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Nancy Wilson

Nancy Wilson's long and illustrious career has encompassed both the jazz and popular music fields. She was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1937 and appeared in local television shows and clubs while still in high school, later gaining performing experience with the Rusty Bryant band. In 1959, Nancy sat in with the Cannonball Adderly Quintet and her career began in earnest. She signed with Capitol Records and subsequent records with Cannonball and George Shearing established her as one of the country's hottest singers. Nancy's extensive list of recordings have embraced a wide range of styles and her accompanists have included jazz greats Chic Corea, Joe Zawinul, Hank Jones and George Shearing. She continues to tour the country and the world and remains one of America's most respected vocalists.

Nancy was interviewed in New York City on November 16, 1995 by Monk Rowe.

MR: We are filming today for the Hamilton College Jazz Archive, and it's a great pleasure to have one of the finest vocalists in music, Nancy Wilson. Welcome.

NW: Thank you very much. I've thought of what you guys are doing — I think it's fantastic.

MR: It's been a marvelous experience for us. I want to read something that was written about you in Leonard Feather's first *Encyclopedia of Jazz*. "Admired by George Shearing and other musicians who have predicted a bright future for her, she has shown a promising combination of sensitive phrasing, secure intonation and a strong jazz feeling." So — I think you've fulfilled their future prospects.

NW: That's pretty good. It works, yeah. The thing that was so wonderful about it is, and I have to say about jazz critics, they really gave me the pits for a while. They felt that the Cannonball Adderly album was a compromise for Cannon. Because I was a Pop artist.

MR: No kidding?

NW: Oh, yes. You don't know the stuff they did to us. But my point that I've always tried to stress is I came into this business with a gift, the voice is a given. It was a gift from God. I didn't put any labels on it. I also decided to leave my home to do this, to be commercial. I mean the object of the game for me was why would I want to, why would anybody in their right mind want to give up their security, their home, all the things that mean happiness to me, to go out to only want to fulfill somebody else's idea of who and what I am. I figured that I was going to do this on a major scale or I didn't want to do it. Because I could go home, go to Carnegie Tech as opposed to Central State, and be a doctor or be something in medicine, and I'd have been fine. But the voice was always out front. But I have never apologized for being a commercial artist. That is why I do what I do, is to sell. I want to be heard, I want to reach as many people as I can. I believe in that mass thing. You know I want everybody to know who I am if I'm going to do it.

41 MR: There's nothing wrong with that.

42 NW: So when I listen to the things that Leonard — Leonard Feather used to get on me. It
43 would be I was not as jazz, I mean I was not a true jazz artist. Well I've never professed
44 to be. What does that mean, being a true jazz artist?

45 MR: Good question. What does a true jazz vocalist mean? Do you have to scat? Do you have
46 to ...

47 NW: Well if that's what it means, then I'm not, because I don't scat. I'm not a scatter. I think
48 being true to yourself, being able to improvise, to leave the melodic structure, being able
49 to be sensitive to ... see I'm a lyricist as opposed to hearing the intonations and where the
50 music is going. I believe in the spoken word first. So I came at it as an actress before I
51 came to it talking about the music. So the music is, it's all in my ears. I mean I don't, I've
52 never studied this. I am not a person who can give you lectures on what is jazz. I can't
53 really discuss the music too well with you. But I do know what I like. And I know the gift
54 that I have, and I've tried to use that wisely. So I just want to put the jazz in perspective,
55 for me. I sing songs.

56 MR: Right. Well I felt that way too because I think of you as one of the finest vocalists in
57 music, okay, because I know your career has encompassed a lot of things. This particular
58 album, I can't imagine anybody saying anything bad about it.

59 NW: Oh it was the fact that Cannonball Adderly had kind of stepped out of the jazz thing, into
60 the Pop. Because this was a huge across the board album. It was not just a jazz album.
61 "The Masquerade Is Over," "Sleeping Bee," these songs just popped out everywhere.
62 And that was the good thing about radio in those days and music is that the focus wasn't
63 so narrow then. We were able to play concert venues, Carnegie Hall where we were also
64 able to go into, the south side of Chicago and play The Southerland. So you could do so
65 many more things then than you can today. The labels kind of keep you out of places.
66 Whereas before we tried to broaden the scope. We, I believe that Cannonball Adderly
67 took jazz out of the sawdust and he was one of the more commercial jazz artists. And he
68 made his audience understand what he was doing.

