

Garvin: "Sista" not "sister", "sista"

Jan: Yeah, sista'. Of course, being from the south themselves, they had strong accents. What are you thinking when you recall hearing her on radio? You said you could...

Garvin: She was the best group we heard at that time.

Jan: One of the best.

Garvin: Yeah, never that good before. She interpreted jazz the way it should have been sung. That was my opinion.

Jan: And Ella?

Garvin: Ella came right along behind her. Very much _____ here. She was young, she was only 17 years old when he got her, in _____ when we heard her that night at the contest. Only 17 years, she might not have turned 17 yet. So I used to have to go in the dressing rooms and make her put Mums under her arms before going on stage, make her comb her hair, and all that.

Jan: She was young.

Garvin: Yeah, she was young. Her voice material, settled down, got a little broader, little darker in quality, little more depth. Then she began to take on some of the sounds of Connee Boswell.

Jan: Did you notice it yourself?

Garvin: Sure, we used to tell her about it, we used to tell her about it! You sound more like Connee Boswell everyday Sis! Oh yeah, that'd please her. She liked that.

Jan: Oh, she liked that.

Garvin: She liked that. Sure.

Jan: It's amazing, of course, as she got older, she imitated horns like Connee Boswell did, but then she got into her own thing. She ran with it.

Garvin: That's _____ with great singers. If they, they start emulating someone else, they finally turn into a style of Ella. Ella turned out to be a style of her own. She started with Connee Boswell. And then she turned out to be a style of her own.

Jan: That's right.

Garvin: With that, kid style she had (sings "A Tisket-A-Tasket") and then she began to sing (sings "A Tisket" lower) broader. The mouth was (gives examples of how she held her mouth). That's the difference. so,...

Jan: Do you think that she, Ella, now has in turn, listened through the years, other singers? Is there any other singers that you think of that Ella influenced?

Garvin: Thinking that Ella what?

Jan: Do you think Ella influenced uh, other singers?

Garvin: Oh, she, there were quite a few singers that emulated Ella in her days. Yes. they were copying her. All singers do that, you know.

Jan: Connee Boswell you mean?

Garvin: Of course. I did it. I was one of those. I tried to sound like Ella!
Garvin: No, this is a male, male singer.
Jan: You have to have a role model. My clarinet playing, I started back in the days of Ted Lewis. I was impressed by Ted Lewis, and then the Dixieland, Larry Shield. And then along came Goodman. I was impressed by him. So I stole something from everybody 'cause if I'm impressed by him, go do something that he did, that I like. Singers are the same way. He is one of the most original. He and Benny Goodman are original, very original. Yes.

(end of side 1)

(begin side 2)

Jan: Well, let me ask you, we're talking about singers here, in the book did, you thought there were certain singers, three that influenced a lot of jazz singing itself. Do you remember?
Garvin: ...copied something from Benny Carter. My latest impression of clarinet has been by, what, the great jazz clarinet player, the modern jazz clarinet player, what's his name?
Jan: He's ever lived, jazz included, what is his name, the one, he was a

Jan: Uh, wow, modern jazz...

Jan: Oh yeah?

Garvin: He copied after Charlie Parker, but he played it on clarinet. Not Pete Fountain, he's jazz, New Orleans. (stopped tape) Johnny Dobbs, back in New Orleans, and _____,

Jan: Until you came to your own sound.

Garvin: Sure. My experiences go over such a wide scope. Many years. You'll hear me play things from everybody.

Garvin: Oh yes.

Jan: So your saying, which is very true, that singers, of course, after the singers up to today, listened to Ella and, is there any uh, in your book you mentioned that there were some people that really had major influences upon jazz singing.

Garvin: Yes, yes. Let me tell you. I give so much credit to, white singer who, that uh, what's the white singer's name that sings jazz almost better than anybody.

Jan: You mean Connee?

Garvin: Who?

Jan: Connee Boswell you mean?

Garvin: No, this is a male, male singer.

Jan: Male singer!

Garvin: Yeah! Of course Louie Armstrong was original, with his quality made him an original. But his style, he got it from horn players, and his own style of horn playing. He is one of the most original. He and Benny Goodman are original, very original. Yeah.

Jan: Well, let me ask you, we're talking about singers here, in the book you said, you thought there were certain singers, three that influenced a lot of jazz singing itself. Do you remember.

Garvin: Yes, let's see if I can remember the basis for that statement. There's a white singer that I think was just as creative as any black singer has ever lived, jazz included, what is his name....the one, he was a Welch singer, Tom Jones!

Jan: Oh yeah?

Garvin: Tom Jones. That's who I was talking about. Tom Jones, Louie Armstrong, Bing Crosby, quite a few singers that had adopted styles that turned into something individual. Crosby, Louie Armstrong, created a style that....

Jan: You think he was one of the main ones?

Garvin: Oh yes.

Jan: And you mentioned Ethel Waters.

Garvin: Ethel Waters, Louie Armstrong.

