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Lester Goodman [00:00:23] I'm Lester A. Goodman and this is the Chicago Dance History Project.

Jenai Cutcher [00:00:28] Excellent. You're a pro, you've done that before, huh? [laughter] Okay so, I don't even know where to start with if you, Mr. Goodman. But let's start from the beginning and just get a really brief overview of your childhood. You're from Chicago, right?

Lester Goodman [00:00:54] Right. Born and raised and educated right here in the city. And I trained at the Art Institute and got an honorable mention certificate. And I trained with Tuskegee Airmen, and every year they'd give them fairs, fundraisers. And I had them, those that are living here the chapter here in Chicago, the "DODO's", D-O-D-O. And so I trained them, those that are here -- there's only a few living now -- in routines; I'd set dances for them. They did their own performance for the public, there were fairs. And I traveled naturally. I traveled with choreography in Philadelphia at the -- what is the name of that, oh my, I'm trying to think of -- the opera house where I was in Langster. It was in Langster, that's where it was, that opera house. "Miss Evers' Boys." You know that, that's the study, study of the same team, the -- there was a -- had syphilis, remember that. And I worked with them, and here I choreographed at that show, in Langston when I was up here.

Jenai Cutcher [00:02:39] Wow.

Lester Goodman [00:03:00] I was with Katherine Dunham. I formed my own dance company, the Joseph Holmes Dance Theatre, and they traveled here and abroad. And I was taught tap by Sammy Dyer.

Jenai Cutcher [00:03:10] Oh, wow!

Lester Goodman [00:03:25] Yes. And I had ballet training under Ruth Page. And a fellow from Russian who studied with Nijinsky, Alexander, Alexander Neikov. And he had a studio in Chicago right at the corner of Washington --- I mean, Wabash and Van Buren, that building that's there on the second, yes. And, mm, so much...

Jenai Cutcher [00:04:08] You've done a lot, yeah. Well, let's go back for a second. I think we should state for the record: when were you born?

Lester Goodman [00:04:17] July the fourth, one o'clock on a Sunday, 1915. That was the year. And of course, that's when World War, the first -- World War I broke out in that year, and so --

Jenai Cutcher [00:04:30] So you've seen a lot?

Lester Goodman [00:04:30] Oh yes.

Jenai Cutcher [00:04:46] And what neighborhood did you grow up in?

Lester Goodman [00:04:47] Hm?

Jenai Cutcher [00:04:47] What neighborhood did you grow up in?

Lester Goodman [00:04:53] 5208 South LaSalle [5208 S LaSalle St]. On one side of the street, it read, that area was LaSalle right up from 51st to 53rd. We were blocked in, like: on the west side of the street were houses; on the east side of the street was a big back alley wall. With a back alley railroad track, big wall. No houses. It had a backlot for a sidewalk, with you know and, but no houses.

Lester Goodman [00:05:35] And the street was never paved. Never. And even until the day I rang, came in and took it over... [laughter] and I often drive by and see where I lived. One end was the commissary for the trains.

Jenai Cutcher [00:05:58] M-hm

Lester Goodman [00:05:58] And at the other end, it was like, it was blocked off because the street, you know, with the houses on that still. You'd have to, when you'd get to 53rd, you would have to go east or west, because that's where the houses on that side. But then you'd make a right -- if you made a right turn, then make a left turn, then it's called Grove Street. Nothing but trees like you see in Washington. You know how the trees --

Jenai Cutcher [00:06:43] Yes.

Lester Goodman [00:06:45] Avenue of trees, and -- oh! And oh. And see there was cobble-, cobblestones. Oh, from State Street to Woodward was cobbled. After there the streets were paved, coming in. There was a dime coke open right at Pedro, which was the next street, right there at 51st. And on the, on the, at 53rd and Woodward, on the west, on the west side of the street, was a firehouse. That-- they had an engine up drawn by two white horses. And then the, and then the, and they had a chimney going, like a big chimney going in the center. And the ropes, you know, go on the side of this like -- it's like, you know, I think you can -- like a cab or something, chimney going in the center. And it was there for years, many years.

Lester Goodman [00:08:20] And then they were all -- and the streetcars were green. They had straw seats. You get, you got in on the back; there was a conductor. You got in on the back but you always exit at the front with the conductor with your ticket that you paid when you got on one end, go in and take a seat. And then you'd get ready to get up, and go out the front and down the stairs. And, [claps] boy.

Jenai Cutcher [00:09:04] Well --

Lester Goodman [00:09:04] That's it.

Jenai Cutcher [00:09:04] Yeah, yeah. And so what was your first experience with dance? How did you start dancing?

Lester Goodman [00:09:13] I started dancing at five years old. And my mother she was a person into, she loved the vaudeilles. And she used to take me to ... there was a theater -- 31st and State and Grand Theatre -- and that's all where all shows came in for like, for a week. Butterbeans and Susie, Ethel Waters would come with the, with the show. Jake and Morla they'd come in with the show. Alicia Everett and the Whitman Sisters, they'd come in for a show, and when they... And anyway, my mother would take me there every week because she loved it. And I--they were dancers. And the Whitman sisters had two younger brothers about this high [holds hand shoulder height]. Pops, they called, Pops in the

middle, Louis and Louis [Louis Williams]. And Pops was the son of Alice Whitman. She danced -- oh, she was a beautiful dancer. She danced just like Eleanor Powell.

Jenai Cutcher [00:10:23] Yeah!

Lester Goodman [00:10:23] Yes. And I always thought Eleanor Powell and I/Alice were guess... You'd took from her, they both had the same kind of [dances] with their bodies. Oh they, oh, they were great. And everything I'd see them do, I would go home and I would do it, practice. I would go to the movies and see all the musicals. Whatever I saw, I'd come home and I'd practice. I learned backflips -- everything just to watch it. My mother took me -- I was about 7-years-old -- my mother took me to the Owl Theatre. They always had amateur night. I would sing for that. My mother sitting all proud, everybody ... The Charleston was the rage then, and I knew every step that was in the Charleston. I got on stage, the woman asked, and then said, "What do you want me to play," because we have a pianist playing. I didn't know what to say. They chose the music: "Turkey in the Straw." [Sings] -- no. [Sings] And [laughter] I only did the beat. I knew I had to lose my -- I jumped, I was jumping up over my [laughter], I don't know. When I came out -- and they put their hands up over your heads, you know, they do down the line... And for some reason, I did win a -- would you believe -- a live chicken. [Laughter] Someone gave me a live chicken. But my mother was like, this with her back [slouches back in chair], because that's what I went up for...and all the friends who came, they just knew I was gonna win first prize, seven years old and doing the Charleston, flips and all. Ooh, my mother was like this [slouches back in chair.] And here I come with this live chicken. [Laughter]

Jenai Cutcher [00:12:44] I don't know who I feel sorry for more, you or the chicken.

Lester Goodman [00:13:11] Well, I took him home and one day I came home -- I named him Pete -- I came home, there was no Pete. And I came and sat down for dinner --

Jenai Cutcher [00:13:26] There was Pete.

Lester Goodman [00:13:26] And I did not eat it, yeah. That, so...

Jenai Cutcher [00:13:35] So, that was your first paying gig, I guess.

Lester Goodman [00:13:38] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [00:13:49] And then a there was I said, I... There was a team called Chilton & Thomas. Carol Chilton and her husband, and they were a tag team. And their and -- her mother wanted me to... My mother let me go with them, and have, and I'd be too, so that I could be like for her daughter, company for her daughter. And my mo- father said, "No, no." So, I lost that opportunity of traveling then and... Because Chilton was white and her ... so I lost -- she married a black man, a mulatto at 18. Her mother didn't want her married, but she did. So, anyway.

Jenai Cutcher [00:14:49] That must have been a big deal back then.

Lester Goodman [00:14:51] Oh yeah, and everybody took to me this, because my mother didn't cut my hair until I was five, five years old. My hair was down to here [points to shoulder]. And the first time she cut it touched to the ground, and the next time, more. But then I went to... I performed my own act, and started dancing in two of the nightclubs: Rhumboogie, DeLisa. And while I was working at the Rhumboogie, Carmen Jones had a

touring company and happened to come here. And they came to the cabaret, they came to the Rhumboogie where I was performing. And at the center where you come in, at their table, they asked, "How would you like to be with us?" And you know my answer: 'You know I would--yes!'

Lester Goodman [00:16:07] So, and then I found Carmen Jones, I fell with them for a year; we traveled all around. And when I left Carmen Jones, I performed my act, another act. And so I traveled, played Cafe Society, which I explored. I was always fortunate to get the right places. I played the Eldorado, which became the major one on the South Side. It was up at State. Daniel Andrew [by ear] who became a great person here, was the bartender and people used to come all over to the Eldorado -- it was the Eldorado then -- because of him. He could pour mixed drinks from up here and he could mix so many drinks, and they wouldn't mix. Somehow he had it where so that he made it a color, you know? And anyway, as I said I worked with Dunham. The night when she was playing at the Chez Paree in Chicago, and when I went with her -- I didn't travel with her because... She liked my dancing, had it for my dancing, and I had the ballet training, as I told you, from this man from Russia.

Lester Goodman [00:17:50] And at that time, it was very segregated, right. So, Judge Lyle, Judge H. Lyle- great judge here, hard on gangsters. And his house was always guarded. My, my the woman that I -- the woman who I married -- her mother worked for him. And so she took me out one time to mop the floors for her and he said, "Oh." And he's the one who sent me to this, to learn my dancing ability, Russian dancer. Russian dancer, he had me come and audition, and he was amazed at what I could do. So, he said he was very sorry that he could not have me come into his classes. But he taught me privately. I'd have to come early in the morning, and he would train me. Because he said if I was put in a class, the parents might pull there [rubs fingers together to signal money], you know. But he taught me ballet, and he amazed at my leaps and my heights, doing it [...]. And then when I left him, then I went to train with Petroff [Paul Petroff] in New York, ballet. I love ballet. Although I had had tap under Sammy Dyer, I just had love for ballet. So anyway, but as I said, it was at thing that, I couldn't get into it, but I loved it and took it. I could never get into any of the companies here, you know.

