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Paul Riser, Detroit Music History 2015 Oral History Project
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Deb Rumley: It's Thursday, December 15, 2016. This is Debbie Rumley and I'm talking this evening with Paul Riser of Motown and Funk Brothers Fame. How are you, Paul?

Paul Riser: I'm doing fine, thank you.

DR: So can you tell me a little bit about where you were born ad what it was like growing up in Detroit?

PR: I was born in Detroit in 1943. And Detroit was, uh, an exciting place at that time. Very active. You know, very very very – um uh uh – an active environment. A lot of people were doing things. There was a lot of activities. There was a lot of – um uh uh – jobs, job opportunities, more so than there is now. It was a good, a good exciting place to be uh, to be around then.

DR: What was the music scene like at that time?

PR: The music scene was, uh um, also exciting. Um, there were many many outlets for musicians, more so than there is now, uh, in the way of nightclubs and places where they could play there. It was mostly a jazz environment at that time as opposed to hip hop and R&B as it is now. So it was uh, it was quite a few good outlets, yeah.

DR: Um, I know you got your start pretty young in music. How did you get involved in music?

PR: Well, um, I always enjoyed, um, enjoyed music, primarily classical music. But I had an instructor by the name of Harold Inaldi who, uh uh, allowed me to take up music in elementary school – Keating Elementary – and I took up trombone of all instruments. (Laughs) With my short arm, you have to have a pretty long arm, to to reach all the positions. There are certain positions and it was years before I could reach a certain position. I could only go to six because of my short arm. But I did eventually grow to that, to that, to uh utilize that certain position.

DR: What made you decide to go with the trombone?

PR: That's a good question. I, um, I think it was just the excitement of seeing things – the slide go in and out. And if I, uh, had to do it all over again, I would have picked something different.

DR: Was your family musical?

PR: Uh, my mother was. And, uh, she was a keyboard player. She played a lot of gospel music and, uh, that's it. Uh, we had a piano at the home and we used to always hear her play – uh uh uh – hymns and sing! To herself. And I had an older brother who also played piano and uh, he read very little, but he just had a feel for piano. And uh, I had a brother who was one year older who, uh, was really an accomplished musician. He taught me, uh, taught me MUCH about music as we were growing up.

DR: So I didn't realize the GAR Building hosted musicians. And you mentioned you got your start in the GAR Building at nine years old. So how did that come about?

PR: Well, um, my instructor felt that I was coming along good enough to join what was known as the Parks and Recreation Boys Band. That's what it was called, uh, at the time. And we had uniforms, and we played concerts at Belle Isle at the shell, and we played for the soap box derby in Ohio, and we went to camp, and all this is as a teenager! And um, he felt that I was uh accomplished enough to sit in the band, so that's what started it at nine years old, yeah.

DR: Did they have a band at the GAR Building?

PR: Oh yes! Called the Parks and Recreation Boys Band, mm hmm. And, uh, no girls – all boys – (laughs) uh, and uh, we just had a lot of fun! And some of the members that we had at that time I still connect with today, here in 2016. Yes.

DR: That's great! Who or what were your biggest influences as a child?

PR: Uh, I think that sports was one of my big influences. We didn't watch much TV growing up, I remember that. Uh, but sports – uh uh – some organized sports, I played baseball, organized sports; but primarily music and I was a jazz buff and a classical music buff!

DR: So I read that your original intentions were to play with the DSO. And I know you've mentioned that you hated R & B. Sooo, I'm just wondering what made you decide to start playing with Motown and what sort of changed your mind?

PR: Well it's true that I, uh, hated R & B. Yes. Um, I had a friend – uh uh – who attended Cass Tech, he was like a year in advance of me. And he graduated and went to Motown. A fellow by the name of Dale Warren who, uh, wrote a lot of music himself. He's no longer with us. He passed on a few years ago. But he called ME to come in and play a recording session on Trombone. They were one musician short of uh so so they needed a trombone player. And I was called for that. That's, and THAT'S the reason I got started at Motown. Otherwise I would've been playing classical music or jazz or, uh, anything BUT R & B music.

DR: So that one experience sort of changed your mind?

PR: It did. Yes.

DR: So, moving on from that experience, how did you get introduced to Berry Gordy?

