepfather, Ray French, ah, was the one that hauled the drums over there for me to that- it was, it was onstage at Catholic Central

CK. So they were supportive, if he took . . .

JR. Oh, sure, sure. And then from there, I ah, I got into high school then, I think, and I was a freshman and I started working with ah, Tom Ferguson. The Tom Ferguson Quartet. With ah, Jay Thomas played sax, Bob Rohn played ah, guitar, and I played drums and we started playing The Yacht Club parties, we played all the teen dances when Dolly Gray wasn't playing them, because we were another band in town, we were the Tom Ferguson Quartet, then there was the Dolly Gray Band and with Sid Pugh played drums, Howie Arnold played ah, trumpet – no, Bill Jerome played trumpet . . . Howie Arnold, I'm trying to think . . . I can't remember. But anyway, that was the two bands and then, ah, I filled in for some of the other bands around at that time.

CK. What were some – do you remember names?

JR. No, I worked with Dolly Gray, worked with Joe Emerson. Fact, I worked at the Alpena Bar with a trumpet player whose name was Bob Olson, he was a big band trumpet player that landed in Alpena-landed in Alpena. He had ah, his wife had relatives here. In fact, his wife was the sister of Smitty's Trim Shop - remember Smitty?

CK. Mm hm.

JR. South of town he had that trim shop? Bob Olson married his sister, and when he got off the road with the big bands, he retired here and he heard me play and he says, "You wanna, you want to work downtown?" So I was I think a freshman or something in high school, started working down there with ah, Joe Emerson, Torey Osgerby, and ah, and Bob Olson.

And when the liquor inspector'd call ahead and he'd say, "Bernie, sic 'em" and he'd, he'd call up and say "I'm in town, I'm going to be ah, I'm gonna be around tonight. Skip or Joe who owned the bar, there was two, two partners in the bar and he'd call up and he'd say, "I'm going to be there about 9:30 or 10:00"

And they'd say 'Ok', so then they'd tell me to go out in back. Go out in back of the bar until he leaves, you know, he'll leave, cuz I was, I don't know, fifteen or something, sixteen. But, ah, yeah, I started there.

CK. How fun to be doing something you really enjoyed doing!

JR. It was. It was great, yeah. I remember playing at the Alpena Bar when Ralph Marterie Band came through town. And they played at the, right next door here at, at the Memorial Hall. The Ralph Marterie Band, the Marlboro Man? The big band?

CC. Yeah.

JR. And they played there, and I went there with Bob Olson, and Bob says, "I know Ralph," he said "I played in his band," he says, "come on up, I'll introduce you." And I was I think fifteen at the time, maybe sixteen, so I went up and I ah, I talked to . . . got introduced to Ralph Marterie and Bob, we went back to the table and Bob says, "You know, I know these guys," he said, "and Ralph," he said, "maybe I can get them to stop at, at the Alpena Bar." Well, I thought he was just kidding. So, after the, after the gig that night that they played, we went down to the Alpena Bar. And this big bus pulls up, great big bus, and these guys start coming off of it, and Bob looked at me, says, "Get up behind those drums" and those

guys started coming in with instruments, and I'm in there sitting in with ah, Ralph Marterie's band members, it was one of the greatest times of my life. So,

CK. Where was the Alpena Bar?

JR. It's where the bank is, right . . . a couple of streets down, right across from the theatre now, where Penny's used to be. What's the name of that bank, First Federal- the new one?

CC. In Cul-, Culligan Plaza? Was it that side of the street or the opposite?

JR. Yeah. No, it was that side of the street.

CC. It's Culligan Plaza then, what, what they call it now.

JR. Yeah, where the big drinking fountain is, or the big fountain is? Right there.

CC. OK.

CK. It was called the Alpena Bar?

JR. Yeah. Alpena Bar.

CK. Was it big?

JR. No, it was very narrow, probably wasn't 20 – 30 feet wide and all the way to the back, and you could come in the back door or the front.

CK. And they all squeezed in there.

JR. We used to pack that place, man. I'm telling you, it was fun. But that's ah, that was a real treat for me. And then of course, I used to sit in out to the Hideaway with Johnny Woytaszek, it was a polka band, I loved to play polkas, that was, that was a fun time. Sunday afternoons out there, they used to pack that place.

CC. I know, yeah.

JR. So I worked with him, I worked with ah, Ted Kapala out there . . .

CC. What did Johnny Woytaszek play at the time, if you were the drummer?

JR. Drums. Drums. I used to just sit in, he'd say, "Get over here."