Jan: And uh, Garvin, where would you place, we were just talking a few minutes ago about Ella and how she emulated Connee Boswell. It was sort of strange, how did Connee Boswell get in the middle of this anyway. Where would you put her? Would you put her as a jazz singer?

Garvin: I say this. Connee Boswell only had some regular outlets but she didn't become a national style that people emulated, but individual singers copied the things by Connee Boswell.

Jan: They did.

Garvin: You see. Ella is one of them.

Jan: What did you think of Connee Boswell when you heard her? Did you think of her as a blues singer, early jazz singer?

Garvin: Early jazz singer, early jazz singer. Not a blues singer, early jazz singer. When you think of blues, you think of Bessie. And Ethel is not a blues singer. She sang blues as way some people interpreted it. Those of us who played blues we wouldn't interpret it Ethel's singing, more melodic.

Jan: Getting back to these major influences, another person you talked about, Louie Armstrong, Ethel Waters, and Billie Holiday. How did she fit in? What did she do differently?

Garvin: Oh, Billy fits in there beautifully because there was nobody that sang like Billy. She, she borrowed from Louie Armstrong. With her coarse unique voice, and she borrowed from Ella!

Jan: How did she borrow from Ella?

Garvin: You'll hear some of the things she did, that is Ella's style, but it is basically Louie Armstrong! Basically Louie Armstrong. Maime Smith had some things that she did, _____ with her, but... what's the girl's name?

Jan: You were talking about Louie, you thought that Billie Holiday....

Garvin: Billie Holiday. Yes, she was influenced _____. She made all the rehearsals. Her father played the guitar in our band. She wasn't singing then. She hadn't started singing. And she made all of our rehearsals.

Jan: Billie Holiday?

Garvin: Billie Holiday. The one with the _____.

Jan: So you knew, met up with Billie.

Garvin: Oh sure, all of our, got the memorial here for. I played for her. And I talked about it. I knew her first job, I knew how she was inspired by our band, and her father being a guitar player. They say he is her adopted father, but she has his name. I don't know what her real name was. Like Ella, she had exposure to horns. Exposure to horns. But she was influenced by Louie Armstrong. She had that "Aaaaaaaa" (imitating raspy sound) voice (imitates Louie) and that was unique.

Jan: That's true. And you say she borrowed a little from Ella.

Garvin: Sure she did.

Jan: What was it, you think was the most distinctive thing about Billie then, that influenced other singers? What was it?

Garvin: Her style, she emulated Louie Armstrong to a tee only it was a female Louie Armstrong. Let's see, something else unique that she did... uh,

Jan: Phrasing?

Garvin: Her phrasing, pronunciation was "Aaaaaaa". Most singers try to avoid that. You're a singer, you know that. You try to avoid those "Aaaa" sounds.

Jan: That's right.

Garvin: But Billie, "My Man" (sings like Billie) she got away with it. Her pronunciation, she got away with it! And uh, it became a style indigenous with her.

Jan: That's true.

Garvin: You can break all the laws, and if you can break them so people like it, that's a style.

Jan: I guess I'm going to ask you, all these singers, we're talking about, in their own way were a little different, yet they seem to influence most of jazz singing. Louie Armstrong, Ethel Waters and Billie Holiday, who was really different, definitely different than Ethel. But more like Louie Armstrong. What I'm going to ask you next is how does it fit, how do the Boswells, a white woman fit in there? She was different?

Garvin: Listen, for the same reason Al Jolsen used to put on cork and do an interpretation of black singers, and he was born in Baltimore and he had some of that in him also. Jewish, but he had that southern thing. I know about Al Jolsen. I went to see him in person. Al Jolsen was doing the same things. So, Louie became popular from 1925 on. He joined Fletcher Henderson in 1923 I believe, no, no, 1923 in Roseland. As a singer he became popular after, after he went back to Chicago, and he began to sing like he played. With that hoarse bad voice like we called it, but he sang like he played! And that was it. When he came to Connee's Inn, in NY, with the _____, he brought his _____ along with him and his style from then on, it took off. But they began to accept that style. He had such great interpretation. He had a great interpretation on trumpet. There was nothing to equal as far in those days so he sang what he played and that turned it in to a different thing.

Jan: For sure. Tell me about working with Chick Webb. How was it working for Chick Webb's Band? You knew him before, earlier, right?

Garvin: I used to arrange for him before I joined the band.

Jan: You did?

Garvin: I did some arrangements for him. And uh, Chick was afflicted, he was a cripple, hunchback, very sensitive, but no education. He couldn't read or right. He didn't know 2% or 1% of anything! He couldn't figure, they cheated him out of all of his money. He did know he was....

Jan: Just didn't...

Garvin: Illiterate, completely illiterate! But he,

Jan: You knew him in the early days before you joined, right?

Garvin: Yes, after I joined him he was still, sure! He died being illiterate, he didn't change.

Jan: No, I mean, even earlier, when you were younger playing with other bands, I think you were with Calloway first.

Garvin: No, no,...Yes I was Callaway before I was with Chick Webb.

