

Reminiscences of

William B. Bowman

September 8, 2008

Interview by Karen Perone

Introduction

KP: Today is September 8, 2008 and I will be talking with William Bowman at Rodman Public Library. I am Karen Perone. Mr. Bowman or Bill as he is called is an Alliance Native with quite a varied background. He attended Mount Union College, served in the Army during the Korean Conflict, managed the family hardware store, worked in radio, and was elected to the position of Stark County Auditor. Bill is also quite active as a musician playing with the JR4 jazz combo, and working as a church musician. He has also given over 3,000 musical programs to various groups since 1963.

Interview

KP: So Bill welcome today and thanks for coming to talk with us about your life in Alliance, and all the varied things that you have done in your career.

WB: Thanks Karen. It's good to be here.

KP: Good. We like to start off by talking about your background, your family, where you grew up, when you were born, your parents, things like that.

WB: Well my mother came to Alliance, Jessie Allot, and her father had the big hardware store in Downtown Alliance, and she met my dad, Blaine Bowman, in Alliance High School. They were married just out of Mount Union College, and he was Sales Manager for Alliance Manufacturing Company. Lost his job there when the Big Depression started in 1930, and about a month after he lost his job I arrived in the family. We were living at the time in a little house on Heartsharns Street, which the college has since torn down. I'm sure that while any arrival would be a blessed arrival there was some concern about an extra mouth to feed as the Depression just starting.

KP: Sure.

WB: My older brother, Jack, was eight at the time, and pretty much since that time, 1930, I've been in and around Alliance. Except for a 20 year or so period where I was on the road so to speak with my wife Susan Bowman, who is a United Methodist Minister, and subjected to a lot of changes of venue they call them, so pretty much Alliance ever since 1930.

KP: Ok. And you mentioned to me that your grandfather was the Dean of the College.

WB: Yes.

KP: Who was that?

WB: John Brady Bowman was Dean of Mount Union College from 1912-1936, upon his death, and was greatly loved by the students and faculty of that time. Like a lot of things his ten year has drifted off into the misty past, but some of the old timers around the college would remember Dean Brady Bowman.

KP: What kind of changes did you see going up around Mount Union?

WB: Well a lot of change in the campus of course. I've always seem to live just on the edge of the campus, first being born on Heartsharn, and we lived for quite awhile on East College Street just across Union, and the growth of the College the new buildings, and the number of students and faculty and so on. That growth has been very impressive and very welcomed. We use to play softball and baseball and football on many of the lots that are no occupied by very big structures. So it has been one of fairly consistent growth and I think it's been really good for the community. I would not think Alliance would be what it is without Mount Union College.

KP: Was the Landborn Floral Company in full business while growing up?

WB: Oh yes, it was there with a very large greenhouse, and at that time they still grew carnations, which of course they gave up in the later years. I use to walk by the greenhouse on my way to Parkway School, which was just built before I started school, and I survived six years there and three years at State Street Junior High, which has been torn down, and three more years at the old Alliance High School, which has been torn down. So there seems to be sort of a concerted effort to remove any remembrances of buildings that I spent any time in.

KP: And Parkway is the only remaining...

WB: Parkway is still there.

KP: Pretty much the only remaining school, I think.

WB: I think it is. From the ones that were there in the 1930s, but I've always consider that I've gotten a good education from very tough teachers and glad to be a graduate of Alliance High School. Our class of 1948 just observed its 60th reunion a couple of months ago. I don't think we will have anymore. Attendance is getting a little thin.

KP: Oh. Talk a little bit about the family hardware business?

WB: Well like I said my dad had been in industrial sales and the depression killed that. And he went to work for his brother-in-law Guy Allot who was a descendant of my grandfather, Benjamin Allot, who started the business and was obvious a brother to my mother, Jessie Allot. And so Dad went downtown to manage the Allot Hardware Company, and as far as I know that was the only experience he had in the hardware business. And he worked for his brother-in-law for about nine years. Apparently didn't like that experience at all, and saved his money and

started the Bowman Hardware Company in Mount Union in 1939, and of course Mount Union square and environs at the time was a far cry from what it is now. People thought he was crazy because Mount Union was too far away from Main Street to be successful.