CC. Just sit in, take a break, ok. Alrighty. Ok.

JR. I was trying to think how it went from there, I, that's when I was in high school . . . and then ah, I got out of high school and I th - I went to one year of college here. I wanted to be a music teacher. No, I wanted . . . before, I got out of college and Mario Fabrini's brother, Flavio, wanted to go to New Jersey. So I looked in a magazine, there was an instrument repair school in New Jersey, and I said, "I'd like to work with my hands – I'd like to repair these instruments." So we jumped in my pickup and we drove right from here, drove right to ah, Newark, New Jersey. And it was right, looked for the address, right downtown and I looked, and they were having a race riot. The, the Spics were on this side, and, and the blacks were on this side, and they were throwing stuff, and I looked up, and there's the address I'm supposed to go to school.

CC. Oops.

JR. And I looked at Flavio and said, "I don't think so." I said, "What do you think?"

He said, "I'm not in it." We turned the truck around and drove right back to Michigan. We were young then, you know, just, I mean, just kept driving. But I saw that, and that took that outta there.

CC: Sure.

JR. That was, out of the equation right there. So, what happened? I, ah, we went back to town and I said, maybe I'll be a music teacher. So I went and, and ah, enrolled in this college for a year and I had John Dovaras was the teacher. And-

CK. Can you give me a year, approximately?

JR. Well, I graduated in '62, that would've been ah, '63, probably.

CK. Ok.

JR. So I went for a year . . . I'm not sure whether I went there first or whether I went . . . I went to Berklee School of Music for a year, out in Boston. I think I might've went there right out of high school. I wanted to be a jazz musician, big band, so I went to Berklee in Boston for a year, and I got out there and everything was going along pretty well until I went to a jam session one night, and I was, a bunch, all musicians sitting there, young guys, and I sat there, and I watched this trio play, and I, I watched this drummer play, and he played ah, they played a couple of numbers, and he got up, and he, no, he was playing, he was playing piano or something, and he got up and played the, the bass for a couple of numbers and I went over to him, said, "Man, that's fantastic! You switched from the piano to the bass"

He said, "Man, I'm a drummer."

And right away, I thought, "Man, I thought I had talent. There's kids out here in their teens that are giants. I mean, they just got so much talent, they can play anything." So I saw that, and that one year was enough, I said, "I'm going on the road." So ah, that was an experience out there, we played Harvard College and we played ah, all the big colleges. They would call Berklee and say, "We need a band."

So somebody would come out in the dorm and say, "We need a drummer, two saxes, ah, you know, trumpet, who wants to go? Who wants to play?" And you'd just come out and sign up and you'd go play at Harvard or whatever one of those big colleges.

CK. You were probably exposed to a lot of different kind of people, too.

JR. Those kids, I remember back, cuz I was living in a, eating bologna sandwiches and stuff, and, and we went to those, and this one party I played at Harvard, they were having a toga party. Those kids got so much money that were going there, I mean they, the got cars and money and flaunting it around like it was ah, it was unbelievable. I never saw that kind of life before.

CC. No.

JR: Here I was from Alpena, we had a little community college; but to see that, it was just amazing. And then we got . . . I was there right about Christmas time or I can't remember what time of year it was, a guy came to see me by the name of Doug Rose – you know Doug Rose, Carole? No?

CC. I don't think so, Jerry.

JR. I said, "Doug, how in the hell did you ever find me?"

And he says, "Well, when we were back in Alpena," he says, "you told me you were going to Berklee School of Music." He said, "I joined the Navy", and he says, "We're docked in, we pulled in down here, so I told my mates, I says anybody want to go? I'm going down to find Berklee School of Music, say 'hi' to Jerry." And he walked in and I just couldn't believe it. So we threw together a jam session up on top of the dormitory roof – there were flat roofs out in Boston, and from here to that wall, was the Chamberlain dormitory - the girls'. So we had about, I don't know, seven, eight musicians up there and started to really

play, and these girls started dancing, and pretty soon the shirts were coming off and everything, and so the cops came, and, and arrested us all for inciting a riot, and we got – we got thrown out of school.

And this one fella that was playing up there, his dad was from, I think it was New England or, or ah, Maine or up in there, but he was, he was in politics. And the fellow's name was Brent that was playing in the band. He was one of us and he says, "I'm going to call my dad."

And his dad came down there and walked in and said, "What do you think you're doing? You get these kids enrolled back into school, right now." Or, I mean, he just, you know – politicians, you know?

CK. Yeah.

JR. And so that took care of that, we weren't thrown out anymore, I mean, we weren't inciting a riot or anything just cuz, you know, the girls were dancing and stuff.