69 MR: That's right.

70 NW: He had a command of the English language, and he talked about the music as though it
71 were truly alive. And he made everybody know what he was talking about.

72 MR: He, there's been a few people in your career that in the beginning were instrumental I
73 think, and he was one and John Levy.

74 NW: But before John Levy, and before Cannonball, there was a band called The Rusty Bryant
75 band who recorded for Dot. And I understand there is a copy of a bootleg, because I
76 never signed with Dot. There is supposed to be a record out of me, somewhere, on Dot.
77 And I do believe that was with Rusty Bryant's band. And before Rusty Bryant, because I

78 didn't join that band until after high school, there was a band called Sir Raleigh Randolph
79 and his Sultans of Swing. I was fifteen, and the band's singer. And I played all the
80 cabarets with — in the midwest and in Ohio. I felt really blessed to do that. It was
81 unbelievable to be able to sing all those wonderful songs at a young, very young age. I
82 had a television show at the age of fifteen, so, that kind of made, in my sphere, I was a
83 big fish in a little pond.

84 MR: Was that in Columbus?

85 NW: In Columbus, yeah.

86 MR: Was being in that area of the country, was the music different from when you moved to
87 New York? Did you notice a ...

88 NW: No. No I think we were all pretty much on a — at that time — we're talking about time
89 that made the difference, as opposed to where you were. Maybe if you were in, if I'd
90 have been in Kansas City I might have sung more Blues or R&B. But what I heard as a
91 child, was Little Jimmy Scott, Nat Cole, Bull Moose Jackson, Laverne Baker, Ruth
92 Brown, Dinah. Basically male influences first. Louie Jordan and the Tympani Five. My
93 father was the one who bought records. Consequently what I heard were male influences.
94 I found Dinah and Little Esther, her first record with Johnny Elios, was what was being
95 played at the juke joint around the corner on Kerdosier's [sic] Place. Little Miss
96 Cornshucks. I found I was fifteen before I really heard Ella and Sarah, and it was very
97 much later that I heard Billie. So I came out of more R&B than I did, and Blues, than I
98 did jazz. But everybody in Columbus played all of that. We didn't make those
99 distinctions. There was no such thing as Bobby Short and his jazz trio. It was Bobby
100 Short's trio. Rusty Bryant's band. And nobody tagged us. We played — Rusty had hits
101 basically in R&B, but we played, had one of the most brilliant keyboard players Hank
102 Marr, who is now the head of the music department at Ohio State. He's unbelievable. We
103 had some of the most magnificent people involved with the music in Columbus in small
104 clubs like the Club Regal, the Litchford Hotel, there was a little lounge in there where I
105 played. Rusty Bryant and our band started that whole midwest influx where Miles,
106 Cannon, Bill Evans came with Miles, Bill Doggett, at a place called Marty's 502, where
107 we stayed for a long time and the next thing, I mean things got so good that all the major
108 jazz artists came through there. And that's, I met Cannonball though, with Rusty Bryant,
109 in New York City, on the corner standing at 52nd and Broadway. That's where we met.
110 Cannonball had just come up. He was with John Levy. John Levy, I knew the name. If
111 you were in this business, you knew who John Levy was. John Levy was the former bass
112 player with George Shearing, who became George's road manager, eventually his
113 manager, and because he did such a good job for George, that just opened the door. By
114 the time I went with John, he had Ramsey Lewis, Gene Harris, The Three Sounds, he had

115 Cannonball, I mean he had so many wonderful artists that he nurtured and made sure that
116 they took care of the business and did wonderful things for them. So the object of my
117 strategy was, if I'm going to do this, the only person who I would trust to help and be
118 there for me would be John Levy.