KP: We heard that story about the Cope Furniture Company.

WB: Yes indeed, Cope Furniture was out on West State and most of us who were in the Mount Union area were looked at rather peculiarly by our downtown friends.

KP: So where was the Hardware Company in Mount Union?

WB: Well According to my dad it was 51 steps North from Mount Union Square.

KP: OK.

WB: It was one of many buildings bought by a large drug store chain a few years ago. Torn down to make a drug store which went go broke in 3-4 years. It's now the property of a Dollar Store or something like that, but the building is long gone.

KP: It was right there on the corner.

WB: Yeah right there on that corner square.

KP: OK. Now you managed that store for awhile.

WB: Yes, after my dad's death my mother, brother, and I seem to think it would be advantageous to keep the store going, and so I was the manager there for seven years. And finally the big box stores got to be more competition than we could profitably survive, and so we closed up. And Toni Gates who was the manager of radio station WFAH invited me to become public affairs director for the radio station. So I spent the next three plus years going around interviewing people as you are now for what was going around in the community and trying to make features interesting enough for people to listen to. It was a lot of fun. I didn't make much money, but ...

KP: Got to know the community.

WB: Yes, I really enjoyed the work.

KP: So what was the position you had there?

WB: I think they called me Special Events and Public Affairs Director, and I also sold some on the time. And Don Peterson was the manager of the station and Don didn't want anyone to be on the road without a sales pad in his pocket because it was after all a radio station for profit. And so it was interesting, two friends of mine, during our time at Mount Union which was six or seven years before, had talked to Toni Gates because we knew he was a professionally trained musician and arranged to host a classical music program in the evening on the radio. And so we

started to think, oh, Twilight Concert which was the first classical music program in Northeastern Ohio.

KP: I was going to say that, that was pretty unusual.

WB: Yes that was 1955 we started that and that program went on. Dr. Chris King was one the three of us and a fellow name Walter Cline was the other one. We had a good time of course our work was free. We formulated the programs broadcast.

KP: Where those recordings that you played then?

WB: Yes we played recordings. We had no budget to do live music of any sort. And so Toni knew my work and when the hardware store closed he seemed to think I might have something to contribute to local radio and by then most people knew my voice.

KP: True.

WB: So, had a lot of fun and it kept up. Twilight Concert turned into Sunday Symphony and that stayed on the radio then until the 1970s. And so when I went to work in Canton and it was just a little too much anymore to keep it up.

KP: Sure.

WB: But we had a lot of fun.

KP: When did the radio station change from WFAH to WTPN?

WB: Some time after I left.

KP: Okay.

WB: I'm not fully familiar with those dates. There has always been separate FM and AM, but I'm not sure 70s or 80s.

KP: Okay. Let's go back to college; you went to college at Mount Union.

WB: Yes I started there. Then Uncle Sam seemed to feel I was need to fight off Korean and Chinese hordes in the Far East. So I spent the better part of two years as a cryptographer in the Army Signal Core on the Island of Okwanawa. What between middle years and so forth it was three years later when I returned to the college and finished my degree, majored in Political Science and History. John Saffle who has appeared on programs, was one of my favorite teachers, he was an ardent Democrat. I was equally ardent Republican.

KP: That must have been interesting.

WB: We use to exchanges barbs, which seemed to amuse the rest of the class and I'm sure it amused John because he was always able to hold his own. He was one of the great professors I have had over the years.

KP: And he was your History professor?

WB: Yes.

KP: Any other professors that come to mind?

WB: Well my Political Science advisor was a man named Norman Welling and he left the college soon after I did. I don't think for the same reason and I have no idea whatever became of him. But those two by and large certainly excited my interest in politics and in government. Though I later took advance work in studies in Public Administration at the University of Akron, and of course when Joe Yoder came to me in 1967 and offered me a job as Chief Deputy at Stark County's Auditors Office. I thought that was too good of an opportunity to pass.

KP: True.

WB: So I went there and stayed there until 1991.

KP: Okay.

WB: Didn't realize that he was going to retire and he came into the office and said, "Bill I'm not going to run for reelection I think you should."

KP: What a way to get introduced to you.