CC. Yeah.

JR. But, uh, that was part of that Berklee deal. Then I just said, "I'm going on the road". So I came back to Alpena and I ah, I went on the road with a band called The All Nighters – played about eight different states. And you'd play maybe in Pennsylvania one night, the next night you'd have to open up in Ohio or, you know, Illinois. I mean, drive all night. So, I did that I think for about six months- and that, I got burned out of that, I couldn't take that. So I went back to ah, Alpena . . .

CK. Where did you find The All Nighters? Was it a local band?

JR. It was a fellow that I had met - it was a friend of Bob Moors. Bob Moors was a Cordorvox player and he had went to school with a fellow named Greg Colby and Greg Colby owned that band, that was his band, The All Nighters. And their drummer got drafted, so Greg called me, and he says ah, "Bob tells me you can play", he said, "would you be interested in going on the road?"

I said, "sure".

CC. So they were a local band, then, Jerry?

JR. No, no – they were from uh, Bob met him at college. Northern, I think, I think Bob went to.

CC. Ok.

JR. Huh?

CC. Ok.

JR. Marquette.

CC. But they weren't a local band, they weren't a local Alpena band, you went with a band from out of town?

JR. No.

CC. Ok.

JR. No, in fact, I think I met him one time before I did, I met Greg. I was playing at The Adobe Room . . . I'm getting mixed up here. I went to, I went to Berklee, then I came back and I think I was going to be a music teacher. I went for a year in Alpena. Didn't like that, he told me, "Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti, do," all that, that – I couldn't do it. I mean, it just didn't, didn't work for me. And I didn't want to – I, I used to teach percussion at Al Ash's studio, when he had, he had, on Chisholm Street there?

CC. Mm-hm.

JR. And parents would bring their son in, and say, "I want him to learn how to play drums just like you."

And I'd say, "Ok". And I think, you know, I'd get \$10 for a lesson or something. Well, after about two lessons with their son, if he wasn't showing any interest, I would just take the parents outside and tell them, I'd say, "You know, I can't take your money."

CC. Mm-hm.

JR. This young fella, he's a nice, nice fella and everything, but he's just not interested. And then there were some kids that would practice and just couldn't do it. And I would tell the parents, I'd say, you know, "He could practice for ten years and he's never going to get this. Just doesn't have it in him."

CK. Did you ever get any girls? Coming through? Play drums?

JR. No, but there's one gal that ended up playing drums in Alpena - Corky. Uh . . . (drums fingers)

CC. Gates.

JR. Gates. Her dad just died. Yeah, Ralph Gates just died. And she, when she was young, always wanted to play drums, always. And I'd say, "Well go on up and beat on 'em," and stuff. But she finally ended up, I don't know if she married a guy that was a drummer or something, but she finally ended up so she was able to play in a group. And that's the only gal I ever saw that just really loved the drums.

CC. Mm-huh, mm-huh.

JR. But, anyway, let's see, after I ah, yeah, I went for a year there and I said "I'm not doing this". So, Bob . . . Bob, ah, Bob Moors was, was going to college with me. And I said, "What do you think?"

And he says, "If you're not, if you're dropping out, I am, too." He says, "What do you want to do?"

I said, "Let's go to California." So, we took the drums and the Cordorvox and uh, we made a big amplifier and had two big speakers in it from jukebox speakers, and we loaded all that stuff in the car, and uh, we took Jeff Gideon with us. The three of us went to California.

CK. Where'd you go? Where did-

JR. We went to Downey, California. We ended up there. There was four guys from Alpena living in an apartment out there. And we had enough money to get an apartment out there for about a month. And ah, I thought we could just go out there and play and there was really a lot of competition out there, and Bob played a Cordovox and that wasn't a real popular instrument out there. So we ran out of money after about a month and we were just about ready to get thrown out of that apartment and, and Bob was standing there, and the own-, the the manager of the apartment said something about "Well, I don't know what we're going to do."

Bob said, "What's the problem?"

He said, "Well, my daughter's getting married", he said, "and the band cancelled out."

Bob, Bob said, "The band cancelled out?" he said, "You want some music?"

And they said, "We're going to need a band."

And Bob said, "Well, we'll play, and we'll barter you some time", you know. So we did; we had a heckuva time. And then, 'course, ah, we couldn't get any more . . . Jeff finally joined the air force, he was starving to death; Bob Moors finally ah, his Grandma Benevenutti sent him some money, he took the Greyhound bus back to Alpena; and I'm there, by myself, so I'm washing everybody's car every day to get enough money to buy a Harvey's Broiler sandwich and I'd eat half at lunch, and then half at ah, - for supper. And

they were letting me stay with them for that. I was staying there with ah, four guys, and in fact, I'll tell you who one of them was, was ah, Ron Winters.

CC. Mm-hm.

JR. Ron Winters – Ron's done pretty well for himself, hasn't he?