Lester Goodman [00:20:10] So, then in 19 -- I think it was 1940, something like that -- World War; the war broke out, and they put a freeze on travel. We could not travel. And there was a dance company from Bali that was here and they could not get back, so they rented a three-story silk home on Huron street. It was Devi Dja -- that was the leader of the dance company. They were little Balinese, they were short people like this. So I, worked, I worked there and trained with them. They -- ooh, they loved me, and they wanted me to [hands crisis-cross], you know? And at that time, I looked like them. You know, I -- people always mistook me for else because of my hair and all that. And so anyway, I stayed with them and that's when I started -- I got away from ballet because I could never get into a ballet company. I began to do Balinese dancing. And then I met Devi Dja -- I mean I got her from New York. She was from India and she taught me Hindu. So I made the combination of the two: I mixed Balinese and Hindu, because, and then I began to... [dancing poses] you know, because you use your eyes your... I love Hindu because Devi does the dances, sort of religious, because this is very -- you work from within. You know? And the depth of nature, like fish swim, you know, the whatever-you-call-it, the elephant-- you do all gestures. And when you dance, it was just-- you know you're dealing with nature. And that -- I stayed with that type of dancing. I played Ed Sullivan; I was on his show. I played all the separate animals. And they never booked me into the black house, because they said they didn't think people would appreciate Boogie, Asians. We would

always sit in plush, separate bus and things like that to perform. And I traveled out in the states on this separate bus. And I met Rajah from India, and he said -- and I was working for Cafe Society. I mentioned I did work for Powell Theatre, yes. But when Rajah said to me, I went -- and he's a Caucasian brother you know-- and she's said, "Tell him where you're from." I said 'The states.' I just used that as 'the states,' meaning [gestures around room]. She said, "See, I told you." And he said, nothing, because they call -- I didn't know that -- but they called India "the state." And so, and she said "tell them," and I said, 'I was born here in Chicago!' He said, "I could have sworn you were one of us!" Because he -- [laughter]. He says -- now, he was a fair Indian. But he said, "We have--we're just like you, skin coloring and all. And you're doing --" and then I had to go through the history of how we're... you know, yep. And oh, I've had a beautiful life in dance.

Jenai Cutcher [00:25:00] Sounds like it.

Lester Goodman [00:25:00] Yeah, so.

Jenai Cutcher [00:25:00] What was the act that you did at the Rhumboogie and Club DeLisa, what was that like?

Lester Goodman [00:25:23] Oh, that was beautiful. Well, because that was the epitome of Black clubs here in Chicago. And most... At the Rhumboogie it was mixed. It was always half and half. But at the DeLisa, 90 percent of his patrons were always white. Yes. But Mike, Mike DeLisa, he -- oh, was crazy about me. And I worked there and I was their nightlife. He'd seen me dance with --people would think I was something else... I would say, 'Well no, no, I'm American.' Well anyway, dancing and doing all this, and it was wonderful. I would work all week, under the bills of a lot of big stars: Eddie Schafer, the Four Chops -- or not the Four Chops, the Four Sons. They were a ...you ever heard of them?

Jenai Cutcher [00:26:36] Mm-mm [No].

Lester Goodman [00:26:38] Anyway, I worked with Viola, Anita O'Day -- you ever heard of her? Yes. And also with Sophie Tucker at a club in ... Town Casino in Buffalo, New York. And also, McCormick and Viola, and they were, they were my friends. And I went to Canada and there was a team called Osawa and Shijaka. They were a white team during, you know. And my [inaudible] black. And they came-- I was working a club called Michel -- and they came. They had heard something about somebody doing ... at this club. So they came to Michel's. And Michel was a white, and [Rockhead's] the black club right around the corner, but I was working at Michel's. And then Michel would, when they came, I didn't even know they were there. And so when they, just [inaudible] they, "Somebody want to meet you," and they took me to their table and they...I didn't miss them. And I, that night, I forgot about--Shijana and Osaka? He was white, but she was pure Indian. For some reason, they were a team and they were doing, naturally, Hindu dance. And they traveled. And I also met Kosty and Heirs. So, there was only three of us doing it, two white. So but--oh! And then later on, there was Beatrice and -- what was her sister's name-- the Crabb, their last name was Crabb... sisters, that's the way they were known, the Crabb sisters. Well, one of them got married and stopped dancing. And Beatrice decided she wanted to get back into it. And she had an audition. And she had heard of me, and she picked me and a white boy to train with her. And you know, she had, she was a woman and two men on her... [laughter] I mean, oh it was-- oh, I'm telling you, I just...

Jenai Cutcher [00:29:58] I didn't realize that -- actually, Ella, can I ask you to move that chair, so it would really close to the door? I didn't realize that Asian dance was a part of the club circuit at all.

Lester Goodman [00:30:16] Of the culture?

Jenai Cutcher [00:30:16] Of the club circuit, of club performing.

Lester Goodman [00:30:16] Oh, yes. You had the Crabb Sisters, as I told you those, those that, you know, they all -- because they always had what you call a novelty act. That's the way the night... They would have a singer, comedian and the novelty act, and a chorus line. That was the format of your club. I mean your... and so, yep.

Jenai Cutcher [00:30:51] So, you were the novelty act?

Lester Goodman [00:30:55] I was -- we were always, yep, the novelty act. But we were so good, that we would always be next to closing. Whoever was going to close, we were right before them.

Jenai Cutcher [00:31:12] Wow.

Lester Goodman [00:31:12] Always, always counted back, you know.

Jenai Cutcher [00:31:14] Yeah. And how long was your set? Was it like a--

Lester Goodman [00:31:20] Hm?

Jenai Cutcher [00:31:20] How long was your act?

Lester Goodman [00:31:23] You mean the time?

Jenai Cutcher [00:31:23] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [00:31:27] I remember because I always told a story. I told one where the... I had two girls working with me. Like, they are always two or three. And I had two girls. And I had one as the "pearl" and one as the octopus. I had underwear, shoes and buttons, small or large, just up on the sleeves. And, her hair was covered because, you know, and she... And then a helmet made for the head. Moss green was the color of the outfit and these buttons. Well anyway... and down near the thighs, the buttons you know-- because it's tight-fitting underwear you know-- buttons, and they'd go from small to large, you know. And then, what would happen, I would come out and my "Pearl" -- she was very fair. She wore a wig down to here [points to waist]. her name was Mary Smith. And she'd come in -- and she was very fair. A lot of people always thought she was white, but no. And my outfit was dark, darker than me. And I had a shell made, and I'd open the shell and the Pearl was right in it, and all the Pearl costume in tight-fit and all. And the lighting's salmon pink, like those big brass something to touch, you know. And then people would get [gasp], they would gasp because of the picture and all. After the, he sight at the end of the curtain call at 1 am. And then I came out with a --what do you call it just the lapels and the soft parts, tie, you know tie it around, and I'd come out. Then I was doing my Balinese. And I'd come out and do whatever, and then I'd go over to the coat. And I had a knife, and I'd start cutting her out, and then I'd raise the shell. The people would gasp AND I'd take the pearl out of the--she'd rise up out and come up, and we'd go to each other and dance,

like a love dance. And then the octopus was beginning to come up, and the people [inaudible] because, when she starts, they're surprised at that. And the octopus attacks, we get into a duel, you know, and I wrap one of the... around the arms, around the neck you know, and drop the knife, you know, buried a bit. I-- she and the Octopus begins to sway during my cuts, the Pearl runs back to the -- because she's been crouching in her shell -- she goes back and pulls the top, and just as she pulls the thing, the octopus falls over the shell.

Lester Goodman [00:35:50] And people, people saw a different thing. One woman said, looked at it -- as I told you it was a time of segregation. She says, "You know what..." One she had thought that I was -- the one girl was so fair, white and the other was dark-- like discrimination, and that I was there to save, you know... I never looked at it like that. All I knew was I... [laughter]. But oh. And the club--I worked one club in Atlantic City. Only had to do the shell one time. The people came for the first show -- and usually after the first show you pay another dinner because you stayed. They would stay because they wanted to see the show, and [laughter] the owners, they did that purposely. So, they only showed you in the middle. They'd give you three shows; I only had to do it in the middle. If you weren't there to see it in the middle, so it is, you know. And then they would have to come back; if they missed it, someday they would have to come back. Oh...

Jenai Cutcher [00:37:21] Sounds like a long way from "Turkey in the Straw."

Lester Goodman [00:37:22] Oh, thank you.

Jenai Cutcher [00:37:28] Did you ever meet the Whitman sisters?

Lester Goodman [00:37:29] Oh yes, yes. Alice was real fair, blond hair, beautiful body. Eleanor Powell had a beautiful body, too. But Eleanor -- but Alice was like-- oh, I can't describe it. She was almost like statue: soft and curvy. And when she danced, definitely her and Eleanor Powell, when she danced, she'd, "[Dancing] "Ooh, aren't I cute..." She'd talk during her dancing, making gestures. But, yeah, yeah. I went with Harold Nicholas' chorus. And I like, Fayard He's kind of, he'd stand up, cool. But Harold, while -- Harold was married to Dorothy Dandridge, you know. And they had a daughter, who was ... [inaudible] And I often wonder, after Katherine, after Dandridge died--about the child, because they were into it, or someone was distant. and I always wondered.

Jenai Cutcher [00:38:49] Yeah, I don't know actually.

Lester Goodman [00:39:01] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [00:39:01] That's a good question.

Lester Goodman [00:39:01] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [00:39:01] Yeah. So, the Balinese company that was here --

Lester Goodman [00:39:04] Devi Dja.

Jenai Cutcher [00:39:04] Yeah, how did you find out them in the first place?

Lester Goodman [00:39:19] I'm trying to think... Oh, I know they were telling me about this team, this company that was here, and I went to... What happened, as I told you, they

rented this three-story on Huron. On the first floor, they had set up dining, and the rooms and things were above. And they had these little stoves. They'd come out and they had-- you sat on cushions about so thick and all on the floor. And you'd come out, and put the stove in front-- little stoves was like this--and prepare your meal. And then they'd perform. And I, and that's when I'd, when I'd come in. They said, "Yes." And then after I got there and they saw how well I adjusted and how I choreographed, they fell in love and wanted me to travel. And I said 'No, 'I can't.' And, so...