119 MR: What a rare commodity — to have a musician, a fine musician, who would step into that
120 role. "I want to be with him."

121 NW: That you know would care about you as a person as opposed to being in the "show
122 business" mode. I did not have this great desire to be in show business, so I really needed
123 to know that there was somebody out there who would allow me to be a person and to use
124 the music to enhance, but be a part of, as opposed to just overshadow everything else.
125 And John understood that. We met, his assistant was a young man from Ohio, Chuck
126 Taylor. As I say, I met Cannon on the corner, this is when he and Nat, in fact both he and
127 Nat were in New York for one of the first times. This was about the time that Julian
128 [Cannonball] was, they were disbanding their first group, Cannon was going with Miles
129 and Nat was going with Lionel Hampton. So we were, we became friends. We talked, we
130 exchanged numbers. And Cannonball told John, Chuck Taylor had already told John,
131 John Levy was very much aware for several years before I ever got to New York that
132 there is this kid in Columbus, Ohio who sings. So it was kind of, it worked, I mean all of
133 it worked out nicely. I'm just grateful that I was not the kind of person who put the cart
134 before the horse and wanted it to happen all of a sudden. I needed to know me before I
135 wanted to do this. And I figured that if I got to know who I was and put happiness in
136 perspective and knew what it meant to be happy, then I could handle this business. And I
137 could do that with John Levy. I also wanted Capitol Records. I thought David Cavanaugh
138 was one of the best producers. He produced Nat Cole and Peggy Lee, Dakota Staton,
139 Jonah Jones. Because everybody out there — Capitol Records was the singer's label.
140 Johnny Mercer was there. I mean who, what could be better? So I shot for and I wanted
141 that. I wanted MCA which was the biggest agency. I wanted to play supper clubs, I
142 wanted the Coconut Grove as opposed to Sawdust, because I'm going to give this my
143 time and my effort. If I'm going to do it I want it to be right. And John understood that.
144 We talked and when I finally did come to New York, it was at the same week that Julian
145 was first diagnosed and these illnesses were discovered. I was 22. It was in 1959. And
146 when I arrived in New York, Cannonball was in the hospital. And we talked and he was
147 able to go back out and did many, many things. I ran into him in Ohio, obviously, when
148 he was with Miles. But there was this word, this murmur, from Joe Williams and
149 Cannonball, from many of the artists who came through Columbus, Sonny Stitt, just
150 [inaudible] kid in Columbus. So John was kind of, I just needed to showcase. And when I
151 was ready I came to New York. And within five, I got a job, which was different. I had

152 worked for a minute, you know, other than singing, between high school and college I
153 worked at an insurance company just to make money just to augment that scholarship.
154 Because I didn't want to put that kind of burden on my parents. But because I was
155 already making a decent wage, I mean I was earning a living as a singer, it was very
156 difficult to sit four years in a college. So I went on and joined the band eventually. I went
157 to school for a while, and Rusty Bryant had come after my prom. My prom night I went
158 to see that band. That was a big time band, the Club Carolyn and this was national. And
159 that was in my home town. So the first time I ever heard that band was on my prom night.
160 I sat in with the band that night. And Rusty was at my house the next day asking my
161 father for me to go on the road, which I said no, and my father said "it's up to her." I'm
162 not ready. So I went on to college.