CC. The one that did the Alpena Flyer? Is that Ron Winters?

JR. Ron Winters that owns . . . owns, uh, the plant out here.

CC. I think he's the one that re- . . . got the Alpena Flyer, I think.

JR. Yeah, the car.

CC. Yeah.

JR. Yeah, that's the same guy. Yeah.

CC. Yeah, he had that restored and gave it to the museum. He's a musician?

JR. No. No, no.

CC. He's just a friend?

JR. No. They were just four guys livin' out there, Mike Kaczorowski, Ron Winters, Marv Hiske, and, uh . . . there was four guys . . . Glenn White. Glenn's passed away now, I know.

CC. Who?

JR. And then- Glen White. Uh, and then ah, Kenny Werth was out there. I'd, I'd get so hungry and Kenny and Pam lived over in Canoga Park and they'd invite me over about once a month over there, feed me, she'd make a big roast, boy, and that was just – (laughs) I can remember looking at that roast and mashed potatoes, and I was livin' on burgers, you know, one a day. So anyway, I finally, ah, saved up enough money to get back home. So I drove home and I said I'm never leaving home again, unless I've got a union card or I've got . . . So I started – I went to work at The Adobe Room with, ah, with The High Notes, that's when I started with them.

CK. This would've been in the late 60s?

JR. No, I got, I was playing there before I got married, I got married when I was - in 1966, so that would have been in probably '65. Yeah, I graduated in '62, '63, '64, I paid two years in the colleges and, yeah, that was about right. So, I went to work there, and then I, I, Dick Niemi- he signed me up in the pipe fitters. So I went five years apprenticeship in the pipe fitters and I worked at the Adobe Room for eight years.

CK. You had a regular gig there?

JR. Yup. Fridays and Saturdays.

CC. Packed the place?

JR. Well, yeah, God it was packed. Yeah, Bob Ruczynski was a bartender there.

CK. Related to you?

JR. No. No, he wasn't. (laughs) And I don't know how old I was, but I never . . . let's see, I graduated . . . I was eighteen when I graduated in '62, '63, '64, '65 . . . I was probably 20? Maybe? Anyway, uh, Bob used to come up, and say, when they had the little 7-Up bottles? You know, when they were all bottles?

He'd come up and say, "Here, here's one for you." And I'd take a sip of that, and it would be full of vodka and maybe just a dash of 7-Up. He'd say, "Put it behind the curtain over there, get it over there behind the curtain". Remember Bob?

CC. I do.

JR. But anyway, yeah, I played there and I think, I, before I got married, I got married when I, it was 65, and I was playing at the Adobe Room, and I got a call one night from a guy, and he says, "Jerry, you probably don't remember me." He said, "I saw you playing on the road in Illinois." and he said, "I want to send you a ticket", he said, "I want you to come join the band." He said, "We're playing at The Fountainbleu in Miami," and he says, uh, "I'm, I'm going to send you a ticket."

And I said, "Well, geez", I said, I said, "Well actually I'm thinking about getting married," I said. And I said, "I don't, I don't have any money", I said, you know, "I've got drums and everything."

He said, "No, I'll pay for everything." He said, "I'll pay for all the drums." Boy, and he had me on the phone for about 20 minutes and I kept hem-hawin' and I said, "Wow, god, what am I going to do?" I mean, that was the chance of a lifetime, you know. Like a seven piece band.

CK. Were you engaged at the time?

JR. I think I was, or something, but I just, oh, I wanted to go so bad. I didn't. I told him, I said I just can't go.

CC. Wow.

JR. Gotta admit, that was, that was – that would've put me in touch with some real players, there. You know. Best decision I ever made.

CC. Yeah.

JR. Going to celebrate my 50th wedding anniversary next year.

CC. Yeah.

JR. In fact, a year from two days from now.

CC. Ok.

JR. But anyway, uh, yeah, I stayed in Alpena and finished a – we, we did eight years there.

CK. At the . . . what . . . tell me what kind of music The Playboys played.

JR. Standard stuff – you know, at that time, back then, uh . . . the popular band, one of the bands was, uh, what was the guy that played the trumpet? (sings a rhythm)

CK. Herb Alpert?

JR. Herb Alpert was real popular, so we did, you know, stuff like that and uh, anything that would – even some of the rock and roll stuff that was popular we would do.

CC. But the name of the band that you played with – was, was, uh . . .

JR. At the Adobe Room? Was The High Notes.

CC. That was The High Notes. Yeah.

JR. That was Dick Niemi and . . .

CC. Yep.

JR. Bob Rohn and-

CC. That's, that's the recording that I have-

JR. -and Jim LaCross.