WB: And of course Stark County is not the world, but it was 400,000 people. And it seemed very large and very hostile. So I set to work to get to know the county as well as I knew the city.

KP: I understand that you where the first person from Alliance to be elected to be elected to a County Office like that.

WB: That's what they say. I haven't been enough of a history buff to go back into that, but it was certainly consider very rare at the time. And people told Joe Yoder, who was one of the great man in my life that he was crazy because I wasn't from Canton and therefore I could not possibly be elected.

KP: Surprise.

WB: And they were all. Of course I've had some emersion in politics before then, in 1963 when I was still in the Hardware business, I ran for Mayor of Alliance. My first big political campaign started right at the top and ran for Mayor, got local business man George Wimer, who you undoubtedly know.

KP: Oh yes.

WB: To manage my campaign, and between the two of us we managed to change certain victory into ignominious defeat.

KP: Aw.

WB: I finished second in a two man race.

KP: And who won?

WB: Dale Wallborn was elected Mayor and served honorable for eight years. And got a big reservoir named after him for his troubles, but he was good. I worked very hard in that election, but...

KP: Politics are very difficult.

WB: It was not to be. Republican have elected the Mayor for almost 20 years, and I was almost able to single handedly change that. Then two years later for some reason they were trying to fill a spot on the ticket, they asked me to run for Council at large, and I was pretty sick of politics at this time, but I said put my name but I'm not going to work for it. So of course being politics, I led the ticket without a penny spent. Two years later I was already on the ballot when Joe Yoder asked me to come to Canton, and the jobs are incompatible City Councilman and County Auditor Deputy. So I announced publicly even though my name was on the ballot, I would not want people to vote for me because I couldn't be elected, couldn't serve in the office. Front page Ads and so forth, and of course politics being politics I led the ticket again. So worked very hard the first time and lost it all. Didn't do anything two more times and won it all. If anybody tells you politics is rational they haven't been it or studied it very carefully.

KP: That sounds about right. So you were elected as City Councilman?

WB: Yes, I had the joy of serving on Alliance City Council and dealing with the city problems and working with Mayor Wallborn. It was a good time.

KP: And that was Council at large?

WB: Yes.

KP: That's very good. Alright, so then you became the Deputy Auditor?

WB: Yes.

KP: And that was an appointed position?

WB: That was appointed by Joe Yoder.

KP: You didn't have to run for that one?

WB: That's correct.

KP: And that was '67 to '74 I believe.

WB: mmmhmmm (nods in agreement)

KP: Then he decides to retire and you decide, ok, I'll throw my head into the ring.

WB: Yes.

KP: Describe the whole process of getting elected.

WB: Well, as I said 400,000 people spread over quite a distance, 36 miles by 30 or so. Joe and I had quickly decided that the most important thing was for me to get well known.

KP: Outside of Alliance.

WB: Yes, my work in the office was splendid they had no concern about that. So we started a network of people, trying to get me involved to come and do a program. You spoke of the 3,000 plus programs that I have done over the years, and I was already doing programs by then.

KP: These are musical programs?

WB: Musical Programs, but we decided that maybe was a pretty good idea because while people might resent or not even entertain an idea of a political speaker. To have somebody come and play popular music of 200 years, or patriotic songs, or church music, or whatever. That was good, especially since he was free. So that year 1974, I did about 350 programs, in one year.

KP: You were busy.

WB: I was very busy, enjoyed it. Of course, I love doing these programs.

KP: And these were all different kinds of musical programs?

WB: Yes, I had six or seven different programs as I still do. I think I was in every grange, every church, every fraternal organization, and every service club around the county. I've been in so many very unusual places most people probably don't know exist, and some strange stories to tell about those kinds of appearances. I have played pianos that you and your musical husband would not approach with a ten foot pole.

KP: Well I don't know we've played some pretty strange things.

