

Unapproved Draft

Oral History Interview

of

Mr. Robert Rusk

May 24th, 2000

Bloomington, Indiana

Robert Rusk
Carole Nowicke

Tape 1, Side 1

[chat concerning recording equipment]

Carole Nowicke: This is May 24th and we are interviewing Robert Rusk at the Indiana Prevention Resource Center. If you'd start by telling me where you are from...

Robert Rusk: I was born in South Bend, Indiana, 25 November, 1948, which happened to be Thanksgiving Day. My father claimed he wanted to name me "Tom," but they talked him out of it after protracted discussion. Grew up in South Bend, went to the public schools and was exposed to the band program in I think, 3rd or 4th grade (somewhere in the elementary level) and took up the cornet at that time. I played cornet for several years until I got my teeth knocked out playing baseball one night, and because I hadn't reached the adult growth yet--the skull wasn't its maximum growth, they made me a rather bad partial plate which would no longer support the trumpet embouchure.

So my band director suggested that I might try the euphonium which I did for year, and then by 8th grade I had been switched to tuba, and apparently found a home. During high school I also played with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra, the Elkhart Symphony Orchestra, the Elkhart Municipal Band, and the skids were pretty much greased for me to come to Indiana University.

I enrolled in the School of Music in the fall of 1966, and spend four interesting years here. It was August of 1970 I auditioned for, and was hired to play with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, so I moved to Milwaukee in 1970 and I did 25 seasons. Concurrently with that, I taught tuba and euphonium at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, I taught tuba at Northwestern University for four years, and there were several other universities for lesser appointments. I finished 25 seasons with the Milwaukee and resigned, retired, or quit in disgust--you can put it any way you want. They cut our season by eight weeks, which was one season [week?] less than when I started. I said, "There's no future in this line of work."

So, that is the bare outline of who I am, where I am from, and what I have done. My major teachers were, of course, Bill Bell here at I.U., and then I was fortunate enough to start studying with Arnold Jacobs, here again, when I was still in high school, due to the proximity, I suppose, of South Bend to Chicago. It is a fairly easy drive up. So I had the terrific advantage of studying with the two major teachers simultaneously, which was, as I found out, not particularly a "cool thing" to do (I learned to keep my mouth shut at very early age) but I think it made all the difference in the world that I had the exposure to the two approaches, which were sometimes different in the methodology or the means to achieve the end, but they were, I think, remarkably similar in the end itself. Both of them were fine professional players, and they both knew music, and I think they were all going for the same end product--but different personalities, different backgrounds there, and of course, very, very different teaching methods. Complementary, I suppose. It was a wonderful experience. What else?

Nowicke: How many of you also taking lessons with Mr. Jacobs?

Rusk: At that time, to the best of my knowledge I was the only one. I think Floyd Cooley, later, but he only studied here in Bloomington with Bill Bell I think for two years, '67 and '68, because he went to the San Francisco Orchestra in the fall of 1969, and he had done, I think, one year at the University of Iowa. I do not know at that time that he was--I don't think anyone was studying with the two of them at the same time, but here again they might have, but we learned not to spread that word around. Mr. Bell didn't like it. He liked it a lot less than perhaps Arnold Jacobs, and I think he expected a certain amount of loyalty from his students which is good and bad, but on the other hand, it really wasn't in the spirit of furthering your own career, or you know what I mean.

Nowicke: Collegiality.

Rusk: Well, I thought there was a feud between the two, but yet, they had known each other since the late 1930s, and Jacobs substituted for Bell in the Armco band over in Cincinnati. I guess Jake substituted for Bell in the New York Philharmonic at one point, so they knew each other and I think they did play together on several occasions. So I don't think there was really much of a feud, but of course, musicians of that stature on that level tend to be a little jealous of their reputations (shall we say) or their positions, and I don't think Mr. Bell really appreciated people going out and studying with other teachers at the same time. [laughs] There was a little friction. I tried to cooperate, but there was definitely friction. Again, I would certainly recommend to any student of any instrument that they have at least two major teachers just to get the opposite point of view, or the different point of view, because ultimately the player, him or herself has to have their own identity and come up with their own answers.

Nowicke: You started studying with Mr. Jacobs when you were in high school?