CC. -that you weren't there for because you were on the road somewhere.

JR. Yeah, probably recorded that just before I got off the road.

CC. Ok. And you did eight years.

JR. Did eight years there. Trying to think what, did I move to ah, Oscoda, and I had a few bands around there, played at The AuSable Inn there. Just kinda laid off and I just would play . . .

CC. Did you move there because of your work, Jerry?

JR. Yeah.

CC. Because you were . . .

JR. Yeah, Ray French was my stepfather and he was in the coin machine business and uh, they needed, they were having some trouble down there, he says – and I used to help out in Alpena, ah, with my Uncle Tony and, and my stepfather, I used to help out on the route, and he said, "We've got a problem down here, you want to go down and take a look at it?"

And I said, "I'll go down for a while." You know, I was, I was a, ah, I was an apprentice pipefitter. I don't know whether I had just become a journeyman, it's right on the edge, cuz I had to go five years apprenticeship and I did do that. And then I think he asked me to go down there and I said, "I'll go down and try it."

So after a couple of months he said, "What do you think?"

And I said, "Well, I think things are improving.

He says, well, "Can you stay a while?"

So I talked to my wife and she says, "Let's tell him we'll stay for two years." You know, we stayed for ten years, and, and then my stepfather got sick with cancer and died and then we came back and ran that business and for my mother and ended, ended up just selling everything. But, uh, yeah I was always playing in the bands around here just when somebody would call. I never played steady after that. I played The Red Stocking every year, that was fun. That was a ball – that's the most fun I ever had playin' and it was for nothing.

CK. Explain what The Red Stocking is.

JR. Pardon me?

CK. Explain what The Red Stocking is.

JR. Well, It's a show The Girls and The Boys Club used to put on – they used to hire the director from New York-

CC: Mmhuh.

JR. - with all the costumes and everything, they'd ship all that in – they would ship in the director and all the costumes and then you – The Girls Club and Boys Club would get people to, to participate.

CK. Local?

JR. All local talent. Doctors and lawyers, uh, city workers - anybody. So, and it was all donated.

CK. So it was a real community effort it sounds like.

JR. Oh, god it was fun. I don't know why they don't do it today.

CC. I don't either. I don't either. So much talent here in Alpena yet, I mean back then and yet today.

JR. That's the most fun I ever had and like I say, everybody - it was all donated.

CC. But, Jerry, it sounds to me, uh, that you, you playing with different musicians, different groups. What – tell us what your style of music would've been considered?

JR. Well, I'm, I'm, I'm more of a – I like big band,

CC. Yes.

JR. And I like the standard, uh, I like the Frank Sinatra stuff, the more standard dance music from the old era, I guess.

CC. Ok.

JR. And I don't like the real modern, modern jazz but I like just the old Dave Brubeck style of –

CC. Mmhuh.

JR. -something you can hear a good melody to.

CC. Mm hum, and a good . . . so you can keep a good rhythm. Now, when - when you um, when you played in, you were playing for these different venues, and you'd get hired in as the drummer, you must've read notes some way.

JR. I read just enough to keep me out of trouble.

CC. Ok, ok.

JR. Just enough not to hurt me any, just so I could just tell when – the most important thing for a drummer reading music is to see where the rests are. So you're not playing on, on a rest, you know? Playing when somebody else is ah, playing or something, so, ah.

CK. And then there - a lot of it is just listening, right?

JR. Mmhuh.

CK: To the other band members and . . .

JR. Yeah, you gotta pay close attention to the piano player and, and everybody else, yeah – listening is a big part of it. I remember one time, Clem Mason told me, when I was just starting out, he brought that set of drums over and showed me how to do the high hat on two and four, and he was showing me how to play.

CK. The high hat?

JR. Yeah, the cymbals that go up and down? Play that with your left foot – except Bobby Riggs, he plays that with his right foot – he's all screwed up. (laughing) Bobby's a left handed drummer. Anyway, I remember Clem Mason telling me, and it's stuck with me 'till today – he said, "Just remember one thing about a drummer," he says, "The real compliment to a drummer is when the guy comes up from the

audience that says – and says, “Can you play a little louder? We can’t hear you.” And I always remembered that and I’ve had people in the band ask me to play a little louder, you know, cuz I’m always laying in the back just, you know, tryin’ to keep the beat and, uh, it’s worked real well. And, cuz I’ve heard some real bangers get up there and, uh, it’s just overpowering. So I try not to do that, I, I suppose once in a while I do it, especially if you’re playing when Carole’s playing, she, she gets ‘er cranked right up there.

CC. (laughs) Oops. Aaaaah, so. Places to play in and around Alpena, Jerry – you played the Alpena Bar, you played, ah . . .