163 MR: You knew what you wanted.

164 NW: Yeah. And I eventually joined the band and traveled in the midwest. But when I did come
165 to New York, I worked ... I want all young people to understand that there's a way to do
166 everything. I did not choose to be in New York City without being able to take care of
167 myself. I did not believe that I should come here and say to Cannonball, "make me a
168 star." I mean we were all musicians and people trying to earn our way into this business. I
169 didn't think that was anybody's responsibility but mine. So I came here, went to the
170 telephone company, learned to work a PBX machine, it was a phone operator, went to
171 Triangle Handbag Company in the garment district for a little bit, and then I ended up as
172 a secretary to the dean at the New York Institute of Technology. Because the hours were
173 from twelve to eight. And I could sing at night, do my daytime thing, and they also were
174 very understanding. And when it came time to go to California to record, when it came
175 time for photo sessions and, I always had the leeway to go do what I ... they were very
176 supportive of what I was trying to do. So I really am grateful to the New York Institute of
177 Technology, and to Cannon for when I did get here. There was a young lady who still
178 lives here in New York, she was the band singer with Johnny Hammond Smith. She was
179 my, we were roommates when I first came to New York. We hung out and just sat in at
180 places. We went to the Blue Morocco in the Bronx within a matter of ten days, two
181 weeks after I arrived in New York. [Inaudible] broke her leg, I stayed there until I moved
182 to California with the first album. I sang there four nights a week I think it was. Once I
183 had a place to sit down and sing, then Cannon said, "are you working." "Yep, I'm
184 working." John Levy came, and said "I'll call you tomorrow." And that following week I
185 was in the studio with Ray Bryant's trio. We did four demos, which were recorded within
186 the next year, within a matter of months I was in California. Actually it was in December
187 of that year. I came to New York in October. I had John Levy, MCA, Capitol Records,
188 David Cavanaugh, and a new album in the can by January 15th. So that's kind of ...

189 MR: So you could call your dad and say “hey, it worked.” That was wonderful.
190 NW: And I was blessed here again. My people were not show business people. They did not
191 push. They wouldn’t have known how. It was, the music was in my face, all the, from the
192 time I was a little kid.
193 MR: Some of our greatest piano players have had the pleasure of accompanying you. George
194 Shearing and all the way up to the Griffith Park band.
195 NW: Yes, Chic Corea. And I just did a show, night before last, with Billy Taylor’s trio for
196 National Public Radio. And although we have worked together, this we did at least eight
197 numbers and it was so much fun. Gene Harris, Ramsey Lewis, Joe Zawinul — oh. Joe
198 Zawinul made a statement that, and he said it a little rougher than this, but that there’s
199 nobody in the world that can play for you like I can. He was the most brilliant
200 accompanist. Because he came out of, he was Dinah Washington’s accompanist. And he
201 came to the ballad as no one else did other than Jimmy Jones. And I did so many albums
202 with Jimmy. He was one of the most brilliant arrangers of all time.
203 MR: Oh, “The Masquerade Is Over” — what he plays behind it.
204 NW: He’s wonderful, truly.
205 MR: And you’re traveling like crazy these days, right?
206 NW: Um hum.
207 MR: You were just overseas?
208 NW: Japan — I’m always in Japan. Yeah. I go there at least once a year, usually twice. Have
209 been as many as three and four times a year. I have been in Japan and Tokyo more than
210 I’ve been in Chicago the last five years. My daughters are now young women, they’re 19
211 and 20. I have a grown son. But from the time my son, who will be 33, was 7, I backed
212 off in order to be a mother. I worked enough. But it always was in perspective. The girls
213 are now, I’m working now for me, and I’m working to not work. And I’m going to be out
214 here a little bit more, and have been for the last two or three years. I’m very busy these
215 days, yeah.
216 MR: I’m interested in how a musician like you chooses songs, especially in the more
217 contemporary, like the song “Now I Know” which you recorded — how do you go about
218 choosing material? Do people present it to you in demo forms?
219 NW: If they do it properly they should present it to producers as opposed to the artists, or
220 management. If I allowed myself to receive everything that came through, I’m not going
221 to lie and say that I can listen to everything that people hand me. I just can’t or I would
222 have no life. I don’t think people are aware of the fact, and they think they’re giving you
223 a song for you. Nine times out of ten that is definitely not so. I wonder sometimes, did
224 these people ever hear me? Do they have any idea who I am or what I sing? Because a lot
225 of it just has nothing whatsoever to do, I mean there’s no way that I would ever do it. I

226 come from an old, traditional stance. I want a story, and I want a beginning, a middle and
227 an end. I would like a song that has meaning, touches your heart. Just recently I have
228 found a song that I would consider R&B that has a hook, which is something that I'm not
229 thrilled with, but the groove is so good that I'm willing to listen to it. But I'm basically a
230 lyric person. I really want to tell a story. I would like songs that deal with relationships,
231 the love of man for a woman, woman, children, God. I don't like throw-away songs. I
232 really want to say something.