Jan: Before Chick, but you knew of...

Garvin: I knew of Chick years before when Chick was around. And uh, I known Chick, I had done some gigs for Chick and we went out on the road and we didn't get paid.

Jan: That's what I think I remember.

Garvin: Ella wasn't with us then.

Jan: No. That was years before.

Garvin: Yeah.

Jan: So that was your first time you'd....

Garvin: That was the first time I was with Chick, on the road and we didn't get paid and all 16 of us had to sleep in one room.

Jan: But he was a nice guy to work for...

Garvin: Here's the thing. People that are illiterate have a different concept about life. And they haven't read anything. They only take what they have heard. And what they picked up. So Chick's philosophy about life was little bit out of, different than the average and being a cripple and a hunchback he was sensitive. And uh, naturally he had horse sense. And that doesn't always fit in, horse sense doesn't always fit in. You have to use logic that goes along with the day, the time. And uh, Chick would demand some things that we just didn't like too much. But he would be in the, we would try them anyhow. He was a phenomenal drummer, he ___ read music. With arrangements, he'd go off and listen to the arrangement while we rehearsed it. Then he'd go back on the stand and play it. He had an elephants eye in remembering. He'd remember and he'd remember all those arrangements, how they drew 'em and he couldn't read a note of music as big as this house. And he tried to be big. When the band leaders were popular, like the Ellington's and the Count Bassie's, and all that, he'd try to be big, and he was only about this high, and he would stand there and (imitates C. Webb) "Yuh, you'll do as I say...." Oh shut up little man! That always got under his skin! But he always try to impress how great he was. And eh was a good drummer. Gene Kruppa got his style from Chick Webb.

Jan: Definitely. You can hear that.

Garvin: When Chick died, while his body was lying there in state in Baltimore, Gene sat there from 7:00 in the morning, sit there all day long, sit there, and I saw him watch that casket until that night, we had to put him out, 11:00 at night we had to put him out. He idolized Gene, Chick Webb. And uh, Chick had a great sense. He wasn't a good drummer to play behind. He didn't swing, he didn't feel much of his drumming, but sensational solos you couldn't beat him.

Jan: That's true, great solos.

Garvin: He didn't swing the band very much. He was pretty hard to play with. And when we record with him, you'll notice that sometimes the tempo drops back. You just have to fight his tempo.

Jan: What did you think when he asked you to join and was Ella already hired too?

Garvin: No, Ella came after. I did a concert with him and uh, the gig with him, at night was at the Emenets theatre, that's where he picked her out at the contest.

Jan: Were you there?

Garvin: I didn't pick her, no. She was chosen by the judges.

Jan: Okay, but were you there?

Garvin: Sure, oh sure.

Jan: Tell me a little about when you were there about, you heard her at this contest, what did you personally....

Garvin: She out-sang everything there with that baby style of hers. And what did she sing, I think she sang "Sunny Side Of The Street", what did she sing then? I'm trying to think of the number that she won the contest. And Chick hired her that next day. He called her up and had her come to rehearsals the next day.

Jan: So you were there when she sang for the first time.

Garvin: Oh yeah. Sure.

Jan: When she won the contest.

Garvin: Sure.

Jan: She sang, you think it was like one song, "Sunny Side Of The Street."

Garvin: I think she sang "Sunny Side" I've forgotten what the name of the sheet was.

Jan: "Object Of My Affection"?

Garvin: I don't know, I've forgotten the song, one of the songs she later one. You know we're going back, my memory is pretty good, but I'm going back 35, 40 years. It was more than 40 years. It was 50 years. 50 years... it's over 50 years.

Jan: That's a long time. And you heard her when she was just 16 to 17, got up there and sang. All of you fellows, you were sitting there and Chick Webb was impressed.

Garvin: He was impressed, yes he was impressed. He called her up and had her come to rehearsal the next day.

Jan: How was it when she...

Garvin: She was alright. She sang, she sang a song, didn't have any arrangements made for her, but she sang some of the things we had arranged, we had to tell her to take a chorus in there. The piano, let her take the chorus, we had no arrangements so right away the arrangers got busy. And started making charts for her. Al Feldman, who is now a big arranger in Hollywood, his name is, he changed his name, ...

Jan: Isn't it Feldman still? Is it Al or Vic?

Garvin: No, it was Al Feldman and he changed his name to (pause)

Jan: Does she still know, would she still, does she know you now that she's a big star?

Garvin: Let me tell you what happened. This happened, our relationship began '33, '32?

Jan: Yes.

Garvin: '32. She came to Puerto Rico. I was a band leader there, I had a band at the hotel. So I had the night off and I went to hear her and when she went to Puerto Rico, this was in '70, 70 something...about '68 or '70, and she came to Puerto Rico with _____ I asked, I went back, we found the party, the guy that manager of the _____, and the printer, the printing shop, come on Buschell - we're going to take you out to see Ella, to see if Ella wants to go. So they figured (inaudible) So what happened after the concert, after she appeared, the club, a big club, hotel, I went back and asked her to come on and

join us. "Oh no, oh no, I don't sit at anybody's table" "What you say?" "I don't sit at anybody's table" I said "this is me your talking to." "I know Buschell!" She wouldn't come out, she wouldn't come out and sit with me. I wanted her to meet these people.