WB: Yeah, I suppose most... I've had the joy, at a grange meeting one noon, finding that I had stuck to the piano bench because the varnish was old and soft. So wrecked a good pair of pants, and I had another incidence playing at a private home in North Canton of asking the hostess, it

was very cordial, to move a beautiful tiffany lamp she had on the piano. I really didn't want to play with that, she wanted to leave it there. So I played and at one point I played crashingly, I played loud. Loud is good it's on one of my t-shirts. Any way I played and the tiffany lamp went on the floor and broke. And I first apologized to her afterwards, kind of casually reminding her that I suggested that the lamp be moved. So, I didn't have to buy the lamp, but I remember that and sticking to the bench. I remember a program at Regina Chaley School in Alliance, I was to come and play and I was introduced with great fan fair and sat down and discovered that the piano lid was locked and no one had a key. Someone had heard me play and didn't want me to play there, I think. Anyway, they finally found someone of authority who had a key, and things went forward. I always thought that was strongest criticism of my playing that I've ever had.

KP: Well it put in the public eye, and helped you get you that name recognition.

WB: Yeah that was good. So the election of '74 was one, and I served there sixteen years. Might be there yet, but Susan was a traveling United Methodist Minister, she was appointed District Superintendent in Cambridge, and so...

KP: It's a long commute.

WB: Well, I would no longer be a resident. So I was no longer allegeable. I simply retired, and I was in my sixties by then and I was glad to retire without owing a dime to anyone or being under any indictment for misuse of public funds. It was a good feeling to have been there 24 years and to handle to so much money and to come out the other end clean. I had good employees.

KP: So what kind of things does the auditor's office do?

WB: First all, the auditor is what you may call in an operation the controller of all the finance. The auditor is responsible for all the book keeping on funds that come into the county whether they be Federal, or State, or local. And the auditor writes all the checks. The auditor owns the check book. So we processed in and out on an annual basis of 500 million dollars of public funds, every year.

KP: Wow.

WB: And to do that and do that accurately was the auditor's most important job, and I was like I said I was very privileged with a wonderful staff. John Thorp of Alliance, who is another descendant of a lustrous family, was my Chief of Accounting Services for most of those years, did a wonderful job of handling the money. And then the auditor, Joe Yoder use to tell me back in the old days "That were only two people that hung around the court house at all times one was the sheriff to keep all in order and the other one was the auditor because he had the checkbook." And so a lot of miscellaneous jobs fell to the auditor under State Law because he was there. So the auditor had the job of appraising and assessing all of the real property in the county for tax purposes, and that with nearly 200,000 pieces of real a state became a very large job, when the

State required that be done every three years. And some miscellaneous, we had managing the Budget Commission, which approved the budgets of all the schools, and all the cities, and all the townships, and the villages, and all the libraries.

KP: We are familiar with that.

WB: And one of the things I always felt good about is John Thorp and I along with Harriet Clem the former librarian here, were very active in securing through the State Legislature a predictable and constant formula for financing local libraries.

KP: Right.

WB: Up until that time, when this occurred there been a certain pool of money the State sent in, and the seven library districts in the county would come in and vie for their share. They were presented before the Budget Commission, budgets to say the least were inflated.

KP: Yes.

WB: And it was the Budget Commission's job, and this was the prosecutor, the treasurer, and myself to nit-pick these budgets and finally gets down to reasonable requests. So the State finally changed all that and the money comes in by a formula, and we eliminated that. And that was one of the good things we did. Then we also inherit some jobs like licensing dogs and that kind of stuff, why auditor should do that because the auditor was in the courthouse. So varying duties and a lot of different hats to wear, I found the work fascinating. One reason was because there was some many fascist to it, to exploring a big balance sheet, to trying to appraise a 20 million dollar industrial plant accurately, and making sure with job was done reliably because the auditor of state was always looking over our shoulder.

KP: Right. And I understand you had a decrease in staff while you were there.

WB: Well after arriving at the office, after working for Joe, we had 75 employees and most of the work was done on yellow legal pads, such as you're holding there. So we decided that the age of the computer had arrived, so during... the treasurer at that time was an attorney named John Hoffman and he and I decided it was time to bring computers to Stark County Government. And so we started that and in 1974 that was not an easy sell, commissioners thought we were crazy, some of the officeholders thought there power was being taken away from them, but we brought the computer to county government in 1974 and '75. And things haven't been quite the same since. As a result, I was able to reduce my staff from 75 to 39.

KP: Wow, that's quite a reduction.