233 MR: How is your — I know that you and Joe Williams go back quite a ways.

234 NW: Joe is new with John Levy. He's only been with him maybe fifteen or twenty years. One
235 of the, if not the best band that I have ever worked with was the Basie band. Count
236 Basie's band swings like no other band ever. There just was never a band like that. Joe
237 Williams was, at that time when Joe Williams was with the Basie band, I mean it didn't
238 get any better than Joe Williams and the Basie band. I love the ballads that Joe sings
239 today but I really love the energy that was there with the Basie band. Joe Williams was
240 one of the nicer people in the world. We, and I say John Levy, were very close. He's still
241 working, and working extremely well. I was so pleased to do the tribute to Joe Williams
242 at the Hollywood Bowl this year. Joe just sings so, I mean he's just magnificent. He's a
243 treasure. Truly a treasure.

244 MR: We've talked to a good number of Basie alumnus and from other groups too.

245 NW: The Basie band — ooh!

246 MR: And no one can quite put it into words, but there certainly is the feeling that you just
247 expressed that that band just chugged along like no other.

248 NW: It swings. Even today the orchestra is still — if I had my choice, if somebody was going
249 to say to me, you have a choice of an 18-piece orchestra, I would today say the Basie
250 band. So that's great. And I'm also pleased with what Mercer's doing with Ellington's
251 band. And a lot of young players, we worked together at the Ohio State Fair. The band
252 was as crisp, if not more crisp, than I've ever heard that band. They really knocked me
253 out. And we really have worked together more in the last five years I think than I ever did
254 with them in the earlier years. So the bands are still there. I would like to see more
255 venues. I don't want this lost because it's so special. Buddy Rich's band — ooh! Buddy
256 Rich used to have, I don't know how he did it, but he used to get these young guys
257 straight out of college, and he worked them to death. I mean he would crack the whip.
258 That was, if you had to walk on stage — and I did it with this band with no rehearsal —
259 and have them read my show without an error, they did it.

260 MR: I think they were scared to death not to, right?

261 NW: They did it. They could do it. There's only two bands that I would walk on stage with,
262 without a rehearsal, just put the music in front of them. And that's Basie, and Buddy
263 Rich.

264 MR: That's interesting because they're kind of different.

265 NW: Very different.

266 MR: The Rich band was quite young.

267 NW: Yes they were. But on it. I mean they could read from across the room. They were really
268 happening. It was a dynamite band. Sy Zentner, when I was working some of the night
269 clubs, had a band that was one of the best bands that you would ever want to find in a
270 club. So I've been blessed that I was able to work with big bands a lot longer than most
271 people because I was playing the supper clubs. And they had the Freddy Martin band and
272 I can't remember the name of the band, a fabulous orchestra in San Francisco at the
273 Fairmont Hotel. So they kept those bands a lot longer, and I did more work with those
274 house bands than I did any other time. And it was always a pleasure to go in and be able
275 to use charts. Because I have charts written by some of the greatest people. Oliver
276 Nelson's charts are still so valid today. It just doesn't get any better. And the voicing and
277 the harmonic structure that Jimmy Jones brought to the music. I was lucky. Very lucky.

278 MR: Did you ever have occasion when someone would write charts for you and did you have
279 opportunities to say "this isn't working, can you fix that?"