Garvin: I don't....now she can't see me. She's still living, isn't she?

Jan: Oh yes. She just had her birthday. She's 71. She's lost some weight.

Garvin: Where does she live?

Jan: She lives in Beverly Hills.

Garvin: I've talked to Eubie Blake. We've been together for years. And I told him he had been on the show one night and I called him up in fear and I got his hotel, no no, got his answer "Buschell!" "Yeah, who's that?" I says "_____ Buschell!" "Yeah, how are ya? What's you want?"

Jan: Oh no!

Garvin: I was his arranger. I used to do his arrangements.

Jan: So he didn't remember you.

Garvin: He didn't remember me at all. And we had Milt Hinton's birthday, we'll be celebrating in New York in '83 I think, and Eubie was there and uh, Eubie, they could remember me. And Marion was there and Marion was talking to me and Eubie got mad because she was talking to me.

Jan: Who?

Garvin: Marion, that was his wife.

Jan: Oh.

Garvin: I knew Marion and Eubie the same time I knew Eubie back in the early '20s. Marion and I had been very good friends. She had been a _____ in our family for many years. Some people change like that. And I can't see myself changing like that. I wouldn't do that for nothing in the world because I love my friends so much! I'm so

happy to have, some of them are dead, and everytime I see one of them I grab and hug...

Jan: Sure.

Garvin: Any of my friends that are left. All these guys are dead.

Jan: It's a shame that, you were there when Ella started and...

Garvin: Yes she did, oh she did. Ask my wife, why she was right there with me. She did. "I don't sit with no party" "No, sit with me, sit with me, I'm no party." "I can't do that Buschell." If I ever see her again, although she's afflicted with blindness and what-not, old age, and I'm older than she, but she's probably older than me physically, I'm almost 90 years old. I'm happy that I've lasted this long. I'll be 89 in September. So, all these guys are dead. All of them.

Jan: Let me ask you something else too. It's a little off the subject. When you were talking about New York, and uh, some of the guys there, a couple of jazz violinists too played on....do you remember, there's a

Garvin: Charlie Jackson was one and Stuff Smith was another. Uh, what's the other, there's another, Juice, Juice....

Jan: What was the other fellow, like Joe...

Garvin: Joe Venuti, he was the one...

Jan: Joe Venuti, yeah, Joe South?

Garvin: Eddie South.

Jan: Eddie South. And another guy, white guy, ...

Garvin: They called him the black gypsy 'cause he spent a lot of time in Hungaria. He played, he just did concert, just playing jazz and playing like a gypsy.

Jan: Do you remember a guy by the name of Harry Hoffman? Also he was an arranger but he also, jazz violinist.

Garvin: What was his name?

Jan: White fellow that was in New York.

Garvin: I don't remember him. I remember Stuff Smith, Charlie Jackson, Joe Venuti, uh, there's another one too. Uh, Rappelli, _____ in France here, we played together, Paris. And um, Rappelli was a great jazz player, very great. I played with him in the 60, 1961! When I went to Europe to do the European Jazz Festival and Rappelli was on the bill. We met, had a big reunion, we met all the guys.

Jan: Garvin, after Chick Webb, I knew you were, lets see, played in Europe. Was that before or after Chic Webb when you were in Europe?

Garvin: After Chick Webb.

Jan: After Chick Webb.

Garvin: No, no no, no!

Jan: No wait a minute, before! With Sam Wooding. It was before!

Garvin: I was saying with Chick. I had been to Europe about 5 or 10 times. But my first one was with Sam Woody in 1925.

Jan: Before. And after Chick Webb and after Ella, and you left, through your career, now have you backed other singers with a band, orchestra...other, like Lena Horne or these people or ...

Garvin: No, I've played for Lena Horne, the first time she was on stage.

Jan: You did?

Garvin: I remind, she came to Puerto Rico and she had uh, I was off and another band played her music that night so I reminded her "There's something funny about these women. When they get big they get too big." "Lena" I said, "I played for you, do you remember Fletcher Henderson?" "Yeah Honey, I remember that!" She's from the, you know her with the Southern accent, acquired southern accent.

Jan: Acquired?

Garvin: She was raised, yes, she was raised, born in Brooklyn. Her grandmother, I think she lived with her grandmother in Georgia for

a while. "Yeah Honey, I remember you!" I said "huh?" "Yeah, I remember you, you played the saxophone!" And uh, I talked with her the night, the first time she was on stage with an amature group with the Ray Chiles dancers, kid dancers you know. She was 16 years old then and I reminded her "Yeah honey, I remember you." And that's all. The men were around her like this and although I was musical director of the hotel I couldn't get near her because they were swarming her so I didn't bother no more. She stayed there one night in San Juan.