PR: Well Berry being, uh, a musician himself, he was a songwriter and, uh, played a little piano, um, he had a company that was like, uh, I guess you could say a R & D – research and development –

type company where he allowed people to just come in and if they had talent, he had an open door policy with us and, uh, I was one of those people right out of high school. And he would always come in and like to listen to what the musicians were doing and he always liked to congregate with the musicians! So he would come to the studio the studio and listen to us. And, uh, that's how I met Berry actually. And he had a, uh, took an interest in me from the beginning. Yes.

DR: So how did The Funk Brothers develop from that meeting? And evolve to become the backbone of Motown?

PR: Well, The Funk Brothers were, first of all, a club band primarily jazz and, um, we had an A & R director, uh, by the name of William Stevenson – William "Mickey" Stevenson – who brought the band members to Berry one day. And by the musicians being jazz musicians, they weren't necessarily R & B players. So when they came in, they had to learn to play R & B music. And by them mixing jazz with R & B, the Motown sound was developed. With The Funk Brothers' sound. So that's how that came about.

DR: So was your family supportive of your choice to go with R & B and Motown over your path of classical music?

PR: WELL, yeah, it wasn't so much as the family as the, as it was as, as much as it was my mother. I came from a very religious background. And my mother, uh, thought that that was the devil's music (laughs). That's what she used to call it. OK ? Jazz or, uh, R & B. So we didn't have much of that at the house, um. But uh, once I got associated with Motown, and, uh, successes started coming – uh uh – the family kind of got behind me and gave me a lot of support, yes, even my mother and my father, yes.

DR: Did they listen to what you guys were creating?

PR: Uh, not necessarily so cuz I didn't bring it home so much… cuz I was primarily a musician at that time as opposed to an arranger, orchestrator, conductor – so I didn't bring a lot of the music home. Uh, but then um, as my career progressed I invited my parents to a recording session. And uh, uh, they enjoyed it! And if I had a known how much they enjoyed it, I would've invited them many years earlier. But uh, uh, they enjoyed it very much.

DR: That's great. Do you ever think about what your career might have been like had you stayed the course of your classical intentions?

PR: Well, yes. Um, see my first love is classical music – to this very moment. OK? That's the foundation of me being able to perform other music is that very classical training. So, um, I listen to classical music every day – just about all day – to this moment. So um, um, I uh, uh, I think I would have been a trombone player anyway in one of the symphony orchestras in our country. If not locally, I would have ventured out to another city. But I would have been playing classical music on trombone, yes.

DR: So after you switched gears and started playing with Motown, how did it feel when you started getting praise and recognition for some of the hits such as "My Girl" or "Papa Was a Rollin Stone" or "I Heard it Through the Grapevine"?

PR: Well, just to be frank, um, um… Me, along with the rest of my fellow musicians and orchestrators and conductors and arrangers, we never knew we were makin' history first of all. We just did music for the sake of doing music and enjoying what we did. And uh, little did we know we would be makin' history as it is known today. We had no idea. We didn't do it for the sake of money. We just did it because we loved music.

DR: So how does it feel looking back on all of that now? Like knowing that you're a part of history?

PR: Well, we were proud. Everybody's proud to have been a part of that. *Everybody*. It's just too bad that some of the musicians who passed on at an early age didn't get a chance to, uh, really enjoy the the the laurels of the the their what their toiling and their hard work – how it's paid off today. They didn't get a chance to enjoy. They died at an early age. But we're – in remembering them – we always speak on them. You know we never let them be forgotten.

DR: So, how does it feel being a Funk Brother?

PR: Well, (laughs), that's a funny thing because, um, I didn't think I was a Funk Brother. I just, uh, know that I, for years I associated with them. I enjoyed being taken into the fold as far as they're concerned, cuz they don't just accept anybody in their grouping, ok? So Berry Gordy certified me to be a Funk Brother – uh, uh – as my career progressed. You know, so I'm a certified Funk Brother, yes. And I enjoy it. Yes. Proud to be! Oh yes.

DR: So I've seen some of the documentary *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*. So, uh, how did it feel to be back together with The Funk Brothers after 41 years?

PR: Well, it was uh, it was good to see them – course I always "them" because I feel like they were the foundation; I just became a part of that foundation. So I speak first for THEM. Um, it's um, everybody was proud to to – it was a hard, um, a hard toiling to get the film made. It took approximately 15 years to get the film made. OK? Piece by piece by piece… And some of the members passed away before the film was created, was finished and put into the marketplace. So they didn't get a chance to enjoy it, but their families – their heirs – are proud that they were a part of that; that they're a part of history.