WB: Well, it became necessary to simply operate within the cost of the revenues that were available in the county. The county always seems to have revenue problems, but that without the

computer and obviously if you went around in 2008 and said computers, well of course, but in 1974 there weren't any in Stark County Government.

KP: Did you have to do a lot of the programming yourselves or were there things like turnkey systems like they have now?

WB: Oh yes, the first thing we had to do was decide how to proceed, and at that time P.C.s had not been invented.

KP: Right.

WB: Laptops had not been invented, and so we had to proceed with a central processing center, data processing center, and have terminals at the various places where information was needed or from which information was input. So basically with the staff we hired, we did all that programming. Many of the programs other counties now use and Stark County now uses began with our own programmers. There weren't any things you could just buy off the shelf.

KP: Microsoft didn't exist.

WB: There weren't any things. It was kind of like inventing the wheel, well you get back a few years, and you think sure that's easy, at the time it was quite an undertaking, and I've always viewed it as quite an achievement.

KP: Do you remember what kind of computers those were, IBMs?

WB: Those were Unisys's.

KP: Unisys's, okay.

WB: And we entertained, the treasurer and I had hearings for two weeks with main frame manufactures, and so forth. And tried to become "Experts" quote, quote in a very short length of time, we never had any reason to think we had not made a good decision. And of course, I don't know, I'm sure there is an amalgam of P.C.s,

KP: Right.

WB: And probably some laptops as well.

KP: Servers now are much smaller.

WB: Oh yes, well we had occupied a second floor of an entire building in Downtown Canton with our computer center. I remember visiting there great metal discs, tape drives, and a halogen firing system, which they assured us would kill us if we were in there for sixty seconds. It was an exciting time to be doing something constructive, and trail blazing.

KP: Well it's good. It brought a lot of good will to the department and everything.

WB: I think. I think they're been three auditors since I left, and I think they are still using systems that the basis for which was designed by us back in the 1970s.

KP: Oh yeah, it's so important to migrate that data from one platform to the next.

WB: Oh yes.

KP: And to keep it viable all those years.

WB: A little thing like real a state, you get your tax bill and there is a permanent parcel number on there, and it tells what taxing district it's in and it's assigned up until the time we devised this we had to use legal descriptions, which are lengthy and totally gibberish to the average person. We had a gentleman who came to work with us, and had come from the card people and his name was Jim Sayers. I wanted to credit to John Offen and Jim Sayers because they were key players in this, and John Thorp who I had already mentioned and I had a little input also.

KP: Good. Let's turn our view to something a little different, a little into the music aspect. Now, I've also noticed that you play the tuba.

WB: Yes.

KP: Tell me about playing the tuba, was that something you picked up in school or?

WB: No it's something that I picked up at the courthouse.

KP: Oh really?

WB: I'm not quite sure on just how it began, but one Christmas season we decided it would be fun to raise some money for Salvation Army for their Christmas things. They had complained in the paper that their kettles weren't doing very well. So one of my deputies was a band leader named Sam Campaign who played saxophone and clarinet, and he knew a guy in the Engineer's Office who played drums, and he knew guy in the Treasurer's Office who played trumpet. And he said we opt to get together a little band Sam says, and I thought okay I'm for that. And day he brought in a tuba and said you need to play this.

KP: And you were thinking piano, right?

WB: Yeah, well I knew we had to be portable.

KP: Okay.

WB: So anyway we put together what we The All American Black and Blue Courthouse Starvation Army Band, and we rehearsed on the scene about a week before Christmas and went around for a couple of hours at the various offices, which was great fun and we even decided we would go into the court rooms. Where some of good earnest judges were conducting trial, at that time we decided, and I said come on I sign their paychecks they aren't going to say anything to

me. And so we rose that first Christmas about 500 dollars, and basically kept it up and for the rest of the time I was in office about 16 years. And we were raising a couple thousand dollars every Christmas time. One judge use to come out robe flapping raising a big check and say here take this but don't play. So anyway that was my tuba career.

KP: You should play in Tuba Christmas up in Akron, or? Have you ever done that?

WB: I have never done that. I admire the tube the only time I did admire it was when I went through a low doorway and well that wasn't fun.

KP: Ouch.