Jan: Any other vocalist through the, you career, that sticks in your mind? Or vocal groups even?

Garvin: Well, of course I played for the Ink Spots sometimes. I wasn't impressed with them because I sort of diskliked one of them because the guy that played, the tenor singer, he sold his dog up in Boston for 50 cents because he wanted to get something to drink. That little dog used to follow him all the time. That dog loved him and he sold that dog for 50 cents and I stopped speaking to him. I never spoke another word to him until the day he died. The man who sells his dog for a drink of whisky I don't have anything to do with. He died, I saw him walk, I went right by him. I wasn't going to, he looked in my eyes and I turned my head 'cause I'm a lover of dogs, I love dogs. And I said "You're lower than.." I called him some names which I won't repeat. I did, I did! Sell a dog for something to drink! For 50 cents!

Jan: Isn't that something. But other than that group...

Garvin: I don't know anybody else that I played with, um...

Jan: Did you play with, you said you knew Billie Holiday, and you saw her, but ...

Garvin: I didn't do any recordings with her, no.

Jan: Or just even played on....

Garvin: No, I didn't play any of the gigs with Billie. I didn't play any of the gigs with her, but I knew her. She used to make the rehearsals with us. And I knew her very well. She would come to every rehearsal and uh, then when she would begin to sing at Pard's & Jerry's on 33rd Street, I'd go in there and sit down with her. That's her first

job. And I'd go there and listen to her, late hours. Stayed open until 6:00 in the morning.

Jan: You really liked listening to her?

Garvin: Yeah sure! She had a good style. And she tried to sing like Louie Armstrong and some of the things that horns did, and she copied and it was good. I enjoyed her, yeah! She was a real pretty girl in those days, when she was young you know.

Jan: That's what everyone says.

Garvin: Yeah, she was pretty.

Jan: She had a lot of hard luck.

Garvin: Yeah, yeah. Billie had quite an experience in night clubs and she knew what she was doing, not by theory, but by experience. She experienced the way to sing. So, this style that she established, I guess, she thought it was quite a while before she decided she was going to sing like. She just chose Louie Armstrong, and that's what she stuck to that and it worked. It worked very good! And her unique way of delivering that, that made it something different. Yeah.

Jan: Did you know Louie Armstrong?

Garvin: You know, just like, the last time together, we were all in the elevator together at the Ottoman Hotel in Cleveland. That's the last time I saw Louie. And he....

Jan: When was that about?

Garvin: I was in one of his jobs, I was playing at the Cleveland...

Jan: You think...

Garvin: I went to one of his concerts in Cleveland. Sure, I knew him well. I'd call him Lou and he'd call me Bushy. Very well. And she (Lucille) knows him well, had a good time with him.

Jan: When was that about, you're recalling the time you went to hear him after you job.

Garvin: What?

Jan: What year was that about? 60's?

Garvin: Sixty, (pause), sixty (pause), wasn't in '64, I was in Africa in '64. It had to be '65 maybe. No, no, no. It was earlier than that. It was earlier than that because I left over to Paris, it was while I was with Wilbur and that had to be somewhere in the '50s, '59. '59 or '60.

Jan: How did he know you, Garvin? Louie?

Garvin: Well, I had been in all the big attractions in Vaudville, all the different shows.

Jan: All the different bands.

Garvin: Yeah. And I had been first alto in all the different bands and that, he knew, I was surprised that he knew my name. But he joined Fletcher, before I joined Fletcher, then he heard, I had been with Fletcher years before, the I went back with Fletcher in '35-'36. But in the '20s, late 20's, no, '23 or '24 I think, Louie joined Fletcher. But he heard my name bouncing around with Saffwood, that was first alto. I'm the first one to play oboe and bassoon and the black horn players played oboe and bassoon. So I had been to Club Alabama, had been to Broadway, ben on Vaudville in the early 20's. We didn't play the Palace theatre but we played the whole state. We played the Vaudville houses, played the Astor Hotel. So my name had been bounced around quite a bit.

Jan: I'd say.

Garvin: I went to Europe, a lot of _____ and records, and I came back and I went with the, played with the Philharmonic, played with the _____ Philharmonic, played with Radio City with bassoon, so he _____ knew me very well. As a matter of fact, I thought, one time, he was going to ask me to join him. I think he did when I was with Wilbur, 'cause he was looking for a clarinet player and he was going to ask me but out of respect for Wilbur he didn't. He didn't approach the question to me but I think he was looking for a clarinet player. He might have asked me to do it. Because Tyria, Tyria and I were good friends. Tyria Gwenn, that was his trombone player. And we were very good friends. And I think one time he probably wanted me to

Join the band. But I wasn't, quite a little, quite a with Tom. I didn't like the feeling, like Tomming (imitates Louie's sound) and I didn't go for that. I was on the other side of the fence. That didn't interest me too much.

Jan: That was his way.

Garvin: Yes. That was his way of doing it. It paid off for him. He became an inter, a world figure by then.