JR. All of them. All of ‘em. I don’t think there’s any place over the years that I haven’t played. I played all the little community centers, the weddings, you know, the, the anniversaries, the - all the halls.

CC. Ok.

JR. And I played with, uh - I remember one time playing with Bruno Hertz, he played guitar, and Wade Corpus, playing Cordervox. And Wayne’s got a hand about the size of a football. How he can play those little buttons, I don’t know; but we’re playing a wedding, out in, I don’t know where it was, Hawks or Metz or someplace out Posen someplace and we weren’t playing enough polkas, I guess, and about three guys came up to the bandstand and says, “If you bastards don’t start playin’ some more polkas, we’re gonna come up there and beat the shit outa all a youse”. And Wayne looked at – of course, Bruno was a golden gloves champ and he looked at Wayne, and Wayne, nothing Wayne loved to do better than fight.

CC: Yeah.

JR: And they looked at each other and started to laugh, and, and just, I mean, I guess those guys must’ve known, when you can look right in their face and laugh like crazy that . . . (laughs) but I’ll never forget that. Played a lot of weddings; played a lot at the VFW when I was younger.

CC. Really?

JR. I think it was mostly in high school because, uh, we used to play all the proms. We played the Alcona prom.

CC. Mm hm, mm hm . . .

JR. God, there was one story I could tell you that was just funny but I suppose it won’t have to get put down here, but we were playing the Alcona prom one time, and, and on the way there - Jay would drive - Jay Thomas used to play sax and he owned the Siesta Motor Court, and he would drive. So we’d put my big drums in the trunk and at that time, you didn’t have to carry a piano, it would be at the job, so and Bob Rohn played the guitar and then a sax case is all. So we, four of us would drive in one car. So, I wasn’t 21, and Tom wasn’t 21, so Jay would pick up a bottle of schnapps or, or something and we’d drink on the way there – it’s just the way we, we- if you’re brought up as a musician, most of the time, maybe not nowadays, but back in the day, they just nipped.

CC. Yeah.

JR. Anyway, we got there, and Jay was the driver and he, we were drinking beer, and, and some red brandy or something. And we got playing, and we’re playing, and all of a sudden I looked at J-, at Jay and the piano was over here, and here’s Jay and then Bob was over here and Jay was playin’ and all of a sudden he went – like that, and he barfed and that red, that red liquid was goin’ all over everything. And I looked at Tom, Tom looked at me, I said, “Keep playing, Tom!” And Bob Rohn picked Jay up, grabbed that sax in one hand, and he picked Jay Thomas up, threw him over his shoulder, and walked out.

So then, then at the end of the night, the guy, (laughs) the guy that ah, was the running the, the prom, he said, “Well I don’t know what the hell is going on here,” he said, “but, but I don’t think we should pay you!”

And Tom Ferguson said, (laughter) “Well, you gotta pay us,” he said, “we can’t help because one of our guys got the flu!” Oh, gosh, honest to god, I . . . I . . .

CC. A musician's life, Jerry.

JR. Oh, my god, the times that we went through. Tom and I used to sit in the back seat, I can remember different times, and we'd play Millersburg and Lewiston, we were all over the place playin'. And 'course we were too young to drink, but we were drinking, so Tom and I every once in a while get in an argument on the way back. And you know how kids are, arguing, we'd be in the back seat arguing, I can remember Bob Rohn telling Jay "Jay, stop this fuckin' Cadillac, I'm goin' back there, I'm gonna kick shit out of both of 'em!" (laughter) Honest to god, I can remember that like it was yesterday! I still keep in touch with Tom Ferguson. Tom, he's probably one of the smartest people I ever knew. He translate-, last time I said, "What are you working on for a project?" He was translating a book from Russian to English. I mean, just . . .

CK. He lives in town?

JR. He could go to school and skip school for almost a semester, come in and get A's or B's or something like that, you know. That's, he worked for the *Detroit Free Press*, just one of those kinda guys. And, ah, I played for him, he could call me up a few times, I'd go down to Greenfield - he was living in Greenfield - and we'd do a benefit down there. He bought a farm, and he put up a big tent, he'd invite all the farmers and then we'd put on a big . . . he'd put the stage up back there and we'd just, just play. He's in ah, Arkansas I think, now- him and Linda.

CC. Wow.

JR. Linda Crow? Remember her?

CC. That's why, you know

JR. Her dad was a teacher.

CC. Well, of course, I graduated with him. Yep, yep. Aaah . . . so if you think about it, Jerry, really hard, who was your influences? Back when you started?