Jenai Cutcher [00:40:38] But you-- had you already been studying tap and ballet at this point?

Lester Goodman [00:40:46] I started studying Balinese. After I went on Sullivan, then I started training, rehearsing with them.

Jenai Cutcher [00:40:54] OK. And was that before or after you had studied with Sammy Dyer?

Lester Goodman [00:41:00] Oh, that's after, after.

Jenai Cutcher [00:41:02] OK, OK.

Lester Goodman [00:41:07] Dyer was first. I hadn't even started studying my ballet. And he had the Dyerettes, you heard of them?

Jenai Cutcher [00:41:18] Mm-hm.

Lester Goodman [00:41:18] And one of them, she and I are still friends today. I'm much older than her. Gloria, her name is Gloria Broussard. And she went, she went into, she looks like--if she walked in, you would think she's Spanish. She's short, light, and looked like -- she doesn't look Black -- she has features that look Hispanic. And she went into Spanish dancing, and she traveled with a Spanish company and so...

Jenai Cutcher [00:42:02] Wow, we'll have to talk to her, too.

Lester Goodman [00:42:04] Oh, in fact, she called me today because of my show. She's been training some boys; they're called the Mambo Aces. One is Black and one is white, and she's training them. They are terrific; they're going to be in my show. So, she called me today, because, to tell me -- she always called me in the morning. I would wake to see her. And I, people -- I don't mind when they call, but you could [laughter] because I want to go back to sleep. And I always glad to hear from them, you know. But she called me today because she's come by this evening and bring me the resume of the boys and photo for my program.

Jenai Cutcher [00:42:59] OK, so your show is coming together?

Lester Goodman [00:43:02] Oh, it's all set.

Jenai Cutcher [00:43:02] It's all set?

Lester Goodman [00:43:04] I have, in my, a person. She's black, beautiful person. Bigger, curvy thing, who sings opera and training voices, and she's going to perform for me, and so... I knew a model. A friend of mine, had a model agency, and she taught modeling. And

this girl I, at the time--now I always worked with Aida. Aida Gibson, she was teaching. She still teaches. And so I, search. Clara, I help her with her shows out and I put on the number and she had each one of her models to portray a country. They had to stage a dance number. And she was, this girl was about sixteen then, so then... She's going to sing for me. And I had another girl, who, she was a jazz singer; she had a voice like Yma Sumac. She could do the [singing]. Have you ever heard of her?

Jenai Cutcher [00:44:47] No.

Lester Goodman [00:44:47] Get, go to the library and look... She's a Peruvian in [inaudible] And she, she sings like the birds I think, and she got... [singing]. She can go low [singing]. I had two albums of her.

Jenai Cutcher [00:45:19] Okay, I'll have to check her out.

Lester Goodman [00:45:21] Yeah, Yma Sumac.

Jenai Cutcher [00:45:21] Okay.

Lester Goodman [00:45:22] I think it's spelled, Y-U-M-A, S-U-M-A-C, I think.

Jenai Cutcher [00:45:29] Okay.

Lester Goodman [00:45:29] I hope I'm spelling it right.

Jenai Cutcher [00:45:32] Okay.

Lester Goodman [00:45:34] Yma Sumac, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [00:45:36] Good to know. So, let's talk about Miss Dunham.

Lester Goodman [00:45:41] Oh, she used to always... ballet training -- it's good, but she says, "You're not doing ballet!" Now, she had studied with Ruth Page. Did you know that?

Jenai Cutcher [00:46:01] I did!

Lester Goodman [00:46:01] Oh, you did? Okay. And so she had ballet training. But when she went to the West Indies, and learned those dances and brought them back... [begins hitting the table with both hands] [inaudible] get your feet into the ground, you know. Where we're up [straightens back] --you had to loosen...

Jenai Cutcher [00:46:22] Yeah, you drop your weight--

Lester Goodman [00:46:26] Yes, and so anyway ... and she al- "Try to, pull-- my [straightens back]." And when I--"No, no, get down." She says, "We're not doing ballet now! That--this not ballet, right!" right. She couldn't;t talk against ballet because she herself was... [laughter] dancing with Ruth Page. So, yeah and... But I learned a lot from her, because was a great disciplinarian. She ... when she set rehearsals at ten 'o clock, nine -- we always rehearsed early in the morning, like 10. Not one minute after 10 -- 10. If you came in there, now if you walked in one minute after 10, we're on the floor, started and she'd say... She said, "Miss Ellis," -- Lucille Ellis was one of her dancers. Tommy Gomez-- that was one of the principal dancers. Tommy just walked in. Something else she said, and

she says-- and Lucille Ellis would go over to the where he's sitting now. He's docked. He can't rehearse, he has to sit there. She wouldn't let you rehearse that day; you'd sit and watch. She -- "You do not..."

Lester Goodman [00:48:16] That taught me time. That's why I'm always early. And when I set my time to come here, I thought, 'straight-shoot.' But we got all in, all up in that traffic out there on the north side. Boy, all these cars and trucks and pulling in -- oh, it was like a maze [laughter]. So anyway, and so I [inaudible] as far as that. But I didn't, but she -- for some reason, she didn't like me. I didn't know if it's because I knew her ballet like she did, plus could do her, was doing her... She's teaching everybody, but of course I had to come and learn the routine and all. But I think, but she-- but she needed me because Tommy Gomez had left.

Lester Goodman [00:49:21] What happened... she was, they were working at Chez Paree, and Tommy... The phone rang. Tommy answered the phone, and he said, "Katherine, phone." She went to the phone, she came back. She said, "Don't you ever call me Katherine in public. I'm Miss Dunham, Miss Dunham or Madame D. No first name." And he had started, started with her one-on-one! When she first started her company, here in Chicago, and they rehearsed at a place called Warwick Hall here in Chicago. They were, that's where she got her company right here. And, and coming on then, "Kathy,"-- they were all on one level, "Kathy." But now when she became -- when Hurok [Sol Hurok] came in, and took and made us... Now, I think he put all that in her head: they were to respect her. He changed her. "Because she was above them"... he put that feeling into her. He's the one who put that feeling into her. And so... and he [Tommy Gomez] said, "I'll be with you 'blah blah blah.'" He says well, "Get you another dancer." That's when he walked away from her, Tommy Gomez.

Jenai Cutcher [00:51:23] Wow, I did not know that story--

Lester Goodman [00:51:23] Yes, and I stepped in. But I, but I, I never would travel with her. She kept me...

Jenai Cutcher [00:51:37] So, were you there just for classes and rehearsals or did you perform?

Lester Goodman [00:51:41] No, I had to, I had to be -- oh, I had to be at rehearsals. And then the performances. Oh, I...

Jenai Cutcher [00:51:46] Do you remember the works that you performed?

Lester Goodman [00:51:55] The works?

Jenai Cutcher [00:51:56] Which pieces of choreography were you in?

Lester Goodman [00:52:16] Only when I was in Timely Jones, and then Showboat. There was, was the -- I'm trying to think if Mike was... Was it Michael Kidd? Was there a Michael Kidd? It seemed like there was--

Jenai Cutcher [00:52:25] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [00:52:25] That's where I...studied under him, and under--because he choreographed these things, shows like... And I... what else was it? I never really had much training under... because I was so into myself and learning about learning.

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:00] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [00:53:00] See what I nev-, I never, p- ...

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:06] Yeah, I was asking about Katherine Dunham's choreography. Were you in particular pieces, or was it just you know her revues?

Lester Goodman [00:53:14] Her revue work --

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:14] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [00:53:14] Her revue pieces.

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:17] OK. OK.

Lester Goodman [00:53:19] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:20] And at what point did you help to form Joseph Holmes?

Lester Goodman [00:53:29] Alright. Red Saunders, you heard of him, the great orchestra leader?

Jenai Cutcher [00:53:35] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [00:53:37] Three years as the DeLisa -- I mean, yeah, the DeLisa. He and I were like this [crosses index and middle finger]. He had me come in and work with the chorus girls. And he had, he did a... you heard of America Speaks, I mean "Africa Speaks: America Answers"

Jenai Cutcher [00:54:03] What's that?

Lester Goodman [00:54:03] Guy Warren. you ever heard of Guy Warren? And he wrote this piece. And Red Saunders... Urban Gateways, if you heard of that. Well, I'm trying to think of the woman, can't remember but we were so close. What was her-- and I'm looking at her -- but she, she, she hired Red Saunders to get a show together, t- show, to take it to the schools, to perform in those schools. And so, Red, Red Saunders, Darlene Blackburn -- she and I are like [crosses index and middle finger]. In fact, she--I was just at her house Wednesday, last Wednesday -- Tuesday it was, because she was get- celebrating my birthday. She took me out for that.

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:20] Oh --

Lester Goodman [00:55:20] Yeah, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:20] That's nice. How's she doing?

Lester Goodman [00:55:20] Oh, she's doing great. Oh, do you know her?

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:23] Mm-hm

Lester Goodman [00:55:23] What's your-- does she know your full name?

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:29] Mm, I dont know, I interviewed her like this.

Lester Goodman [00:55:32] Oh --

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:33] Yeah, yeah, yeah

Lester Goodman [00:55:33] Oh, oh! I- she's a --

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:33] Yeah, yeah!

Lester Goodman [00:55:38] She's a cancer too, she's a cancer. Her birthday was, when was that, the eighth?

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:40] Not too long ago, I did see that--

Lester Goodman [00:55:56] Right, it was--

Jenai Cutcher [00:55:56] Yeah, yeah,

Lester Goodman [00:55:56] Yeah, anyway she took me out to dinner and we had... Well, Joseph Holmes was --she had a dance company -- and Joseph Holmes was in her dance company. Red Saunders saw Joseph. Joseph was tall and he could do these leaps and oh... So, he came, he got Joseph and brought him to me. Said, and he said, getting this thing together, you know, show together, using his girls. And we did what we did. We portrayed Africans. We would come out and imitate. We would show what they were doing came from Africa. Like "the monkey" and all this, [dancing 'the monkey'] we'd show. And we would do movements, African movements, in our dance to show them, you know, "the jerk" and all, and "the watusi," you know. And we used to [laughter]...