DR: Why did it take so long to make that?

PR: Well it was a lot of – um, uh – agreements to be made and, uh, people wanted to – to uh, uh, to to… Everybody wasn't on the same page. Let's just put it that way. So it took, um, a lot of pulling here and there, pulling there for the producers and the film company, and it finally got done, though! And we're all proud of it. Yes.

DR: So I know that you *love* the Cass Corridor and you lived on Selden Street. So… what was it like in the Cass Corridor in the heyday of the '60s and Motown and… I know you mentioned you didn't live there at that time, but can you tell me what it was just like being in the presence of all of that?

PR: Well, you know as a – uh, uh – young professional and as I grew in the business, I always heard of the Cass Corridor, but it always had a *negative* connotation to it. Uh… for many many years! But once I moved in there, which was around the '90s – early '90s – um, I saw the potential. I met a lot of the people there and I saw the potential of the Cass Corridor. It was just starting to bud at that

point – to the point where it is today. It's a great area; it's a culturally strong area; and um, I was proud to be a resident. Yep! I was very proud. And of course Wayne State always had presence there.

DR: How do you feel about the Cass Corridor (what it's become) now?

PR: Oh I'm I'm I'm – I'm very proud to have known and seen the growth and experience the growth of it and see how it's transformed. And uh, uh, one day, hopefully, I can move back down there because it's just that vibrant. And, uh, I'm excited about it! Yes.

DR: There's a lot going on.

PR: Yes.

DR: So, you mentioned that Motown was like a family. So what was it like? Um, how did it feel being embraced by that family and brought into the fold and just evolving with that?

PR: Well at the time, uh, like I said before, we didn't realize we were making history. We just did a lot of the creativity – we created music and did productions because we enjoyed doing it. We loved what we did. Not for the money… course as we grew older we wanted more money. But Berry Gordy was smart enough to put a group of people together at a young age and let 'em just – uh uh – exploit their talents, grow their talents – uh – at his expense and – uh uh – and we all grew as a as a as a family would, like in a neighborhood, uh, like your neighbors across the street or next to you or down the street. That's where we were in Motown. And – uh uh – we had fun! And today – even to this day – the ones that are still around, we still consider ourselves a Motown Family. We call us the Motown Alumni Association now.

DR: Do you get together with them?

PR: Oh yes! Oh yes.

DR: On a regular basis?

PR: Not on a regular basis. Um, that's gonna take place once, uh, the Motown Museum is established in its new home. We'll get together more on a regular basis. Yes.

DR: Nice. Um… And you just mentioned – you said, I think you said – you felt exploited at times. Did you feel as though you were being exploited?

PR: Yeah, as we, as I grew older and we grew wiser to the business, uh, of entertainment, there are actual businesses – business of music it's called – uh, percentages become important, how much we're getting paid weekly, how much royalties we're gonna receive, why we didn't receive certain royalties… you start asking the right questions. But um, but the benefits outweigh the, the ability to make money, the benefits of creativity and just the enjoyment of it all.

DR: So you said at the start of your career, uh, you had three contracts with Motown. So, I guess, feeling exploited leads me to this, um – why did you have three contracts and did that affect your creativity and productivity?

PR: Well, the reason for the contracts, first of all, is because people believe in your talents – number one. And um, they saw that my talents were, were um, blossoming. I went from a musician on trombone up to maybe 1964, late 64-early 65, to, uh, a music copyist – uh, no contracts at this time, though. Then I went to, uh, they assigned me as a writer, and that was my first contract. They signed me as a – uh, as a um – arranger, orchestrator, conductor – that was my second contract. And then I, I graduated to the art of production. So, uh, it was a progression. And you know I grew into them. So they recognized my talents and they tied me up! Simply put. (Laughs)

DR: Um, can you tell me about your affiliation or experiences or with United Sound?