JR. I was, can tell you exactly the day that it happened to me. I was always in school, in grade school, always tinkerin' with something. My mother had a Spinet piano, you know that Mamie Mainville, I took lessons from her for-

CC. Yeah, yeah.

JR. - for three years. 3 years, I think - and I kick myself today 'cuz I love piano and I, I didn't stick with it. But anyway, I was at the, at the Maltz Theater, and I was coming back from the Maltz-, it's the State Theater today. And I was coming, I used to live on Chisholm Street next to Jerry's Beer and Wine store across from the Karpus-Hunter Funeral Home, and I was coming back and we cut through Montgomery Ward's and were coming down the alley by Montgomery Ward's and the old Owl was there.

CC. Mmhuh.

JR. And I heard this music coming out of that place and I - the windows were up about that high and I, I looked around, and there was a cement block and I drug that cement block over there and got up and I looked inside and there was Saul Saretsky playin' and Joe Emerson, and Tory Osgerby, and all the guys they were all sittin' in. And there was Howie Arnold, just everyone, there probably was a dozen musicians in there, and they were playin' some good Dixieland and they were just raisin' the roof. That's when McDougall owned it.

CC. Ok.

JR. Danny McDougall. Fact, I think the brothers owned it. But I can remember that moment just like it was right now. And I got up there and I knew right then, hearin' that music and watchin' those guys, said, "I gotta do that. That's what I wanna do, right there."

CC. Mm hm, mm hm.

JR. It's that simple. I actually met some of the best musicians in my life when I moved to Florida. I was 45 when I left Alpena and went to Florida. And Florida, Florida's like a melting pot for musicians, I mean, you know, when they want to get out of the cold, or they're retiring, and-god, I met some great musicians there.

CK. Do you ever play down there?

JR. Yeah, I played all over, from Tampa to Ocala to Gainesville. I live in Homosassa. So I've made that, that circuit down there; but I played with a fellow by the name of Dave Ovarik, played sax, and ah, he's the best musician I ever worked with, ever. Lotta good musicians in Florida. And there are some guys from Alpena – Carey Deadman, I was telling you.

CC. Mm hm.

JR. Made it real big – he's big in the musician's world. Ah, I don't know who else around here; but ah, oh, I'll tell you a short story that's a good one. Playin' with Chet London, Chet called me and we were playing at The AuSable Inn down in Oscoda, and I said "Who's going to be working with us?" He said, "I got a guy by the name of Darryl Dybka comin' up from Detroit." He said, "He's a young kid." He said, "Wait 'till you hear him play." So we played the job that night and I noticed the first break we took, Chet and I are goin', goin' after a shot and beer, and this kid takes this little keyboard about that big and he goes over in the corner and he's practicing. And, ah, so anyway, I ah, I, I knew he's going to be a good someday. I told him, I says, "You're going to be good player someday, Darryl."

So, to jump from that to two years ago, Bob Moors invited us to go to Mackinac Island for his anniversary- and Bob Young. So we're sitting there and having - in the dining room, and I hear this piano player. And I says, "God, that guy plays nice." I said, "I'm going to go see who it is."

My wife said, "I'll go with you."

So I walked in there, and I looked at this kid and he looked kinda familiar. And I'm lookin' at him, and he turns around and to me, and he says, "How ya doin', Jerry?"

And I says, "I don't recognize you."

"It's Darryl Dybka."

I says, "My goodness." I said, "What have you been doin'?"

He says, "Well," he said, "I moved to, ah, after I saw you", he said, "I moved to ah, Nashville," and he said "I met up with Chet Atkins". And he said, "I started doin'— I did some albums for him, and he said, "I've done some writing, arranging, for Chet," and he said "I've done a lot of stuff," and then he said, "I won the Grammy."

I said, "You did?!" I mean, here's a kid that I saw when he was like, seventeen, and he was at the top of the thing – he had won the Grammys in, ah, in ah, in Nashville, whatever it is, country award or something.

CC. Mm hm.

JR. You know, he wrote the album, scored everything, put it together and, and –

I said, "What are you doing here?"

He says, "You know, it's so busy in that world," he said, "doing everything." He said, "I play by myself here", he said, "It's nice to come here," he said, "I don't even bring my family." He said, "I'm just here by myself - playing." And he said, "Sometimes I write," but he says, "it's just nice to be here alone."

CC. Hmm.

JR. So, (laughs) he went from nothing right up to the top, and-

CC. Yep.

JR. Anyway, well, good to see you, Don. (Don Deadman enters the room)

CK. Ok, so you talked about your first drum set-

JR: We used-

DD: That was a Leedy set.

JR. Yeah, that was a Leedy, but that was an old, great, big bass drum on that.

DD: Yeah.