Jan: That's true.

Garvin: (imitates Louie sound) "Ya Sir, Boss." Not me. I try to avoid that. But I saw much of that as a kid and I try to avoid that. When I lived in New York, you didn't deliver, the delivery didn't come to our front door. They went down to the basement door. _____ So that's the side of the fence I was raised on in New York. My father was a minister. Minister of _____ Baptis Church and I had to, when I got out of the cabarets, when I got into the cabarets, I acted like the minister's son, you know, as far as the people's concerned. But, uh, that uh, his type of mannerisms, type of responding to, because we were very careful to avoid that stigma of being a "Tom" or the old time negro that we're trying to turn around. So we were trying very hard. _____ To this day, that uh, there have been many years since change has taken place but it's working a little bit now.

Jan: Finally!

Garvin: The black people have more dignity attached to them now and because of their personal achievements and not only being a hoofer and a dancer and a horn player, they've done so many other things.

Jan: Yes they have indeed.

Garvin: So, we tried very hard to avoid that. So, Louie was the essence what we tried not to be.

Jan: Tried not to be?

Garvin: But his horn playing, we used to listen, there's nobody else in the world like him. Nobody could come near him, no. Now of course, there are plenty of guys like Louie. They play better, they play better than Louie _____ Louie gave them the idea.

Jan: That's true, definitely.

Garvin: Like Coleman Hawkins, he gave him the style for playing tenor saxophone. But there are so many horn players that play better.

Jan: What was your, in listen, when we were talking about the singers. Off the top of your head, what was one of your favorite ones that you enjoyed listening to? Or maybe, the one that you thought was like a really good jazz singer? Any in particular?

Garvin: Well, I'm gonna say this. Up till now, as far as a jazz singer, there are a lot of guys who sing jazz. What's the fellow that died not too long ago, a few years back. He made a few good records that I liked. But the guy that sang with the nitty gritty, you know, had the real feeling, made all the right turns, the right moves; Tom Jones used to

Jan: Really.

Garvin: Sure. Tom Jones sang like we used to sing. Like the folks used to sing back home. And uh, I always, they said he was from Wales but I never believed it. I never believed it. There was nobody from Wales that ever else had that feeling unless there was....

Jan: There must have been someone else.

Garvin: His background was someplace else.

Jan: He was from Wales but he probably listened to all our American singers.

Garvin: How the name in God can he do it so naturally?

Jan: He probably listened.

Garvin: You can tell when a thing is acquired. It's like a person emulating a British accent or a French; you can tell when it's acquired or when it is original. I can't, it's like years ago, a lot of negroes passed for white because they were white complected. They had to, to get along. And they'd go somewhere, but like, we'd be sitting in the band, like the Cotton Club, Club Alabama, whatever cabaret we would always say "oh yeah, there's one" "hey there's children, that

happened over there." Even in the theatres in Washington D.C., when we'd play Washington, you would always see, the negro women would be powdered up and painted, light complected. Half, you know, half-casts originally, but they powdered up their, pass, you had to pass in those days. We got, we got right now a guy that's one of our greatest _____ and I'm going to say this to you. You got _____, you know uh, I just saw him on the thing last night before with, he appeared with Hines, they did a thing together, Billy Crystal.

Jan: Uh huh.

Garvin: Billy Crystal, he's half Jewish and negro. If you look in real close you'll see it. But he gets away with it and there are many like that. Because it is to their advantage. And uh, I don't criticize them, I criticize the system that cause them to have to do that.

Jan: That's true.

Garvin: Sure, but Tom Jones sang more like he was supposed to sing. And I don't know where he got it from, how he got it, and uh, of course there are singers now that sing well. I say, Mel Torme is very good.

Jan: Yes he is.

Garvin: He is one of my fine singers. I like Mel Torme because he can do anything with his voice.

Jan: Very smooth.

Garvin: Very smooth! Mel Torme to me is one of the finest singers there is: as far as jazz is concerned.

Jan: What about female jazz vocalists?

Garvin: Who?

Jan: Female, girl _____ .

Garvin: Today?

Jan: Today, or even earlier, not necessarily today. Of course, Ella, Sarah Vaughn, Carmen McRae and these people....

Garvin: Heh, funny thing, we mentioned everything but haven't said a word about Sarah Vaughn.

Jan: What about Sarah? Do you know Sarah?

Garvin: Sarah I know personally. She, she you know, she's one of my big admirers. One time Sarah was looking at me that way and I used to turn my head the other way. But Sarah to me is one of the great artists. She's got a big vibrato, but my God, how she interprets! Yeah. I can't stand Billy Eckstein's vibrato. He's been a great singer but his vibrato is too much for me; a little too wide. But Sarah, Sarah, she just had such a quality. So deep, such a _____ and when you heard her sing, if you had goose pimples they come out when Sarah sings.

Jan: That's for sure.

Garvin: That's the difference.

Jan: Even now, you know, she's up there too. She's about 70 and she's still singing away.