280 NW: The very first album. Billy May's. We sent those Ray Bryant demos out. And two of the
281 songs that we were doing were from that. And they were entirely different interpretations
282 than they were presented with. And it never occurred to me, well this isn't right. I want to
283 do ... this is not the way I plan to do this. And I mean I found out way later, you did what!
284 But I mean this has nothing whatsoever to do with the way I sing these songs. Billy just
285 said "okay m'am, you got it," and brought back in new charts the next day. And I've
286 always felt that if I were honest and up front — it never occurred to me that you don't do
287 that. I've been asked, you know, people, you had to do this, you had to — no. I haven't
288 had to do anything. I did not come up in an era where, like today, young people really
289 allow themselves, they believe in order to make it, some do, I will do whatever you say.
290 And they are molding people, they are engineering the records. They are not, it's not
291 creative anymore. It is being done over there with these little knobs. Finally when you
292 realize you've reached a point where major, million, multiple sellers of records cannot
293 perform the material in person, there is something very wrong with that, very wrong. I
294 was really fortunate, as I say, I researched this quite well. When you surround yourself
295 with people like a David Cavanaugh and a John Levy, you do it with that in mind, that
296 these people seem to care, and I don't, I never had anybody ever say "you've got to do
297 this — you have to." And in the early days, you drank at the bar — no I didn't do that. So I

298 was fed stories, horror stories of show business. You know you have to do this, you have
299 to do that. I said well I'm not doing that because that has nothing whatsoever to do with
300 me being a singer. If it has to do with my music or me on stage or my performance, then
301 we'll talk. But if it has nothing to do with that, no.

302 MR: Well it sounds like your musical and career instincts were really well formed in your
303 youth, so that's served you well.

304 NW: I brought it with me.

305 MR: When someone would attempt to tell you ...

306 NW: Well I just felt that there has to be another way to do show business. I mean if you're
307 going to do it — I want to sing, I don't want to be in show business. So I've always made
308 that distinction. There is a difference and you can't do it both ways. You can either be
309 caught up in it and become totally involved and allow it to be the master, or you can say
310 this is me. I have to do it this way in order to maintain, to be sane, to be myself. And I
311 preferred, I chose to be me, rather than to be somebody else.

312 MR: Can you recall as a child, were you always pretty comfortable in front of an audience?

313 NW: Always. I didn't know you were supposed to be nervous.

314 MR: It didn't even occur to you.

315 NW: It never occurred to me that you should be nervous. When I found out I was so grown
316 that it didn't make any difference. Then I found out people actually get nauseous and
317 tremble and shake. Well I don't want to do this if I have to be sick before I go on.

318 MR: Why would I subject myself to that.

319 NW: But some people do. Some people just feel that that's a part of it. I like being relaxed. I
320 like taking it in stride. I love it. I keep it in its proper perspective, and it allows me to
321 continue to do it. As long as I do it this way I can do it. As long as I'm able to do it for a
322 little while and go home and get what I need to give you. Because being out here doesn't
323 replenish. I have to go home for that. To be fulfilled, I need to go home in order to sing
324 for you. I have to have that sense of well being and balance.

325 MR: How long have you been on the west coast?

326 NW: Since the first, let's see I did the first album in December. The first album came out in
327 April. And I left then and went to Australia and waited for it to start flowing. John and I
328 did that. It was so cute I loved it. I spent months in Australia waiting. And I was not
329 available when the first record started hitting the air.

330 MR: That's interesting.

331 NW: I was out of the country working. I had months booked there, and came back, and was a
332 sensation.

333 MR: This was something that was thought of at the time?

334 NW: Yeah. When this starts to happen you won't be here. They'll have to ask for you.

335 MR: I'll be darned. And wait.

336 NW: That's John Levy. I love him so, I just love him. So that worked out very well. And I
337 came back from Australia in December of '60 and was married in California. I came here
338 and moved to California. I really prefer it. I'm from a rural atmosphere. I'm from
339 basically outside of the city limits. I'm not an inner city person. I can't deal — I came to
340 New York and the first year it was oh my God these tall buildings and where is the sun,
341 where is the grass, I want to see a tree that is not in Central Park. So I have, it was quite
342 an adjustment for me from the midwest coming to the East Coast. I basically have loved
343 California. And I love the south. I could live in Atlanta. I could live in North Carolina. I
344 like that. But I think I'm forever in California. I'm a desert rat although I'm basically
345 Pisces and I love the water, I do live in the desert. And it's probably because it's more
346 economical. I lived at the beach for years, and then I moved my family to the desert. My
347 husband and I used to have two places at the desert, but the girls and I are back at the
348 beach. So we just have a, I'll tell you I've really been blessed. I'm able to be ten minutes
349 from The Strand, which is one of the few places that has a room that's really amenable
350 for work and good for working. I can take the trio in and we can have a good time in
351 there. I still play Carnegie Hall. I'll be back in New York at the Blue Note actually in the
352 new year again here at the Blue Note, and stay for the week after and do six nights. But I
353 do enjoy New York to play. There's an excitement here you can't find anyplace else. So I
354 do love Carnegie Hall. I have a good time here. Don't want to live here. I want to come
355 here and party, sing, have a good time.