JR: But when I went to Berklee School of Music, my Mother bought me a set of drums and had 'em shipped to ah, Berklee and that was a set of Ludwig's- Hollywood outfit. And I played those- I still have them - I played those for, uh, up until about five years ago, and five years ago I had an operation on my leg, and they were just too big too haul around, so I bought what they call a traveler's set. And it's a set where the bass drum is here, and the next sized drum fits inside of that one, and the next one fits inside of that one, and they all fit in so you only have one case to carry.

CK. Like Russian dolls.

CC. Yep.

JR. I never played with dolls, I wouldn't know. (all laugh) I don't know. The only doll I ever played with is actually the one that's waiting for me out there-

CC. - the one that's waiting for ya . . .

JR. -and we've been married 50 years next year. But, uh, yeah, that's what I'm playing now and ah, in fact, Clem Mason, before he passed away, was going to donate a set of drums to me, and his daughter called me and she said, "Jerry, my Dad's got a set of drums and wants to give 'em to ya."

And I said, "You know, I just bought a set of Pearl's" - I've had a lot of sets of drums, but I said, "I just got a set of Pearls and I just sold them, but", I said, "I'll tell you who could use a set of drums is the junior high."

And she said, "My God, that's a good idea." So she called Don, uh. . . (drums fingers)

DD. Parrish.

JR. Don Parrish, and took 'em over there and they're probably still there today, I don't know. But, uh, yeah I'm still with a small set now. Most important thing is, ah, cymbals. I got cymbals that I first bought in Detroit at the drum shop when I was, uh, you know, probably a freshman in high school. Yeah, Zildjian cymbals are . . . if you get a good one, you don't want to get rid of it, you know.

CC: Mmhuh.

JR: But the drums, you can beat on anything.

CK. Talk about the brushes a little bit, would you?

JR. Uh . . . I'd, I'm a brush ma . . . I'd probably be playing more brushes than anybody around, I think. 'Cause I like brushes, I like the sound . . . uh, they're more in the background, they lay down a good beat, you can hear 'em, you can feel 'em there, but you don't really necessarily have to hear 'em. You know, they're keeping the beat, and they're there, and they sound nice, and they're not overbearing, and, uh, so I like those, and you can play very tasty with a set of brushes. You know, and you can be loud with them if you hit 'em on the rim, you can get a rim shot with them for an accent, but basically, I just, I like to be in there and hear that rhythm and I *really* like to play with a guitar player on rhythm. You know, a drummer and a, and a good guitar player and a bass player, then the rest of the people can do what they want because they, they've got a good, solid background, you know.

CC: Mmhuh.

JR: But, uh, yeah, I like brushes.

CK. Ok.

CC. So, in the beginning, you went from your, sounded to me like your first paid job was \$11.

JR. Eleven bucks- Catholic Central High School.

CC. Aaand so . . .

JR. Bob LaMarre. (chuckle)

CC. From there?

JR. Bob LaMarre and Don Davis.

DD: I know Don and Bob.

CC. So basically, today – the pay today is what, Jerry? Do we get paid today?

JR. Uh, I play most of my jobs are free, unless I get a, a New Year's job or something . . . in Florida – in Florida, they pay pretty good for New Year's - you can ah, make anywhere from 350 – 600 bucks apiece on a New Year's Job down there.

CC: Yeah.

JR: But they got the big clubs down there, the big golf clubs and all that, but most of my stuff today is, uh . . . well, not most of it – you know, if we play any of the clubs around my area in Florida, they pay, uh, it's about a hundred bucks apiece, hundred and twenty five, something like that.

CC. Ok, ok. Do you have the places to play, uh, here in your hometown that you used to have?

JR. I don't hardly know anybody in this hometown anymore – the young guys that are playing now are great. Uh, I can't stay awake long enough to go down to The Black Sheep, here. They tell me there's some great talent there, but they don't start 'till – you know, I live 30 miles north of Alpena-

CC. Mmhmm.

JR. -and if, if they don't start 'til 8:30, 9:00, I'm sleeping. (laughter)

CK. Do they still have music at the Hideaway?

JR. Not that I know of – I haven't been to music at The Hideaway for years.

CC. Seldom.

JR. Yeah. Uh, my favorite place to go anymore is, uh, uh, The Maplewood Tavern – they got good musicians, uh, the food's good, the bandleader's a little rough at times (chuckle) but, most of my stuff, uh, I have more fun playing free anymore because they can't throw ya out or they can't fire ya or anything, so . . . (chuckle) Yeah . . . Ok, thanks, guys. Thanks, Cindy.

CK. Thanks, Jerry.

JR. Ok. Cindy is it? Thanks, Cindy. ~~Ok, if you, ah, I was thinking about pictures and stuff . . . did you . . . ?~~
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