Lester Goodman [00:57:17] Anyway. And the kids, oh they just loved the children, so... [laughter]. And so, I would, I was... I taught them the routine and Joseph was imitating where you tried--you had to go out and kill the lion and bring back the tails. That was a ritual that the Africans had. We went on certain days, he had to go out kill the lion and bring back the tail. And that's when--so Joseph would come out and do his dance, and he'd jump off the stage and he'd run around the stage, and then he'd come back, he would have a tail with him. And we -- anyway, that's what we did there, a show built up around Africa, show the places and various movements they do, the Africans, come from Africa, you know. And they, know what it means; they know that.

Jenai Cutcher [00:58:41] So, it was your job to show the African roots of all these social dances that were so popular--

Lester Goodman [00:58:46] Right, right, that's what we did.

Jenai Cutcher [00:58:49] And it was you and Joseph who were the dancers?

Lester Goodman [00:58:52] Joseph, I, and we had four girls. And each girl would demonstrate a particular movement. The watusi, and then she'd go and sit down. And then

the next one would get up, and then we'd all get up together, and then we'd, you know, a group dance, you know.

Jenai Cutcher [00:59:25] Okay. And so, the company sort of formed out of performing the show? The Joseph Holmes company...

Lester Goodman [00:59:31] No, no, no. So I, what happened is I told Joe -- I had opened up a dancing school here. And I had Joseph come and teach African. And I was teaching that and I taught him. I had a class I teach, and then I told Joseph, then I told him, 'Joseph, you don't want to just do what you're doing. You need to broaden yourself,' because he was just doing the African, with Darlene, right. So, I said, 'You need to, with your ability, and the way you leap around...' So then, he took my advice. And we, we all got together, got someone to go. He was in New York. And when in New York, we went into Alvin Ailey, and he set up a routine there that they did. "Sammy berna deez?" is one of them, a piece that... and Alvin Ailey got that piece to put, to put into his company. Because he had his own company, you know. So then, and when we came back then from my dance, my dance studio, we formed a dance company and a group. And that's how... I called it Joseph Holmes Dance Theatre, so... I could have said Goodman Holmes, but because I was artistic... See I worked with him, you know I said, 'I've had my day,' you know what I mean? 'And I'm giving you a chance to...' I did everything with him and he is head of Joseph Holmes Dance Theatre. And that's all that. So, and I'm the cofounder. See, he's the founder, I'm the cofounder, right. I didn't say founder, cofounder him. I said, because we're cofounders, and that's all I need: "cofounders," next to him, "Joseph Holmes." All our buildings say "Mr. Goodman and Joseph Holmes, cofounders," so. And then they, "Holmes Dance Company." And I had, I had tapes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:02:18] You do?

Lester Goodman [01:02:18] I do have tapes. So, maybe one day, you can come out and see them someday.

Jenai Cutcher [01:02:27] I would love to!

Lester Goodman [01:02:28] Y- it's a video-- your telephone number and I'll call you.

Jenai Cutcher [01:02:32] I will. I will, and I have it right here actually. So when the--

Lester Goodman [01:02:38] And I had, I -- the only thing I am sad about: I don't have any pictures of me in my eastern dances. I, I did a television show when I was in New York. I did WPIX. And, Shijada and Oshoku, [by ear] was coming in behind me, so naturally, there was a tape, a tape. I didn't go back there -- you don't think. You're young, whatever. So, I just leave the show, got my money, it's paid for. Didn't think about, 'is there a tape or is that...' So then when I began to find out, 'Oh, these places got tapes,' I knew that I had... They had had a fire, and it burnt through and... And I -- oh, I always regret that, because I would like to see my scenes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:04:03] Yeah, yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:04:03] So, I do have tapes of me here, when I had to raid in/Reagan years run working with Berne and Cher, I got a new thing now about, he got -- something he got together on Blacks and talent, whatever... Now I have a tape where he interviews me, and I danced on that tape. And then, Harry Porter, he-- I have a tape with him, but I

didn't do any dancing because it's much later after Ron and Jerry, and I had a tape of me here in Memphis .. but I, but that tape... but I wonder now-- I wanted to see me doing my thing, where I made all my money [Laughter].

Jenai Cutcher [01:05:13] Yeah, I wonder if we can find one. Yeah. You said you were on the Ed Sullivan show?

Lester Goodman [01:05:18] Yes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:05:21] That must exist, right?

Lester Goodman [01:05:22] Yep, Ed Sullivan. I was working in Atlantic City at that time, and he came in the club I was working, Club Harlem, and he invited me to be on his show. Because he had written up -- he was a writer, too. He had written a column about, he came to the show to see me. And He said, "The surprise of the evening was a Black group doing all these dances." Ma Rainey was in the show, and he didn't even mention Ma Rainey. And he didn't like that, because Ma Rainey made [laughter], people -- she would always have somebody that she start to, to throw money up. And when she'd do it, and they throw it up, and it'd hit the stage and when it hit, and she said, "oh," she... "A penny? That was..." She'd say... she shot and she threw it, throw it away. [Laughter] And then people started throwing money from the stage.

Jenai Cutcher [01:06:55] That's a trick, isn't it! Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:06:59] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:06:59] Yeah, wow. Well, when you were -- when you had your Balinese act, what was it called? Were you performing as Lester Goodman?

Lester Goodman [01:07:10] Yeah, yeah it was... yeah, yeah. And I had put-- I had a name. Nakhil [by ear] was my name. But, N, I think it was N-A-H-K-I... I'm forgetting now how it was spelled, but that's, that was the name. It would be... what was, how would you... Because then it was called "aboriginal dancing." That's what they, the writers would always say "aboriginal," when they would write my... So, I don't know how I can get it, because I was always billed the "Goodman Dancers," that's where it -- "Goodman dancers." And I, and then... there should have been a way of finding something.

Jenai Cutcher [01:08:40] Well, I'll try for you.

Lester Goodman [01:08:42] Oh, if you do, please, please let me know.

Jenai Cutcher [01:08:49] I will. I will. Okay so, you're working with Joseph. How did the -- who did what for the company? What were your roles? Did you choreograph? Did you perform?

Lester Goodman [01:09:04] I -- No, I didn't choreograph. I only choreographed one number with him, one Eastern number but after that, I would let, let him do his thing, because he was just a great choreographer himself. And all his works are -- well, when you'll see the tape, you'll see what I mean. He was Catholic, and he would always go and sit in the church and meditate. He did "The Nun's Story" and he did "Mercy." "Mercy" was about ... [holds head, remembering] -- oh I, isn't that something? Now, I'm going to have to go back and take look at that.

Jenai Cutcher [01:09:59] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [01:10:01] I know it had to do with ... because he's executed at the end because of... He had a brother and sister.

Jenai Cutcher [01:10:16] Oh.

Lester Goodman [01:10:16] And it starts off -- when it opens up, it's a trial, yeah a trial. He's on trial for murder. And I'm trying to think who it was he murdered. It seemed like it was a mercy murder, like the person... and he gave him something to ease the... so he could go. I remember that one time. And -- but he is still found guilty. You couldn't do that. There was no excuse to take because of their suffering, whatever. And his brothers and sisters turn... And at the trial, it starts out, he comes out, the jury's there on the side. And he -- they all... and they come in, and there's a desk, and they go and sit down. Then his brother and sister, they come in, they sit down. He brought in and he's sitting on the bench. He's handcuffed on the -- yeah, ropes tied around, and he comes in and sits on the bench. And then the sister gets up -- testifies against him. The brother gets up and he goes sit down, and he comes to... And Joseph, like, [raises handcuffed hands] then he gets up, and he starts his dance. Like, would go to each one of them, you know, pleading. And he says, and he remembers how the things were; he sits back down. He imagines that the rhythm playing as -- oh, you would have liked this, it's, it's wild.

Jenai Cutcher [01:12:37] Sounds like a great story.

Lester Goodman [01:12:40] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:12:39] Yeah, wow.

Lester Goodman [01:12:47] So, he always did things had a religious-- oh y- you, you -- I can have you watch it and --

Jenai Cutcher [01:12:51] I would love to see it, yeah --

Lester Goodman [01:12:51] Yes, yes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:12:51] I would love to see it.

Lester Goodman [01:12:51] Right.

Jenai Cutcher [01:12:56] So, you were more in charge of managing the company?

Lester Goodman [01:13:03] I managed, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:13:03] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:13:03] And then I, and, and -- They all would come to me with suggestions. Sometimes, he'd be too hard on them, and then I called him inside, and I'd talk to him. I, I had to work with him because... and I would try to get him to go, go on, to go see the other things. He didn't-- he didn't want, want to do that, he said, because he... I said, I said, 'You -- Well, that's a poor excuse because,' I said 'you couldn't only grow by seeing.' I said, 'Look,' you know. But by him having gone to in New York and dealt with

Alvin Ailey and gotten to train under him and his work in Alvin Ailey's company while he was there in New York -- that was enough, I guess, he felt. And being with Darlene Blackburn -- you know, she had her thing. So I guess, so he -- I guess he felt he had enough ideas. He said, "whatever." And mind, as I told you, he'd always go into the church and sit, and his ideas would come to him. And he would sit and work on his own from what, I guess, what he has seen and been around. But he never wanted to see somebody else's work.

Jenai Cutcher [01:14:31] Huh, that's interesting.

Lester Goodman [01:14:32] Yes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:14:33] But you would. You would see --

Lester Goodman [01:14:35] Oh, I would, because that's the only way you can grow. They say, "flattery is the best compliment you can give anyone." If you can [inaudible], you know. So...

Jenai Cutcher [01:14:52] So, what did you like to go see?

Lester Goodman [01:14:54] Oh, I would-- oh I kept going to the ballet and any dance company. Any dance, dance, dance, dance -- I was there. Even now, you know, I going to [inaudible] the dancing, that's it.

Jenai Cutcher [01:15:13] The Joseph Holmes company was pretty diverse. You had a diverse group of dancers.