356 MR: Great. That's what you're going to do tonight. Tell us about your current trio. I know
357 Roy's been with you.

358 NW: Roy [McCurdy]. Oh forever. Roy and I obviously we ran into, I know Roy from the
359 Cannonball Adderly days. But he's been on the road with me for sixteen years. John B.
360 Williams, who nationally is known on the Arsenio show for five years, but he was with
361 me for ten years before that, and Arsenio, because I'm kind of Mom to him, said "Mom
362 can I really ..."

363 MR: They got your piano players?

364 NW: They got my — and Michael Wolf was not with me then but had been with me for five
365 years. So when Arsenio was out on the road with us it was Michael Wolf, John B.
366 Williams and Roy. So he, Mike was, he always told them, told Michael, that if something
367 happens to me, I'm going to do this and he did and he asked. And I know that the men are
368 real happy about that. And this is one of the most loyal people in the world is Arsenio. So
369 I'm very happy for the guys. John B. is back, Lou Mathews, one of the best keyboard
370 players, a magnificent conductor. As comfortable with a trio as he is with a symphony
371 orchestra. And told me frankly, although he tried to get him for some time, that until he

372 felt that he could accompany me as well as Jimmy Jones, you know he loved what Jimmy
373 did for me, that he and he just said I'm not ready. I don't think I'll...but he's been with
374 me now for ten years ... so... but that's the kind of feeling you want from your musicians.

375 MR: Sure.

376 NW: We are like a glove on a hand.

377 MR: That's great. It's nice to know that he approached the work with such commitment.

378 NW: Yeah. That was unheard of. I mean it was like "I beg your ... what did you say?" "I don't
379 know if I can accompany you as well yet." And he worked at it. Because it is a different
380 thing, being an accompanist as opposed to playing piano. I've had many pianists. Don
381 Trenner was an accompanist as was Ron Elbright and Lou. Many of the other people that
382 have played for me I would not have used the word "accompanist." They are wonderful
383 pianists and play great keyboard. But accompanying is a special art. And Lou Mathews
384 has it.

385 MR: I think it probably has a little bit to do with ego and looking at the total picture.

386 NW: No, excuse me. It's ears.

387 MR: It's ears?

388 NW: It's just realizing piano players play piano. Accompanists listen to singers. There's a
389 difference, I'll tell you, there's a big difference.

390 MR: Well, this has really been fascinating.

391 NW: My pleasure.

392 MR: And do you have anything to say to a young singer in Columbus, Ohio trying to get to
393 New York?

394 NW: Sing anyplace they ask you to sing. Use your voice. Work. Learn your craft. And you
395 can't learn your craft at home. You need to work those little rooms. You need to put your
396 music in front of people, not in a studio. You need to work. And this is something they've
397 gotten away from. And we need rooms for these young people to learn their craft. We
398 need more little Club Regals and more little places for kids to play. More places where
399 you can just go and just have a piano if you can't have a rhythm section. The object of the
400 game is to put your music and put yourself in front of people. You don't learn your craft
401 just in front of a microphone.

402 MR: Great. Thanks so much for your time. I hope you have a great gig tonight and the rest of
403 your travels.

404 NW: Woah, shortly.

405 MR: On behalf of Hamilton College it's been a great pleasure.

406 NW: One of these days, hopefully, I will be on the campus and walk through, and get to see
407 this.

408 MR: Boy, that would be a thrill.

409 NW: Thank you for asking me.

410 MR: Thank you.