PR: Yeah, United Sound, first of all, um, has a greater history than even the Motown, uh, Museum does. United Sound, Berry Gordy used to record at the United Sound before his company became – uh, uh – a world-renowned company. Aretha Franklin used to record over there – uh, uh – Muddy Waters – uh, uh, uh – many blues singers, a lot of the big bands used to record over there – Duke Ellington, Count Basie – uuuh just just – United Sound was *the* place. They did a lot of commercials for, uh, for the Big Three – at that time General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. Uh, United Sound was a pioneering company – long before Motown was even thought about. So um, uh, yeah. So, so as I grew into my career, I started doing projects over there. More and more after I left Motown – when Motown left Detroit in the '70s – I, I started doing more projects over there because I was independent. And – uh uh – United Sound had such a, a – uh uh uh – a bevy of engineers, great engineers, and then the room itself had the high ceiling, which was great for doing strings because the sound traveled up and it's – to this day – the best room in the city for doing strings.

DR: Do people still do strings there?

PR: Not at this point. Because it – it it it – changed ownership so much. And, uh, the physical building is there, but the history of it and the history and the memories are kind of fading. But the physical building is still there, but nobody uses it.

DR: Was it better for other instruments, as well?

PR: Uh, it was, uh, good for rhythm sections and horns, yes. And good for vocals, too, because of the room size the sound could travel, yes.

DR: So I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit about some of the friendships and the relationships that you developed with some of the people at Motown and I know you're still good friends with Stevie Wonder…

PR: Yes.

DR: So I'm just wondering if you can tell me about your relationship and friendship with Stevie and perhaps some of the other people that you had longstanding working relationships and friendships with.

PR: Well, I was so young when I came to Motown, they kind of – Stevie and I, both – he was much younger than I, uh, I met Stevie when he was eleven years old, I was uh, I just turned eighteen. So, um, we formed a relationship at that time – he and I. Uh, but the people kind of took us under their wing because we were so young. Like, uh, they treated us like, uh, they were like guardians over us

for the most part. So we kind of grew as a family and uh, like from Berry Gordy right on down, his whole family, uh, and uh, some of the other people – some of the artists who are no longer with us like the Four Tops, The Temptations, Diana Ross (whom I went to high school with) – uh uh – The Marvelettes, The Velvelettes – uh uh – Martha Reeves… I just go on and on naming them, but we all formed that relationship, that bond that exists right to this day.

DR: Who are some of the people you're closest to?

PR: Martha Reeves. Stevie, of course, uh, Duke Fakir of the Four Tops, Otis Williams of The Temptations, Diana Ross, uh, Mary Wilson of the Supremes, um, Holland-Dozier-Holland our production team, uh, just to name a few. Yes.

DR: That's great!

PR: The list goes on and on.

DR: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the projects you've done with some of these people?

PR: Yes. Of course I enjoy working with Stevie. He's like one of the few pure geniuses we've had in the whole industry, the music business. He's one of the absolute pure geniuses. Uh, I enjoy working with him. Uh, I've done so much work with him, uh – "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" – uh uh – "Rocket Love", just to name a couple, "Do I Do" we almost won a Grammy for that song as co-writers. Uh, Ashford and Simpson I enjoyed doing – uh, Valerie Simpson and Nick Ashford wrote so many great hits. Uh, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough", "Reach Out and Touch"… uh, I did the arrangements when they first came to Motown. I did all of the arrangements and I, I'm in touch with Valerie Simpson even to this day. I've been knowing her for – uh uh – oh, God, 45 years maybe? And, uh, great talent, of course. Holland-Dozier-Holland doing (?). Norm Whitfield – I enjoyed doing projects with him and The Temptations. We did, like, "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone" and "Cloud Nine" and just numerous songs, numerous hit songs. So… the list goes on and on.

DR: Do you have any stories you'd like to share about any of those projects?

PR: Uuuhh, yes, um um, particularly with um, with uh, Stevie. Um, uh, when he was a young guy, uh, see he knew the – he really knew the layout of the, of the Motown studio better than everybody else even though he was blind. But we used to always tease him – tap him on one shoulder and he would duck and what not and he would just move around, he never bumped into walls, but he was always chasing us around the building. You know, and we talk about that and we laugh about it to this day even. But he was really a genius as far as music and knowing his way around and he always had that second, that second, uh, whatcha call? That instinct? Second, um, what do you call it? Um, just just his genius and he had a second instinct, just a natural instinct to know where people were, who were they, who they were, and he knew the business that well and knew people's nature so he could automatically just feel things about people in the room without even talking to them. Just listen to their voices… He just had second nature instincts, yeah.