WB: That was my musical career. Really began, well, it began with Fern Miller who use to teach piano. She was the organist Union Avenue Church, and mother decided I should have piano lessons since I was always banging on the piano.

KP: How old were you?

WB: Oh I was eleven or twelve, and Fern Miller was a wonderful teacher. She taught me to appreciate good music. She was never able to get me to like practicing.

KP: What kid does like that?

WB: Practicing was not my thing. So I had lessons with her for about a year and a half. And was always banged up from playing baseball, and Fern sent home a note one time to my mother, dear Jessie Billy is going to have to choose between baseball and the piano. And I said to mother, I was always undertaking like some big shot lawyer, now the lessons cost 25 cents and baseball is free. Let's go with the baseball, and so that ended it. She was a wonderful teacher and that was the end of my formal musical training, a year and a half of piano lessons, but I still like to play the piano.

KP: So everything else came naturally to you?

WB: Yeah, everything else came naturally.

KP: That's great.

WB: And my professional career began at First Emmanuel United Church of Christ.

KP: Okay.

WB: When they turned up short of a choir director.

KP: That was in 1964.

WB: 1964, and I remember I was playing on the WFAH softball team and the second baseman...

KP: Still playing baseball?

WB: Yeah still playing baseball. The second baseman turned around to me and said to me “How would you like to direct our choir at Emmanuel Church?” I said, “I don’t have any experience directing a choir.” He said, “Why don’t you go down and talk to Herald Auler our minister.” So I went down and talked to Herald Auler. Great Christian man he took a chance on me.

KP: And how do you spell that?

WB: A-U-L-E-R, Herald Auler.

KP: Okay.

WB: And sure enough the first of September there I was leading the Emmanuel Choir, which numbered about twelve.

KP: Who was the organist there?

WB: Well we had a couple of high school girls who filled in time to time, and we made it through that year and a couple more. And then Emmanuel Church emerged with the Congregational Church, and we became First Emmanuel United Church of Christ on Oxford Street.

KP: Okay.

WB: And their music committee had decided that the choir director there would be the choir director of the newly combined church, but she was away on vacation, and they couldn’t reach her. So, September was at hand and John Tate my good friend John Tate called me up one evening and said, “How would you like to be choir director? We need somebody in here Thursday night.” I said, “I thought I was out of a job...” So I said, “Sure.”, and stayed there for 22 years or so.

KP: That’s a long time.

WB: And the choir built from 12, we had 42 in the choir my last few years there. Had a lot of fun, and at that time we hired a Mount Union College Music Student name Nancy Homer to be our organist. She later married a fellow named Darrel Fugalburg.

KP: Okay.

WB: And that is the Nancy Fugalburg who you know.

KP: Right.

WB: And we made good music together. Made good music together and the choir sang for Nancy’s wedding.

KP: Oh.

WB: She wrote words, you'll appreciate this, she wrote words to the Fest March from Tonhizer, by Vulgner, and that was the processional music. Arthur Linstrom had come down from the college, Nancy's organ teacher, to play and the choir sang these hokie words she had written.

KP: That sounds like Nancy.

WB: And that was her processional, and there was something equally hokie for the recession, but she wanted the choir at her wedding. We've never been asked to be in a wedding since. And of all the things I use to do auditor and programs, choir directing is what I miss the most. Really enjoyed directing a choir, but moving around with Suzan we were never at a church more than a Sunday at a time.

KP: How is that being ... I mean a lot of the ministers have been men and the wives would have the children and move around with the husband. So, how is it being the husband moving around the wife?

WB: Well it's interesting, isn't that what the Chinese, it's been an interesting. I've been well accepted and some places we've gone to live while she was she was the District Superintendent. They've learned that I also play the organ, and organists as you might know are in great demand and short supply. So I've filled the organ spot at a number of churches, where we have lived. Suzan's last full time job was in Des Moines, and I was organist there for a time and choir director there for a time. And then when we filled both of those positions, I became the youth choir, children's choir director, but I love working with choirs.

KP: That's great.

WB: And I don't get to do that anymore, so.

KP: But you are involved with Alliance Curial.