Jenai Cutcher [01:15:18] Yep, we started out with seven Blacks, ended up with 25, a company of 25. We had time to make two companies. We had a girl, African, and she, she was light. We had -- the company ended up being, let's see: Cheryl, Deirdre, [inaudible]. All, became almost dominated with white, the company was so, became so... in growing and taking on. Well, I'd have to pull out my programs to see now, but yeah. And Harriet Ross was-- do you know her?

Jenai Cutcher [01:16:17] Yes, I do.

Lester Goodman [01:16:17] She worked -- she was in my company, and she taught the company the Graham technique. That Joseph was crazy about Graham technique, and he used it in all of his choreography, the Graham technique. And Harriet, Harriet taught... you know.

Jenai Cutcher [01:16:49] OK.

Lester Goodman [01:16:53] Yeah. In fact, Harriet and I are still pretty close. And she was at my hundredth birthday party, birthday party and she spoke. And she had them all, all that was there from the company come up on the stage and join me on the stage. And so her and her husband and her boys and -- [hits table] I saw them come up.

Jenai Cutcher [01:17:21] Right --

Lester Goodman [01:17:22] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:17:22] You've seen everybody come up.

Lester Goodman [01:17:26] Oh --

Jenai Cutcher [01:17:27] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [01:17:26] I mean that I've been in their presence.

Jenai Cutcher [01:17:27] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:17:28] And they all took to me, you know? And now, I think two of her sons are in, is in religion, I think... I think one of them might be here, might be in the States. And, they're all doing well, so. And she had her early, still go over take trips, you know, to...

Jenai Cutcher [01:17:57] And you said you had --

Lester Goodman [01:17:58] And I want to go, and she's trying to help me. [Laughter] See what she's always doing? We talk all the time.

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:07] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:18:11] And she took me out -- when was it -- she and Randy Duncan-- have you done him?

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:17] Not yet, but soon.

Lester Goodman [01:18:19] Oh, he was a knockout.

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:21] That's right.

Lester Goodman [01:18:22] That's what they would call, yeah. And when Joseph died he took over for a while, and then we had Kevin come from New York. Yes, as Grassroots, [Deeply Rooted] now.

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:37] Right, lega.

Lester Goodman [01:18:42] Yeah, he and then Randy and -- that was... You'll see that tape, too, of -- why can't I think of his name? Is it Kevin?

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:59] Kevin lega Jeff?

Lester Goodman [01:18:59] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:18:59] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:19:03] Yeah. And my granddaughter, one of my granddaughters in the piece. She's about this size [shows hand just below shoulder height]. Because he had a mixture -- one was like this, and they're all -- you know she's in there.

Jenai Cutcher [01:19:19] This was Kevin's piece?

Lester Goodman [01:19:22] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:19:22] OK.

Lester Goodman [01:19:22] Yeah, his piece.

Jenai Cutcher [01:19:26] That must have been a rough transition when Joseph got sick and passed on.

Lester Goodman [01:19:33] Oh yeah -- and the sad part about is, is when Randy operated with Cheryl McWorter, they -- she's now in California, and she's still doing things in theatre, or whatever. But they kept the group together, too after Joseph died. And they knew what -- because in the beginning, they knew all the works and things. And then Harriet was there; she'll teach you how to... But, then when he came in, Kevin, he said they had to audition. Now, you got a company, you're bringing someone in and they tell you that... At that time, I had withdrawn from the com-- I told them that I was going to try and go back, to doing something for myself individually. And I, 'Wouldn't it be good to be doing that,' and yeah. So, I said -- I put everything in Joseph's and Harriet's hands, so they could continue. But they always kept my name there, "cofounder," you know, it was all and everything. But I supported them from the outside with whatever needed to be done and, whatever, whatever they needed. But I left, and when he [Kevin] came in and did back, I wasn't there. Although I met him, because I probably -- introduce him to me and all, but... I didn't even know we had problems about him until something happened. So, some dancers left. It was an insult. "You can't do this!" And for one to go along with it... But I had disassociated. Now I can't just come back in around, and say, 'hey, no, no, no, no,' -- "No, but you left us. You gave us..." so, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:21:51] That's too bad.

Lester Goodman [01:21:54] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:21:55] Yeah, so you had left the company before Joseph passed. Is that right?

Lester Goodman [01:22:00] Yeah, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:22:00] Okay.

Lester Goodman [01:22:05] And when because, I had left the company, and Joseph was ill and I... The last time I went to see him, he was there, and tears coming down his eyes. And he said, he had made a lot of mistakes, and that he was going to correct them. Because things I had tried to talk with him before, he was against them. And now he's, he's confessing them and he's crying. And he says, "When I come, get out, I'm going to correct, make, you know, change."

Lester Goodman [01:22:49] And then, and there was one person, Millie Cusack [by ear]. You heard of her? Millie Cusack. She always felt that he was not fair to her, and I think she had left the company. But anyway, he told me he wanted to see Millie. So, I called her up, I said, 'Go see Joseph.' Because she -- she's an aquarian [aquarius] like you, they were both aquarians, right. And they had a similar unforgiving-like personality you know, they wouldn't, they had a... So, she went -- and she went with us to call him when he passed. And, so it was a very great loss, right. But, yeah...

Jenai Cutcher [01:24:09] Yeah, you lost a lot of people at that time.

Lester Goodman [01:24:11] Yes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:24:18] What were you--what had you left the company to do? You said you were going to work on your own thing again?

Lester Goodman [01:24:23] Yeah, because I was planning now myself to get back in, because I was able to dance myself. So, I was going to get back in, getting my act together and touring like I did before. And I could not do that without... And I always came back. Fate [or Faith] is something [laughter] That's what [laughter]. Changed a lot of things.

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:02] I guess so, yeah. I just want to check in. How are you doing, OK?

Lester Goodman [01:25:06] Oh, I'm great.

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:07] OK. I have a couple more questions, but we need to take a break --

Lester Goodman [01:25:10] No.

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:11] OK.

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:13] Not unless you want to.

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:13] No, [laughter] I'm good.

Lester Goodman [01:25:16] Well, I mean, I'm -- yeah...

Jenai Cutcher [01:25:16] Alright, OK, so let's keep going. You talked about having your own studio. At what point in your career was that, and when did you start teaching? At what point in your career was teaching a part of...

Lester Goodman [01:25:36] When I did the studio, I opened it up in 1973 at --there was a "V" at 71st and Exchange [S Exchange Ave & E 71st St.] and something, that building that's there. On the second floor, downstairs there was a dining room. I set up a studio on the second floor. And sometimes, he'd come up, "Mr. Goodman, you check [laughter]..." The sign on the building, it said, always changed to certain things [laughter]. Because if you said I was leaving then he would be on the first train. Well anyway, I stayed there for about only a year, because I had gone to school with Frank Prince Roy? . Worked in real estate, great, he and his brother. I came up with him and his brother from here up in grammar school, 33rd and Woodburn -- Webster, excuse me. And there was only about... let's see there was Adams, Elbrook [by ear], Nini [by ear] that's it -- and myself -- [shows five fingers] in this whole school.

Jenai Cutcher [01:27:25] Wait, five what?

Lester Goodman [01:27:25] Five of them, five in my class. Five. And in some -- most, there's no others. But anyway, Frank and I, became very close, his brothers was okay

but... He and his brothers are always like that. And they owned this building at the corner of 20 East Jackson. At the -- there was a little alley right there dividing Dickens [by ear] and the building, 20 East Jackson. And there was, it was a seven-story building. Frank let me have that building. I think I paid -- you know back then you're doing square foot -- I paid three hundred dollars for the whole seven floors. I had my studio, and then we had another, the littlest, for the dressing, costumes and things. Another room on the other side, and I rented that out for Aida Gibson, and she brought her mom to class in there. We had a sewing machine in the other room, and I had two girls, sisters, and they got costumes sewed. They weren't dancing, they were seamstresses. And three hundred dollars a month, because we went to school together and we were friends.

Lester Goodman [01:29:40] And Pop, Pops Staples and Frank were very good friends, and Pops Staples introduced me -- I mean, Frank introduced me to Pops Staples. When I put on a show -- I had my company in the Goodman, Pops -- Frank had Pops -- they came to my show. Because Frank was in--and Frank had a son, John John [by ear], now I always called him John John, who he wanted to be a model he was singing and modeling. Now I'm trying to think, was it Johnny... He had one son, because he was young -- John John was young, but he had a son, Joseph. And I went to the restroom once and Joseph was in there smoking [laughter] Now, Joseph was an adult. He's [inaudible] he said that... 'I would never do that, don't worry.' And Joseph come in [laughter] "Don't [inaudible]," 'don't worry about it, he'll never know' And Frank had a daughter, and they all... oh. And Frank and I stayed this way until -- I'm trying to think, how...what happened? Oh, Frank and his siblings got the straw -- for some reason, they wanted to sell the building. That's where we -- And Frank, Frank was such a giving person. You know, I guess, he got... Because there was a Karate school in there on the second floor above the restaurant, there was a restaurant. And so it was like, I think, Frank had a heart. That's all I can say. And this was, his brothers, they were losing money, because Frank, let people if they didn't have the rent, whatever. And Frank, had his office in the building, too. So, he had to sell the building. So, they got together and they -- majority wins. He had to go with him, that's when I -- and if they went, if they sold the building, that meant my three hundred dollars was not going to be three hundred dollars for the whole floor. So, that's when I had to [clap] before he -- before Frank left, I went. I went because he's, he's...going to give him out to him, you know. Going to give the whole, single... And that's what caused me to break from him.

Jenai Cutcher [01:33:10] That's too bad.

Lester Goodman [01:33:15] And then we had to go outside.

Jenai Cutcher [01:33:18] So you moved your studio somewhere else?

Lester Goodman [01:33:33] Yeah. We were once at -- I'm trying to think of that-- Broadway and -- what was that other street -- Bicks Street [by ear], and it was at the corner building. And then we were at, we ended up on, I think it was the 18th, in the 1800 block up on State, I don't know -- Halston, I think, was the last [inaudible]... But anyway.