DR: What was the last project you guys worked on?

PR: Uh… He and I, uh, we did, um, I think it was "Rocket Love"? No, I take that back. He did uh, a project which wasn't that successful, uh, about eight years ago. Which was his last CD as a matter

of fact. But he is also now working on a gospel CD. Which I want to – uh uh – be a part of and he's gonna help me be a, become a part of. He and I have discussed it. So I'm looking forward to working that project with him.

DR: That's actually my next question… What projects do you have in the works?

PR: That's one of them – Stevie's Gospel project. And there's the artist named Kem (the male). Uh, he's uh, looking to do his next project, so I'm looking forward to that one! Mm hm. And um, um, yes, um, and also, of course Stevie Wonder and President Obama are great friends. They used, uh, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" (which is one of my arrangements) as President Obama's theme songs during his candidacy. So I'm proud of that. But as far as new projects coming, uh, I'm gonna be working with, uh, the Detroit Symphony – an ensemble from there. I'm gonna do a string project – solo string project. So that's gonna be one of my ventures. Yes.

DR: Is that a project with Stevie Wonder also?

PR: Uh, I want to bring Stevie in to be a part of. He's already expressed that he would love to be a part of that. Yes. Mm hm.

DR: Has he done anything with the DSO?

PR: Oh for sure! For Sure. Every time he – um, in fact, uh, up until maybehe, up until maybe seven-eight years ago he was doing, he would come back in town to do his recordings with the DSO. But uh, since living on the west coast he doesn't have a lot of, uh, opportunities to come this way. So he's done a lot of later things with the west coast strings. But, oh yeah, he still loves the DSO. Absolutely.

DR: How often do you guys get together?

PR: Uh… we do more phone getting' together at this point. But uh, when I go to the west coast I'll pop by his studio maybe and see him when I get to the west coast. Yes.

DR: So, how has your music evolved since Motown? Or how have these various projects over the years affected where you're at now?

PR: Well of course, uh, you know Motown has its own style and what not, but as I gained independence in the marketplace, I did music for a little major record company. It's Atlantic Records, Columbia, Twentieth Century Fox, RCA… And working with their producers and writers and songs, I was able to grow musically and I always approached music from a classical position. So – uh uh uh – I maintained my style as I grew in other genres and different aspects of music.

DR: Can you tell me more about the music that you're currently working on with some of the folks from the DSO, as well as the Detroit Opera Theatre? Can you elaborate on some of those projects?

PR: Uh, yeah, um – there's one project in particular that Stevie Wonder and I discussed. Um, it's a project that uh actually Stevie debuted in the Library of Congress. It's called *Sketches of a Life*, which is really a – uh uh – an opera that they commissioned Stevie to write. And I was orchestrator for that

and conductor. But he wants to come back here to Detroit and do it with the DSO, so that's one of the projects that he and I have discussed. Ongoing. Yes.

DR: So, how do you feel about the current music scene in Detroit? And what it's, kind of, come to?

PR: Well, uh, it's uh, it's it's contemporary. I'll put it that way. It's a far cry from when I was growing in the business. Um, the musicians have taken a different approach to music now. It's more electronic and – uh uh – it's not as creative as it was when I was coming along. There's a lot of sampling, uh, which is the course of electronic borrowing other people's ideas and then creating other songs from other people's ideas, which is something *we* didn't do coming along. Uh, but it's just the nature of things. That's growth. But it's a difference. It's a huge difference. Yes.

DR: You mentioned you think that current music is disposable. And I know you're a huge advocate of the arts, uh, and arts education. So what is the role you think art and music education can play in encouraging young people to be more creative, to create better music, to sort of go back to the roots?