WB: Oh yes, enjoy singing with John Roberts and the Mount Union Alliance Corral. I had the opportunity with Professor Gary Funk of the college of starting that organization. Back about 1982, he had this idea that he could bring the community and the college together, and it worked we had a chorus in those days of a 100-125.

KP: Wow.

WB: And one of our projects each year was to work up and sing with the Canton Symphony. Beethoven 9th or something like that, and so we had several gigs with Garod Simmermon and the Canton Symphony. Now since I was away for awhile and came back and all that disappeared. And of course, about now we are a chorus of 30 or so. So, I don't know all that has happened. We would like to rebuild it; it's more fun when you have a hundred.

KP: Oh, sure, definitely. So, let's talk a little bit about your jazz aspect, like to play jazz don't you.

WB: In 1963, Jim Rodman had a Christmas Party at his house and we lived just down the street. My first wife Sally and I went just down the street to the Christmas party, and he said come down here on the lower level I want to show you something. Well, down there was a piano and a brand new jazz drum set, that his wife Maggie, who used to be a Trustee at the library, had given him because she knew that Jim had envied his brother Bob, who was a swing band drummer, in his time at the college, and maybe for sometime after that. Bob had moved away and didn't know, but Maggie knew that Jim had always wanted to be a drummer. So she gave him this drum set, and why don't you sit down there and play something, and I'll see I can play along with the drums. And that started it. We picked up Buck Law who was then Superintendent of Alliance Schools and played the bass, and Al Nash who taught music and played 79 different instruments, and my first wife, and we formed JR4 plus one.

KP: Plus one was she the singer of the band?

WB: Yes. First thing we knew we had a gig at the college because of course if Jim went to Ron Webber the President and said we have a band and we would like to play, why Ron wasn't going to say no. And then we started being used by the development people to play at alumni meetings. And so we played at Pittsburgh in a big hotel, and we played at the Museum of Natural History in Cleveland, and we played in Canton, and we played at a big dance at the Coast Guard Academy in Cape May, New Jersey. We've to lots of places. Anyway we just play for fun, we've never charged, and we started getting calls to play around here. Huguette became our base player and remained that until his death. Al Nash has dropped out. I think Jim tells me we've had ten or eleven different people play with the band, but only...

KP: And those are like saxophone, trumpet kind of instrument

WB: Yeah, they come in maybe play once with us and decide we weren't good enough for their abilities, and it's true we're just kind of acts. We play for fun. I still go over to Jim's house on Monday evenings and, and we play a little music together.

KP: Well that's great.

WB: He also has a t-shirt that says "Loud is good". So, the only person I really felt sorry for is Maggie, who has to listen to this through the years, and some of the Rodman children who grew up with this awful tin through the lower levels. Jim said the house was relatively sound proof, but some of the Rodman children have told me that it wasn't so. At any rate we had a lot of fun; we've probably played over the years a 150-200 gigs, just for fun.

KP: And played mostly standards, or?

WB: We played any music between 1930 and 1975, anything newer than that is out of our reach and anything before that is too old fashioned.

KP: That's true.

WB: But there are a lot of songs in the swing era.

KP: That's great. Well, I think we're going to wrap things up here, but we are also tag on to this interview a bit of one of your programs.

WB: Okay. I thought maybe I do a little bit of the first program I did which is called "These are the Songs we sang" it sort of an overview of 200 and some years of American popular song. This is right at the end of that, and I think it might be fun for your listeners.

KP: Okay

WB: One of the problems I've always had as a piano player is, I was thinking about this while watch Vlatamere Horwits the other day on television he was eighty-four years old and he was playing Mozart so beautifully, because of my lack of practice and because of my lack of ability I've never been able to play the good classical music as I know it should sound. My ears are still good, but the fingers aren't good. So I play the popular stuff which I can play, but I have a great, great deep admiration for Horwits, and the Circans, and the Earlwhiles, and so on. Who can play the best classical music and could play it extremely well, well up into their eighties. It's fascinating to me, and I don't even try that by myself anymore. I just play the recadink stuff I can play.

KP: Things that you can enjoy, yes. Well thank you so much, Bill, for this interview, and we'll be back in just a moment with the playing part. That'll be fun.

WB: Thanks for asking me, Karen.

(William B. Bowman does his musical program)