Jenai Cutcher [01:33:53] So, what do you think throughout your career, has been... What are one or two of the biggest challenges you've faced?

Lester Goodman [01:34:03] I don't, because you know, things came so easy. Just like, when I first started performing Earl, Earle Hines was a great musician, orchestra [The Hines Orchestra]. He came to the El Dorado. Earl Hines, my wife's father had two sets of

children. One of them -- so, the second set was not his, the woman he married. But, and they were -- his...the one father was half black. And he married a woman and all her kids were very dark. But they were smart and talented, they were into politics, and all that. And so when -- one called Ethe, Ethe Harris, [by ear] she had taken in Earl Hines when he was a young boy. When he became famous, we always--we never forgot -- that he'd be married now to -- she's a step. She's step to my -- in my wife, you know. But Ethe always was into them, his other children. They were not into her, but she was into them. And by her being into us, and I was dancing. She had Earl -- she told him about me, and he said, "Well send him out, send him to me." She introduced us. And he had me come out for this [inaudible] club and audition for him. That, see how.. and he said "Oh, yes," you know. And he hired me as a dancer, and I performed in a chorus line. That's how I was found out. And then I be- ...yeah, yeah. So --

Jenai Cutcher [01:36:53] Wow. So that was kind of the beginning of your professional?

Lester Goodman [01:36:57] Right, that's when it all, all started for me. It all grew around it.

Jenai Cutcher [01:36:58] And you choreographed for this chorus line

Lester Goodman [01:37:03] Oh yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:37:03] Yeah, okay. You choreograph for lots of different groups, right. The Tuskegee Airmen? What was --

Lester Goodman [01:37:08] Oh, yeah, right. Even with Darlene Blackburn in the Ra- ... We did a Renaissance thing at the ...out in Evanston. What's the name of that place?

Jenai Cutcher [01:37:28] Somewhere at Northwestern?

Lester Goodman [01:37:28] Northwestern.

Jenai Cutcher [01:37:31] OK.

Lester Goodman [01:37:33] So yeah. I choreographed for the show that show, and I danced in it. I think I have that tape where I'm doing my dancing. Yes, because of some [honorable frizz freight] tape, ain't that something, gave me a copy, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:37:57] And tell me about -- you mentioned it really early on -- the Tuskegee Airmen.

Lester Goodman [01:38:02] Oh, yeah. Well, they came to my hundredth birthday party that was given for me and they gave me a, right. [ride?]

Jenai Cutcher [01:38:16] Okay.

Lester Goodman [01:38:22] And I still, you know, go to their fairs because they're still operating every year, so...

Jenai Cutcher [01:38:33] But you choreographed for them? Is that--

Lester Goodman [01:38:37] Yeah, one year I put them in tux and top hats, and cane for the routine. And...I'm trying to think what other dances I did, because I had, I had to get their shows together beforehand. And I had one girl--one year I had a girl who worked with them with us. In fact, she taught --she's now with the Muntu dancers [Muntu Dance Theatre]. She's not dancing, she's in their -- she's works in the office right now.

Jenai Cutcher [01:39:21] OK.

Lester Goodman [01:39:21] She just called me, because I'm trying to get the Muntu to be a part of my show. So, she's working on that, she... Now when Joan Brady [by ear], before she was hired, and I did my shows, Joan Gray would always have the Mun-- , Muntu open my performances, my shows. But Joan Gray retired. So now, they now have the this new person who are-- I haven't even met them. But Deidre [Deidre M. Dawson] called and said that she was working to try to get him. So, I'm waiting now on a call from her. When I go home I'll just check in with her to see what transpired to that. So...

Lester Goodman [01:40:20] And Deidre did a snake dance. She used to, she, and wrap it around her -- it was a great, it was oh, about this long [holding arms far apart]. She'd come out with it on her, like a [sound], and she [she'd open her mouth -- oh! You think she was -- I'm kidding because fangs had been removed or something.

Jenai Cutcher [01:40:49] Okay [laughter].

Lester Goodman [01:40:49] But that thing, but it could squeeze her.... we had to know how to work with the snake. You don't do him, he does you, you know. [Inaudible]

Jenai Cutcher [01:41:01] That's right. Wow.

Lester Goodman [01:41:06] Because I was -- once I was working -- I worked at a circus. A fair, it was a fair, fairground. And this woman, she's she had a... She walking around doing her whole floor what was it, like, she had about ten close snakes in there, all crawling all around on all sides. And on -- you might have two, one on each arm, you know. And that's when I knew that you had to know -- nice to know how to work them and all. You know, and never let -- when a rattle gets in his rattle, don't... You go and start running, don't let him strike. [Laughter]

Jenai Cutcher [01:41:53] The things you learn as a dancer!

Jenai Cutcher [01:42:12]

Lester Goodman [01:42:12] And that's p-- things people be think-- I'd love to have like, cheetahs, tigers, lion. I would love to -- elephants, whatever. I would just love to have all these, one of them pets, or one of those tigers, or leopards, you know? Like Josephine Baker. You know, she had a leopard.

Jenai Cutcher [01:42:37] Did she really?

Lester Goodman [01:42:44] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:42:44] OK, I guess that doesn't surprise me.

Lester Goodman [01:42:50] Yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [01:42:51] Wow. So, you've seen the world change quite a bit.

Lester Goodman [01:42:57] Still changing.

Jenai Cutcher [01:42:57] Still changing.

Lester Goodman [01:43:01] And I don't even recognize Chicago now.

Jenai Cutcher [01:43:03] Is that right?

Lester Goodman [01:43:04] Things torn down, vacant, or... And then when I was traveling -- I was in six states going to different cities -- and you come back, something has changed, you know? Now, a lot of things you were so familiar with... [hits desk with hands]

Jenai Cutcher [01:43:25] What do you miss the most?

Lester Goodman [01:43:29] Yeah...what do I miss the most? Well, I don't really miss anything in particular, only my not being able to dance [laughter] oh [inaudible]. I was hit in 2004 by a hit and run and broke my tibia and my left knee. I was hospitalized, bedridden for six months, so the muscles deteriorated. 2004, was that, 14 years ago? How long do you think [laughter] it takes to build that muscle back up to this? You, you understand?

Jenai Cutcher [01:44:18] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:44:23] I'm still trying to work on it. But I'm going to do something in my shows, that I know.

Jenai Cutcher [01:44:26] You are?

Lester Goodman [01:44:27] Yes.

Jenai Cutcher [01:44:27] What are you going to do?

Lester Goodman [01:44:30] I'm trying-- I'm still working on get, trying to get it. But I know singing -- now, I would definitely, depending on voice, and I don't have a bad one.

Jenai Cutcher [01:44:42] I've heard you sing.

Lester Goodman [01:44:46] Yeah, so... But dance, ooh, I just... But dancing -- oh... Are you still dancing?

Jenai Cutcher [01:44:58] Yes.

Lester Goodman [01:44:58] Oh, see, maybe I might let you... probably could have had you in my show.

Jenai Cutcher [01:45:06] Next year!

Lester Goodman [01:45:10] OK.

Jenai Cutcher [01:45:10] Next year.

Lester Goodman [01:45:10] Okay, I'll remember that!

Jenai Cutcher [01:45:10] Please, I would be honored!

Lester Goodman [01:45:12] Oh ok. You do pointe or just--

Jenai Cutcher [01:45:15] Just tap dance.

Lester Goodman [01:45:17] Oh, that's right, tap. I was thinking-- yes. Did you happen to meet Doris Humphrey?

Jenai Cutcher [01:45:24] Yes.

Lester Goodman [01:45:27] Now she -- now this is what I'm trying to do is... Doris Humphrey, because I knew -- I knew her when she was, they hadn't met. You know way back, when she was performing like I was. And I used to, all the time in my shows. She, because by her teaching tap, she always did tap. So they had a tap thing together and I always... But this year, she's out having Mnahattan, but gray man [words] and I told her, I said, 'Where's your daughter join her Karen?' Karen, because her daughter taps, too.

Jenai Cutcher [01:46:14] Sure.

Lester Goodman [01:46:15] So anyway, her daughter has her job, which is good, so ... But anyway, anyway, I'm trying to get someone for Doris, and I either want Eva Derm. You heard of a dancer named Eva Derm?

Jenai Cutcher [01:46:25] M-mm. [No]

Lester Goodman [01:46:35] Well, One time, there was an establishment Houston, and it operated out of Billie King?. Anyay they used to have these shows, and she's one of the dancers there, beautiful dancer. Well anyway, so I'm trying to-- well, she at a hshow, and she's recuperating from the show. She has one of them... So, I said, 'You know what? I am going to get -- I'll have Doris in the middle...' [Laughter] I was trying to work something out that we three could do. [Laughter] So now, I'm trying to pick out a song that we can do, and you know?

Jenai Cutcher [01:47:41] I love it.

Lester Goodman [01:47:42] Yes, yes. So, that's what I'm working on right now, and Im trying to get it all together. ..

Jenai Cutcher [01:47:47] That's a big job, producing a show.

Lester Goodman [01:47:52] Tell me. And when your doing it all by your self, you know.

Jenai Cutcher [01:47:53] Yeah, yeah.

Lester Goodman [01:47:55] And lucky to have people that support it.

Jenai Cutcher [01:47:59] Yeah. Why did you start the Rhyme and Rhythm Revues?

Lester Goodman [01:48:06] Well first, I said first it was the word, and then came the rhyme, and then the rhythm. The drums started [inaudible] you know. But before the drums, there were the words so, that's where -- that's how I've been doing that.

Jenai Cutcher [01:48:29] OK.

Jenai Cutcher [01:48:31]

Lester Goodman [01:48:31] And I always opened it with a religious thing. My organist at church, he's, he always opened with playing the piano, some religious thing. And then I had the Muntu dancers come in, because afterwards the beginning and the word, and I had belly dancers coming in, and they do a number that I choreographed. And they did two of their own, I mean that... And the girl that has the belly dance group is one my dancers when I had the Joseph Holmes dance company. And she, when Joseph died and everything fell apart there, she went and she started studying belly dancing. And then now she teaches it, and she's, and after that she's gotten to travel, and she's [inaudible]. So, I got a bellydancer. And then I have a young man who imitates James Brown. He's terrific. And he's in Manhattan there with Doris. Doris, I told you -- I mean Gloria [Broussard] teaches, yeah. In fact, one year Gloria danced with him. And then after let them do the routine, you know she joined them. But now [laughter] Gloria says she can hardly look at herself, But she's kept her figure and everything. Now she says her pooch... anything I say... But anyway, yeah. It's going to be good.