PR: You see, first of all, music is like the the the common language in the world. Um, there's no other thing that brings people together more than music, you know. Uh, if you take, um, youth from the symphony level – the symphonic level – Germany, Russia, Russian composers, German composers, uh, Chinese composers, Japanese composers… they *all* get along because classical music is so common throughout the world. The way it's produced, the way it's performed is a standard throughout the world. So that's why I call it the "common language" of the world. And um, uh, I think that through music, uh, we can bring peace in the world actually. It's a lesson for everybody – politicians and socially and culturally and everything. If we just look at what's happening on the music scene, it could bring people together. Now as far as disposable music, a lot of it is. The songs being written, in many cases, are not songs that are gonna be around and remembered, uh, such as standards that we think of as standards now – uh, that are 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, some of the classical standards are like 200 and 300 years old. The music nowadays is, uh, disposable music! Literally. They just do it, it lasts for 2-3 months in the marketplace and it's gone and they come up with more. It's just disposable. It lasts 3-4 months and it's gone. And not remembered by the masters. But it's making money, so that's what keeps it established. That's what keeps it coming. But uh, me, myself and a lot of other people are purists when it comes to music. And um, I don't conform to the way music is going now. I'm what they call "old school" which I'm proud to be. So I'm gonna maintain that standard of good music as long as I can.

DR: Are there any trends that you see that you like? Anything happening that you think is good?

PR: Uh, (laughs), that's a good question… And I have to say honestly, NO. Not really. Like I said, I'm old school and I'm gonna be, uh, conformed to the standards and the old tried and true music. I'm gonna stay in that establishment. Uh, I'm not conforming to… what's new is not always good. OK? So, um, I'm old school! Will always be.

DR: Have you ever taught music?

PR: Yes, uh, but I was disappointed. Because the students aren't being taught at grade school level or in too many college levels, also. The theory of music, which is foundational, and the theory of classical music and it's foundational to things that they wanna do now. It's foundational to creativity

and getting the most out of your creativity. They're not teaching it. So when I, uh, started teaching at the community college level, I had a whole room of students who didn't know music. It's like an English teacher trying to teach language, trying to teach English, and the students don't know the alphabet! Or don't know the meaning of words. It's impossible to teach them almost. So I was disappointed. But I'm going back to try to re-resurrect the theory of music in the school system. I think it's lacking in a lot of cases, it's too slow to to – it should've never left first of all. And it's too slow to be regenerated. It's happening, but it's too slow I think. And musicians think that making money is more important than learning the theory and the language of music - the pure language.

DR: Did you have any success stories? Any students that you saw a real spark in?

PR: Uh, in an indirect way, yes. People have come to me over the years – and musicians – and tell me how I influence, through my writing, how I influence them to approach music in the way that I did. See every musician has a style. I established my style because of my classical training and that's what holds me steady in the marketplace – where my style stands out. So I've had a lot of people – yes – to this day they call me because they're grateful that I established that music in the marketplace and it gives them something to grow with.

DR: How does that make you feel?

PR**:** Proud! Proud. Yeah. Oh yeah! And I don't do for that purpose, but it just it comes with the territory. You know when you do good things and write things, you get accolades.

DR: How do you think art and music education can affect a young person's life?

PR: Well I think that, uh, the arts, first of all, they affect your brain and learning processes period. For academics, uh, what it does, the uh… take music – music is – is is is – mathematical, even if a person doesn't know theory they're still doing math because music is, um, so many beats per bar, so many beats here and there, then it's all got to come together. They're doing math and they don't realize they're doing math, but it affects the brain; it affects academic learning. Uh, and a lot of the administration in our schools, they don't realize the connection. So I think the sooner they bring music back in the school as a, as a, uh, I guess what you call it – a, an – one of the, one of the – not an academic, but a secondary thing, but an important secondary. OK? Every student should take a choir or a musical instrument or what not because it would help them to establish something academically. A little more strength academically. It's got to come back to that.

DR: So I know you got your start obviously pretty young. What differences do you see in the music education that you received and the music education that is available now?

PR: Well, um, I think the instructors – they want to do well. Um, but unlike when I came along, the budgets were in place, the budgets were good, they could attract the proper people to come and apply for jobs; but right now the budgets aren't there for them to attract the really truly dedicated people as instructors to come in and teach in the direction or in he manner that I was taught in. So, uh, the dedication is not there with the instructors simply because of the budgetary problems.

DR: Um… Are your children or grandchildren musically inclined?