Garvin: Sure she is.

Jan: And she can still out sing any of the young singers.

Garvin: Sarah is one of my favorite singers. Sarah was one of my favorite singers, Keely Smith was great. I loved Keely Smith, Keely Smith was great.

Jan: I often wondered who Keely Smith listened to. She came from New Orleans, but she had a nice sense of phrasing.

Garvin: She comes from New Orleans?

Jan: Yeah.

Garvin: _____ from Oklahoma originally.

Jan: Really?

Garvin: Yeah.

Jan: But somehow, I guess when she got hooked up with Louis Prima, who was from New Orleans...

Garvin: Yeah, that came out of New Orleans, but she's from Oklahoma. And you can take a barrel of beans and feed every pure white, at that day every pure white person in Oklahoma, a barrel of beans would feed 'em. Back in those, back in the '20s.

Jan: She had Indian, she was Indian.

Garvin: Sure, sure. And the same thing, same thing about the Cherokee nation in Kentucky around there. There was so much mixture, and especially in North and South Carolina, and a lot of Senators used to say "I'm 3/4 Osage, I'm 1/4 Chippewa" and they found out that the Osage and Chippewa in that day were part negro too so they stopped saying that they were_____! (laughs) But, Keely Smith I liked very well. Uh, there's a couple of new singers that I like, I hear, I'm very impressed with. What's her name, names, my wife has to tell me, she knows the names of everybody. She remember names very well. I don't remember too much of the names. Since I had my stroke, a lot of things were erased from my mind. I had a stroke last August. And um, it didn't leave me crippled, this hand is not as active as it once was but some things are just erased from my mind.

Jan: Yeah.

Garvin: I found out your left side of your brain controls the right side of your body. And uh, during that stroke I little pressures. I felt things here and this hand, about three months I couldn't do much with this hand. I was sitting right here and all of a sudden I was getting this stroke. I was giving this flute lesson so after that, things just went out of my mind. And some of them just didn't come back. And my clarinet playing has never, never come back to where it was. Bassoon playing I'm doing pretty good. On the oboe and bassoon but not the clarinet and saxophone I had problems with. But um,

(tape stops)

Jan: ... scat sing like Ella.

Garvin: That's right, that's right. I haven't forgot about scat singing but I didn't know you wanted that included in your category. Uh, Scat Man Davis was very good. He died just recently.

Jan: That's true.

Garvin: Had cancer. Scatman, he was good. And Louie was scat singing. He started all of that. He started a lot of scat singing, yes! I don't say he was a creative scat, but he did a lot of it in his early days. He scatted like he played horn. That was, that gave quite a wide range of....

Jan: Louie Armstrong?

Garvin: Louie Armstrong, yeah.

Jan: What a, tell me a little about, before we call it a day, about Louis Jordan.

Garvin: Louis, Louis was a great artist. Louis was a great artist on the bandstand. I took his place.

Jan: That's right, you did.

Garvin: Here's what happened. I didn't take his place. We were in the band together. And uh, Louie was going with Ella. And Chick was trying to break up that _____ so he wanted to separate that, 'cause Ella, she'd be making eyes at Louie and they were, and Louie was kinda influencing Ella. And that time they wanted to control Ella so, let her go the way they directed. That's the power that Gail and Chick, _____ brothers, and so Louie popped off one night _____ at the RKO theatre in Boston. And Louie said "If you don't like the way I'm doing, fire me!" So he said "That's it, your fired! I mean it, your fired. Gail, give him his money. Give him his two weeks notice." And fired him right in that theatre that night. That was the best thing that ever happened to Louie. He fired him, he came back to New York, got a job, his wife was very aggressive. She came down, she got him a job at a Speedway, out on a Speedway in New York and he had his first band. It had five pieces, and she went out there and told the man said "I got the greatest band in the world." And organized this band and Louie went out there and got the job. And that was the beginning of his Timpani Five. And from there on he went. And he made some terrific records. Terrific as a singer. He had, he was from Arkansas and his background was good. And he could sing blues, he could sing anything.

Jan: That's true. So did you know, you were in the band with Louie.

Garvin: With Louie, yeah! And then they fired him...

Jan: And then they fired him.

Garvin: Sure, sure! I was playin', he was playin' second alto and I was playing first alto. I left _____ band and I hired, _____ jazz like the night, I joined Chick the next day. And I was playing first alto and he was playing second alto in the band. Incidentally, when Chick told him "Fire him!" "Why don't you fire Buschell?" "I don't want to fire Bu, I want to fire you." "Why _____ fire Buschell?" Because Louie would get up and sing and he'd get more applause than Ella!

Jan: Wow!

Garvin: When he used to sing, he'd break up the show! We'd put Louie on, so he'd break up so; you know, we're trying to promote Ella, and he couldn't do it with Louie Jordan there. He was too strong for Ella. She couldn't touch him, no! She couldn't touch him, so he fired him in order to get, that's one of the reasons they fired him. Of course, he was arrogant too. And he knew he was good and he'd take a baritone solo and break up the house. He was quite an artist. Did you ever see some of the movies he made _____?