Jenai Cutcher [01:50:28] Yeah, sounds like it. I can't wait. I can't wait.

Lester Goodman [01:50:34] And I, I'm going to -- the only thing now I'm trying to figure out what I want to do, where I'm going to put myself in it

Jenai Cutcher [01:50:41] I have a feeling you should close the show.

Lester Goodman [01:50:45] No -- I no, no, I don't know. That's a thought, but I'll think on that. But I've always been into...

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:00] I'm just saying if I were on the bill, I would not want to follow you.

Lester Goodman [01:51:10] No-- no matter what I did?

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:10] No what you did. Couldn't top that.

Lester Goodman [01:51:17] Really?

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:17] Really.

Lester Goodman [01:51:24] I'd be a real thought...

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:24] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [01:51:24] [Inaudible] See what you get, what you put in my mind.,

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:24] Well, somebody should, that's for sure.

Lester Goodman [01:51:28] I'll try that this [next] year.

Jenai Cutcher [01:51:30] OK. Well, what would you like to talk about that we have not covered yet?

Lester Goodman [01:51:45] There's so much I mean, I don't know. It takes so long to... you know, you understand what I'm saying, what I mean.

Jenai Cutcher [01:52:01] What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Lester Goodman [01:52:04] Hm?

Jenai Cutcher [01:52:05] What's the best advice you've ever been given?

Lester Goodman [01:52:23] Now. Well, first thing I try to have people... not to be into each other, not... Love, that all I knew, is love, because I love love. Love, love. I have so much love. And when you really love, you also understand. And when you love, you understand. And you may not agree with me, but I understand you. I know where you're coming from. But I would like you to be this way, or be this, change your thinking you know. Don't think about self. See, I don't think about myself. I'm more concerned with you than I am myself. And therefore I want to see you prosper, I want to see you learn to love people, help people. Don't, don't don't gossip, don't be a goss--no. Because we're not perfect. We all have mistakes and make mistakes. I don't know them! Just like we said, I don't know them. When I pray, I pray, for sins I don't even know about but I'm sure that they... need to be forgiven for those things I know not and not recognizing, you understand? So that in the same way [laughter] So, I can talk about you, because you can talk about me. But I see things in you sometimes. Oh, everybody can tell you about me.

Lester Goodman [01:54:19] I had a friend all... I had friends that -- women friends -- one owners, some just taking care of the buyers. I would go, in when they open up this, and set the table to him. People start coming in, then I go. And that's because then its going to be ongoing, and you not going to get... I could never see a woman alone. And opening up, I see-- So I, when she opens up, I open up with -- they all, you know. And that, that is the way I have always been. And so you... I don't know, just... It's a job. because people say, "I hate--" You do not hate people, but you might dislike what they do and they say. But really, you should love. You know? It isn't -- Your life is their life And you might try to change it, because that's what I always do, that's what I've always done. But Now, and one of my dancers once said, "Why is he?" She got, was on the bus. "Why is he staring> I don't like..." I said, 'If you weren't staring, you wouldn't even know he's looking at you!' I said, 'Look, when you go out and start dressing, you're dressing to look good, to be public, right? When you look good to the public, you attract. They're looking at you for that, and that mind the way you look, the way you dress. I mean, we set ourselves up to be looked at. So, when you're being looked at -- [laughter] Don't cause a problem, Just don't look back. Just, put your mind, and be, and be observed. [Inaudible] And hen they put on a shirt-- [Laughter] Oh, I've had enough. And a I've had [] be jealous of me with [?] what I'm 'uh-uh!' And sometimes I take more time, because she needs the time. You don't, you're strong, you're on your own --this person needs. What you got--She doesn't have. But I love, I love you all. I don't love her anymore than I do you. But she needs this. Or he needs this. I mean, it's a matter of bringing what you need to people. And I mentioned a scripture, alright now, but I'm not fanatic. [Laughter] But I use the scriptures in my life. I not a fanatic, but you know, so...

Jenai Cutcher [01:58:09] Well, that sounds like the key to a long and happy life.

Lester Goodman [01:58:13] I'm still here.

Jenai Cutcher [01:58:14] You're still here.

Lester Goodman [01:58:15] Who knows how much longer I'll go? You know, when I was 13 years old, I was living in [fru]for some reason out, at the, out of window, because and on the sill, a little bird flew on the window outside on the sill, hopping up and down, and I said, you know, I said, 'I want to live to see my grandchildren.' You know. At thirteen years old! 'I want to see my grandchildren.' And lo and behold, I got great-greats.

Jenai Cutcher [01:59:05] Wow.

Lester Goodman [01:59:08] Now, I haven't seen my great-greats, because they're here in other states. California, Oregon, Arizona, Connecticut. We're all sc-, we're all sc-. My kids are scattered.

Jenai Cutcher [01:59:26] Your family spread out, but you stayed here.

Lester Goodman [01:59:30] I stayed here.

Jenai Cutcher [01:59:32] Why did you stay in Chicago?

Lester Goodman [01:59:34] I love Chicago. Been here all my travels. Everywhere I went there's always someplace you will see that will remind you of [taps table, pointing down]. Have you experienced that? 'Oh this is...' yeah. And I always get, and I always [sigh], I take a good breath when I get back. I appreciate Chicago more, you know? It's a funny thing. There's no place like home. You may go over, but when you come back home, that... But if I go to Jesus then, I'll like. [Laughter, clapping]. When I make this trip, and I want to come back and be able to tell people things.

Jenai Cutcher [02:00:40] Well, I hope you make it.

Lester Goodman [02:00:41] Thanks.

Jenai Cutcher [02:00:46] Well thank you so much. It's been a real gift to be able to listen to you.

Lester Goodman [02:00:53] Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you. And when I get home, I'll going to say, 'Oh, I hear, I figure I couldn't say so what...'

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:03] Well, then we can do this again.

Lester Goodman [02:01:08] So much, so much.

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:11] Well, I've learned a lot. I look forward to seeing some of your dancing.

Lester Goodman [02:01:17] Oh thanks. Good. Oh, I've given you, given you all--that's it?

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:25] That's it, right there.

Lester Goodman [02:01:25] That's it right there? [Looks at photo album]

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:25] So yeah, our photo numbers--

Lester Goodman [02:01:25] Oh, that's me! Oh, is that how you spell your name?

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:32] Yes.

Lester Goodman [02:01:32] JEN-AY or JEN-AI?

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:44] Jen-ay.

Lester Goodman [02:01:44] Cutcher is that your last name? What language is that?

Jenai Cutcher [02:01:50] German and French, I think, yeah. The Cutcher is actually French. Yeah, Normandy.

Lester Goodman [02:02:00] OK, OK. Yeah, I used to always want to go to Paris.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:09] Did you make it?

Lester Goodman [02:02:09] M-mm. [No].

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:09] OK.

Lester Goodman [02:02:09] I took French in -- that's when I was supposed to fly.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:09] Ah

Lester Goodman [02:02:09] But how else are you going to get there-- Oh the boat. But then that's too water to drink, but anyway. [Laughter]

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:18] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [02:02:18] But anyway...good...

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:31] So, you traveled in the states but never overseas?

Lester Goodman [02:02:35] Never overseas.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:35] OK.

Lester Goodman [02:02:35] Canada and Mexico but never overseas.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:40] OK.

Lester Goodman [02:02:40] Land to land [laughter]

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:40] [Laughter]

Lester Goodman [02:02:44] But, but I'm going to have to.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:49] So that's what you meant, because the Joseph Holmes Company toured abroad.

Lester Goodman [02:02:54] Yeah, they toured abroad.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:55] OK.

Lester Goodman [02:02:55] That's what I said.

Jenai Cutcher [02:02:55] You just didn't go with them.

Lester Goodman [02:02:58] And I wouldn't -- I wasn't able to go with them. But they come back and tell me what's what, and Harry. I don't think Harry... Did Harry? I'm trying to think if Harry... I think Harry did go with them when to Israel think, I'm not sure.

Jenai Cutcher [02:03:24] Well, anything else that we should cover before we wrap up?

Lester Goodman [02:03:27] Hmm, how much time do we have?

Jenai Cutcher [02:03:30] I've got all the time. My time is for you.

Lester Goodman [02:03:56] Can't -- so much, can't --

Jenai Cutcher [02:03:57] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [02:04:02] I can't pinpoint anything right now.

Jenai Cutcher [02:04:05] What do you think has been one of the biggest prizes? Something you experienced that you never imagined you would -- would ever happen?

Lester Goodman [02:04:23] Well, everything I imagined, I hoped would happen. [Laughter] You see? Because, like, like I've told you, when my -- this person, the step per-[person] that introduced me to Earl, the Saturday with Earl Hines -- that was the Eldorado, which is a club. It was a separate club. They only sold. and they -- steak, chicken, baked potatoes, salad, tea, coffee. You know. there'd be when you go and you ordered, a steak or pork chop, or... And you can hear the clink of the glasses, like Cafe Society. Now, Eldorado was here. It was about -- Eldorado was above Rhumboogie, although Rhumboogie was more popular. The Eldorado was above the DeLisa because of the, it was a cla-, because of the class, if you know what I mean. There was a distinction. I mean, well say if you go to a place, just elegant tablecloths and you know. If you go to Rhumboogie, you might have tablecloths, but well, it was a, there was more -- you'd be more with Blacks. It wasn't elegant-like. Rhumboogie, same thing, you'll sound-- I mean the DeLisa. And the DeLisa never closed. They had a fire one day, working the night through. There was a big garage across the street. What did he do? [Mike DeLisa]. They, the very next day, he had people to come in, he rented the -- bought that garage. And you know and the thing that raises the cars and things? That's what the stage was. That's why the stage could raise, because of that. And rented chairs --you know how you can rent tables and chairs. Well, the very next day he opened up, 5 am in the morning, because they, he'd only open up -- he would only close about when it was time for the people to go home, get out, clean up, sweep whatever. Now, because people would start coming in at five o' clock, going to jobs. And he was there from open-, you know. He only had a break between cleaning, that's how I look at it. The. That's why he was so -- it always stayed

cool, it was popular, it never closed. Like, some of them, they opened, they had a period where they had to close for work. Well, then you find other places to go, you know? And you forget about it. But once you're at there, you can always go there, and then leave. And others come and share the news coming in. That's, that was... Just like Billie Holiday. She'd sing three songs, one encore, and that's it. That kept you wanting more.