PR: Oh Yes. Uh, all of my grandchildren as a matter fact. Uh, my oldest was Brittany (last name?), she's 30 years old at this point, since the age of about ten, eleven years. She's been able to pick successful people as writers, as, uh, artists, as producers; she hasn't been wrong in picking a person in the marketplace – people who are successful. She would pick them without even thinking twice about it. That's just her instinct. She knows musically from her instinct. Now I have grandchildren who are five years old – twins – uh, they attend school for the gifted called The Roeper School. And uh, they are taking music; they're taking musical instruments and I think they're taking dance and they are advancing. My granddaughter who is named Sydney – five years old – she wants to be a singer/entertainer at this point. And it's a natural instinct. And her brother – who's a twin and five years old also – he has musical instincts also. So yes, they all – all my grands have some kind of a musical instinct, yes.

DR: So, how did it feel taking your granddaughter back to the GAR Building where you got your start?

PR: Yes. Yes. Aw, that was wonderful! And um, we went back there at a time when the building was being truly renovated. They were knockin' out walls, they were puttin' in floors, they putting the roof on… uh, uh, and uh, she and I actually went in and helped to tear out walls and what not. So we were a part of that new renaissance history. But it felt real good. Brought back a lot of memories, uh because um, actually it was, uh, like I said I was nine years old when I first started there and I spent nine years in the building and, uh, it was wonderful! Quite wonderful.

DR: What were some of the memories?

PR: Oh God! How we used to take the raggedy elevator upstairs. OK? And how old the building was. And uh, how we used to sit in the van and we used to exchange stories – our parents used to bring us and take us… Just a lot of old memories, you know? As children, yes.

DR: What are some of the projects that you've got coming up?

PR: Well, uh, there are music projects always coming along and I'm very specific about projects that I take on. Uh, they have to have, uh, a quality to them – a certain quality – and um, I just finished a project that was out of Memphis, Tennessee. An independent gospel project, which was a good one! And that was a Doc Pearson project, which you should see on the marketplace pretty soon. Wonderful project!

DR: So you're still be recognized and awarded for your many accomplishments. How do you feel about all of this?

PR: Oh I'm proud, yes. I'm very proud. And uh, people they recognize me from a lot of walks of life for my accomplishments and all the work that's paid off. You know all my 51 years – 54 years in the business I should say – is paying off. Yes, mm hm. A lot of hard work.

DR: Can you maybe tell some of your most favorite or most interesting projects that you worked on throughout your career?

PR: Uh, yes yes. The Stevie Wonder project, which was a story of his life in music actually – which is what an opera is. That was his *Sketches of a Life*. That was a great project. Big project! It was like an

opera. Uh, that project, of course R. Kelly's project, "I Believe I Can Fly", which was a great project. Um, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" of course with Diana Ross – great project. I could just go on and on. I've done film projects. Uh, film scores. Richard Pryor, *Which Way is Up*, I've done – I'm very proud of. Those are just to name a few. Yes.

DR: I probably should have asked this a little earlier, but did your career change at all when Motown moved to LA?

PR: Yes, it did. It uh, it made me realize that I have to do a lot on my own. I couldn't depend on the corporation to set a stage for me; I had to go out and get to work on my own. But just so happened by Motown having so many hit records, your work speaks for you more than you going out knockin' on doors. What you got in the marketplace, in other words those some of those hit records are what people use – they called me because of the work that I'd done, my body of work. So I was fortunate in that respect and that's how I expanded my latitude in the marketplace – by people calling me based on my work of the past.

DR: How did the music scene change when Motown moved? Here – in Detroit.

PR: It really changed! It was like a drop. OK, 'cause Motown was the *star* in the city. It was the music foundation in the city. And uh, it was a big letdown for a little while. It was a *shock* to everybody. But, of course, you know, we have to adjust and move on.

DR: So how do you feel about the expansion of the Motown Museum?

PR: Oh, I can't wait! Yes. Because what it's gonna do is allow more people to come and see the museum for one thing; the exhibits are gonna be expansive; it's just gonna be a step up from where we are today, you know. And uh, we've got a lot of major backing – corporate backing – and it's gonna be wonderful! Yes.

DR: Are you excited to be the recipient of the 2017 Heroes and Legends Award?

PR: Oh, I'm honored. Oh yes! Yes. It's been going on – this particular award program – for about 28 years now. So I'm proud and honored to be a recipient. Yes. And I know all the people who are the directors – Janie Bradford (among others), she is the founder of awards program. And I'm really proud, yes, to be honored. Yes.

DR: I think that about wraps it up for me.

PR: And I wanna thank you.

DR: *Thank YOU* for your time! I'm glad we were able to make this work.

PR: Thank you again.