Jan: Yes. A couple of shorts. Quite an entertainer.

Garvin: Oh, he was something. They fired him for a reason, not because of his ability. They were afraid that he would over shadow Ella, which he did. Sure, we were in the band together. "Why don't you fire Buschell?" "I'm firing you" right at the RKO theatre in Boston. Yeah, Louie was quite an artist. You couldn't touch Louie, Ella or nobody else could touch Louie. He'd break up the show. We had a conductor, Art Bardualow. He was a handsome guy. He was part Indian...

Jan: Egyptian, I think he is.

Garvin: Egyptian. (says name again) and eh was born in New Orleans. He made a good front in the band, he didn't know what he was doing but he had his fingers in Chick's pockets, so to speak. Got a salary and there was nothing he could do. But he looked good in front of

the band. So, he just died a few years ago. I told _____ Lord, what'd you leave me here for?

Jan: Well, there's a reason.

(end of side 2 of Garvin Buschell interview)

TAPE #2

INTERVIEW 5/24/89

Garvin: Some things that we talked about, we didn't get on tape.

Garvin: Yesterday we spent time and we just got into _____, that should have been on tape.

Jan: I know. Where did, let's put it this way, what, why do you think that the black musician, who were the innovators of jazz, they had so much feeling, that the whites wanted to copy that. They wanted to get that feeling and many times they didn't. Why do you think, what was it about the....

Garvin: Well the thing, their interpretation, their concept of improvisation, and it's based on how we feel. They don't have that feeling. I remember times when the white musicians in New York used to come up town and eat soul brothers food. They'd eat corn bread and chitlins and ham, and uh, I mean, and beef stew and all the soul food.

Jan: Do you think maybe, they thought that would help them?

Garvin: They thought, they thought it, they thought it! Yes they did! And that's not an exaggeration. Many of them! And _____ said, "oh yes, I eat up town!" But this old theory, you are what you eat, they were following that. And they thought by getting that feeling, 'cause they found out that we have a different feeling approach to life than they do. So, and telling the story of our life, and we've had more, I've had more, 'cause every ethnic group has had problems during their history, it shows and tells us. But we've had, in this country, some immediate problems. So it comes out, in how we, our music. That's the only outlet that we had. And that's going back to our grandparents. That's the only outlet they had. In doing so, they spoke in musical terms of just what they're going through, what they were going through, and how the, what the, how great their desire

was to turn it around. They even created a song. (sings) "Don't you let nobody turn you 'round, turn you 'round, turn you 'round." In other words, the slaves, and then the, you see there were two classes of negroes in slavery. There was the malato and then there was a full blooded African. And the malato was more expensive. The masters paid more for them. As rules, they were house folks. And uh, they'd pick out the malato negroes, put 'em in the house and dress 'em up and then, as their servants. And so, there was a vast difference. But you can't interpret the music until you get the feeling. That's what the white boys are missing. Now they've got the feeling. They play well now. White musicians play well.

Jan: Garvin, do you feel that feeling came from, you sort of implied, all the things they went through. The whites weren't going through it.

Garvin: Yes, now, that's why the Jewish music and the negro music is correlated. Because they had the same problems. Over in their side of the world, they had the same problems we had here. Only, hundreds, thousands of years before. But they had them. In some degree they still have it but they bought themselves out of the situation, so they know what to do. So that's it. That's why their music is very _____. You take any nation where there is where they've been subdued and they've had very hard times of trying to raise food and raise a family, and educate, what little education they had. They had a hard time doing it, so they said it in their music. The Jewish people have done the same thing. The Arabs have done the same thing! You see, that's why....

Jan: What about the American. You mentioned the other day that, you thought that the American Indians...

Garvin: Well, I don't thought, I know! You see, I know, that's been handed down! And I had, forced, I was forced to hear enough of that music that came out of the, not Cherokee, Cherokee is further down south, Kentucky. What was that, I'll tell you, Roy Rogers is part one of them. He's out of that part of Ohio. Roy Rogers, and there's another cowboy star, that mixed with the Indians, — Kentucky. Well anyhow, they miigrated up to southern Ohio, right in back of our house. Two miles back was an Indian village, South Charleston they called it. And uh, I've heard the Indians sing. I heard my grandparents, my grandfather had some of the mixture and my grandma too. So, I've heard them sing those things. And I found out, I said the blues and Indian music, I've listened to it, it's very

similar! The rhythm, almost the rhythm, but the scale that they played.

(tape is turned off)

Jan: We were talking about you had an opportunity to hear a lot of the American Indian.

Garvin: Yes, I've heard Indians in the midwest. I've heard them sing. And I've heard them out in Texas. There's a similarity in there. So uh, I'm sure, a lot of the, the basis of our blues came out of the Indians using the pentatonic scale. They didn't know what scale they used but that's, they were impressed by that scale. That's what it was. It turned out to be the pentatonic scale.