Jenai Cutcher [02:08:46] Yeah.

Lester Goodman [02:08:47] Yeah. 'Clap, clap, clap all you want. I'll be back at the next show!' You know what I mean, see? That's the secret to her success.

Jenai Cutcher [02:08:58] Yeah, that's --

Lester Goodman [02:09:04] Always kept you wanting more so you would stick around for the next show to if you want here different songs or something. But you're only going to get three songs and an encore. And then, if she didn't feel like it, you may not get that encore. Just get up, clap your feet. [Laughter] I saw and I went to a friend of mine, who had a little house, an apartment on the LaSalle and New York. And Billie Holiday stayed there, stayed in a room there. I went in there, and she was sitting just like this. And I came in. I said -- usually you come and you speak with her: "Hello, Hi" -- and I went and I said, "Where...?" They said "She'll be out." Two white folks came in when I was there, took her in the room, and she came but she had dressed. I didn't know! Oh, we were -- I was dumb to the fact that... Afterwards, I realized they gave her a shot of whatever it was. She come on out and, "Hey, hi there!" Different person. Because she had such a, or whatever. Recording, or whatever they do. So, I've seen when she's right here: [slumps in chair] listless, out of it and then "Ah!" And then another time I went to see her performing, she had two chihuahuas, Pepe and Chico [Chiquita]. Pepsi and ch- chi- chi-- Chinita [Chiquitea] and Pepe, two chihuahuas, about these little, little things, these minatures. And she said, "Get, Get away from me! Go, go to your seat and watch!" She talked to me like her... "Go over there." I had a box with her; she had a big box. So, this was right around when I went to see her performing. And she came out and she started singing. And then, I was the only black in the club. And then the, I'm sitting by her. And there was a woman. You know how you "dee-da-de" you're with your party and you "Dadada." And she [Billie Holiday] stopped. And when she stopped, the woman she turned like, you know "[inaudible]". -- [Holiday:] "I hear it, I hear it now," you know what I mean. See, nothing -- you really -- people talk, but that don't mean they're not enjoying what they're hearing. But they, you know, they got they're thing going but they're still listening. But she's not going to get it, that ain't her. "You came to see me here." She stopped. In the middle of her song, she stopped. And everybody, then everybody turned and looked the way she was talking. And then the woman said, "What's the matter, what's the matter?" And so she don't like nobody, you know. When she's on performing, everybody gives their undivided attention. She throws you spellbound into her. Anytime she hears something, she stopped. And she'd go, she'd pick up from where she finished. So, and the woman, the woman now takes offense, when she finds out it's her. So, when she starts back to singing, going "What does she think she's... ? Who does she think she is?" she said. She said, she said, "Take that woman out. I'll pay her tab." She don't, don't want her near. If we want to hear her, you got to let it happen. Yep. That was in Boston, Massachussets, that that happened.

Jenai Cutcher [02:14:23] Wow.

Lester Goodman [02:14:23] Yep.

Jenai Cutcher [02:14:32] Were you on the same show as Billie Holiday?

Lester Goodman [02:14:37] No, no no, I always went wherever. When she appeared. We're all here. And Frank Sinatra says that's where he got his singing from, because when she sang she told a story, like she's talking to you, you know. You can pay attention, "Good morning my love..even go in, Good morning, know you will." [Insert song title here] You just picture what the way she...this Ethel Waters was another one people copied, because of her sound. She, her diction and everything was so ... but Frank got his from -- he go up, he'd go and kiss a girl during the show, sue. AND he danced with that's what I ... Billie that got his feeling, or whatever, talk-singing, telling a story. Telling us like you're talking, yeah.

Jenai Cutcher [02:15:53] I can see that, yes.

Lester Goodman [02:15:59] Yeah, and when you think about it. right next to me. So I guess, that they both, everybody started learning how to tell a story.

Jenai Cutcher [02:16:10] Right, yeah. Well, they were both so popular --

Lester Goodman [02:16:13] Yeah, because you're right. Because the word, the words tell you what to say, and you feel it. You get into it, you know? Because, you can, you can, if you say, "jump", you know to jump. The picture, you get there. [Sings] Jumping and then there was [singing] "Jump, da-dada" Oh, [clap] And some things are sad. "Summertime somehow, Summertime,,,I hatook a table and then am man.... " [singing Summertime from ..] That was a song that Ethel Waters did for a, there was a bout music. Her man is here.

Jenai Cutcher [02:17:24] Wow. I don't know that one.

Lester Goodman [02:17:24] Yeah, she -- "So... " People do things, are a part of life.

Jenai Cutcher [02:17:54] I talked with Doris Humphreys about touring the South. Did you tour into the South?

Lester Goodman [02:18:01] I've only been to Atlanta, Texas. [words, went bad town tour Yes bad experience. I lived in San Antonia for a bout some months. And while I was there, it was still forming reading, the heat. And San Antonio I loved. But Houston, I moved into Houston, Texas and then I went there. I had this girl work with me. She had her fox on and [?]. And she was light, she was real light. And we were in the restaurant -- and this is about, I want to say, only a couple blocks from the club where we working. It was a black club. And two police came in. And for some reason -- I don't know if he saw us go in or what -- we ordered and they told us we needed to get up. Once she's And I said, "What? which cop is come he's coming." So, I told, I looked at the people that owned the --they're black-- they didn't open their mouths or say one thing. Because I guess one thing kno if there was a reason or not, and they're not going to speak up and ask. So, so we went outside. One took her to one side. this girl, this woman. I said, 'That's my dancing partner!' He thought she was white. I said, 'She's not white.' I'm in with the other one. I said, 'No, that's my dancing partner.' And somewhere, working up at the top [taps brain]. So, they told us to get in the car, and we got in the car and she said, "What, where are we here for?" And they said, somebody said, and, she said, "May I have a light?" No, no smoking in this car," or something. So, she said, "Oh, because I'm Black? And she said, and you think and women have always been able say whatevr they want, you that it, and get away with.

And she says something. He go, "Oh," he said to his partner -- his partner was driving. He said, "Did you hear what that Ne--" and he said the word, bitch. And another was who was driving, he's just going on. They took us to this place, this courtroom, we went in there, I sit in the back. We both sit in the back. And while we're standing in the back, one of them that walked down in front of us to a room, and we/he went into it. And the other one come out, and went back in, and then they took us into the room and were told in that room -- He said first, "I want you to know we don't owe you an apology." He said, "The officers did you a favor. You seem dressed like you fur, [eard] fur, he says, "You could've been harmed, you know. You don't know how lucky you are." And, that ready to roll, he says -- I said 'Officer, well, granted,' I said, 'well what are we doing here? That's a dog. That's when he explained, tell us what happened. And so I said, 'Well OK, now that we're here, how will we get back?' Well, because we're broke and we're just sitting here. Now he's "OK but..." And he said and one he looked us at the other officer, "Oh, guess we'll take them now." He said "Now...[inaudible][laughter]] Now, he's got to take us back. When he got back in the car, the one who said you can't smoke in the car, asked, "Oh, you want a light." Oh sure, now I can smoke! [Laughter] See, you know. He take us back there. With the sign at the club. And I had told the people when they took us out to call the club and let them know that we were being taken out by policemen, so they would know. So they're , they go tho the club. I'm staring, the -- they didn't come up. We came up, got dressed, did our show. When we came out on the stage, when we came out and were just dressed in the audience, one of the owners of the club one of the owners of the club came to us and said, "You have company." And we look back, they're just two rugged take us outside, and see the show, what is the whatever. "You did a great job." I said, 'Thank you.' And they left. There was only one of them there? There was two, and they were. From then on, we never separate; we were always together. Well. Another time I went there, to because they have so it's so Red cross in my life to work so lwell. You see here now way Miss. Nice to meet you. Yes. Yes sir. I think so. I'm so sorry. But I think not. Yes. Yes. And you will see us as and life and. Like they my trust.

Jenai Cutcher [02:28:49] Did you ever experience any of that in the club?

Lester Goodman [02:29:10] Oh no. Oh no. The audiences were always good. They all said hey you know this place last year. You got yo it's just amazing to me you know I never had a problem. He said she wants from there. Why is she not worried so much has lost his. People. And that's because she now calls now. So. Instead he said if my son was not something they taught you. Yes. Because somebody said he no matter. White had changed my life changed three times a day. They were gray and they. Oh yeah the way changed three times in the moments when hey how are you. You know she was high and she said hey Raul here. It's so nice nice just said this is what you saw from my hair. Nice work.

Jenai Cutcher [02:32:18] Everybody wants hair they don't have.

Lester Goodman [02:32:21] Yeah. The things that you experience. In New Orleans, there again, in New Orleans, there you can sit--they have Creole and White. There was a girl-- she would come there...this girl was white. She was Creole and her man was dark. They could come but they couldn't [inaudible]. Now I could sit there with you but I couldn't ask you to dance with me. Because in some clubs where it was black and white, some white men would come and ask to dance with you. They would go up to your wife and ask "would your wife like to dance?" But here you could not. You would be afraid you would cause a riot. Can you imagine?

Jenai Cutcher [02:34:11] There's so many things of that time that I couldn't imagine.

Lester Goodman [02:34:27] Things have changed now I'm sure.

Jenai Cutcher [02:34:27] You got some really great stories, Lester.

Lester Goodman [02:34:34] Oh thank you thank you thank you.