Rusk: Yes, he was actually coming down and playing with the South Bend Symphony the season before I was hired. So, in a sense, I succeeded him at least one place! [laughs] There was no one available so I think he was glad to be relieved of those duties. Many of the Chicago Symphony players did come down and play in South Bend, but that was in the days before there was a 52 week season in Chicago, and they had the time, and they probably enjoyed the extra income. At one time the South Bend Symphony had Arnold Jacobs on tuba, Frank Crisafulli on trombone, Jerry Sirucek on oboe, and Emil Eck the flutist come down. There were half a dozen Chicago Symphony players that did play with the South Bend, but I guess when there was a local person who was competent, they would give them preference. So, I succeeded him in the South Bend orchestra, and then started taking lessons with him. [laughs]

Nowicke: That was where you met him?

Rusk: Yes. Well, here again, my high school band directors I think were very excellent teachers, suspiciously above the average, and they set it up, and it was absolutely the right thing to do, so I

appreciate their efforts on my behalf. It made all the difference, absolutely. It's odd that when it came time to pick a school that I didn't look at Northwestern very seriously. I think it was the mandatory religion classes that they had at that time that kind of turned me off. Of course I.U. was a state school, and had a terrific reputation.

I had actually met Bill Bell when I was in high school. We had in South Bend a new music teacher who had just graduated from I.U. Bloomington, a wonderful tuba player by the name of Jerry Lackey, who is still teaching in the South Bend area. Jerry was one of Bell's premier students here in Bloomington, so Jerry was very enthusiastic about Bill Bell and the I.U. music school and I think Bell played a clinic, or some kind of a solo in South Bend, and I met him before I actually came down here and studied with him. So it wasn't a total shock, and I had heard so many wonderful things about Bill Bell from almost all of the other musicians--not only other tuba players but other brass players. He was well known and very well respected, so it looked like a good thing to do.

I didn't realize it until I got here how highly competitive the tuba department was at this school. As this picture indicates,¹ there was a great deal of talent assembled here at one time and I've always wondered about that. Of course, the school had a great reputation, Bill Bell had a great reputation, and of course he could attract the students.

The only other school that I could think of that would duplicate this kind of a turnout would be Eastman, but they were never there all at the same time: Roger Bobo, Chuck Daellenbach, Toby Hanks, Ray Nutaitis, there are several other fine tuba players, and they will all complain that they didn't actually have a tuba teacher at Eastman. I mean, go figure that one out. So Eastman must attract a very high level of student too, you know, just very gifted, very ambitious people and they came out of there--a large number of wonderful tuba players came out of Eastman for some reason. Eastman and I.U. seemed to be the two hotbeds.

Yes, I got here and I was informed by Mr. Bell that freshmen did not play in the orchestra at I.U. which was highly annoying because [laughs] I had been playing and getting paid for it for the two previous seasons. So, the first year I was here I was put in the bands, which meant I carried a tuba halfway across campus three times a week, and I didn't much appreciate that, so I got busy and by my sophomore year I was playing in an orchestra, thank you very much. Sometimes his way of motivating people I think was to make them so mad! He certainly motivated me in that way because practiced my you-know-what off that year to get out of the bands and into the orchestra program. I was totally fixated, even at that time on a career in a symphony orchestra, I wasn't interested in education or anything whatsoever. It was just, I thought, a real setback to have to play in a band for a whole school year.

But like I say, the level of competition here was very high, and the competition for the I.U. Philharmonic (which was certainly the top orchestra) or the first jazz band, or the best brass

¹Photograph of William Bell with late 1960s Indiana University tuba ensemble.

quintet, I mean, was very intense. A lot of us, I think, did not thrive under that kind of a situation, some of us did. I think Bell's idea was that the music business is highly competitive and therefore you'd better get used to it now, because it doesn't get any easier.

So there was, I think, a great deal of competition engendered by him, and I suppose rightly so, although at the time it was not very pleasant. I can't remember that all of us were close friends. We did associate--especially the famous Saturday afternoon football games, but I remember my best friends in the music school were like trumpet players or horn players, and I did not hang out with tuba players. I think part of that was because of this competitive aspect. I couldn't really look at these guys as friends when I had to go up against them at the next audition. I don't recall that we socialized with other tuba players that much, which is too bad, in a sense. But that was kind of how it was, I think.

Nowicke: Did you work on the stage crew?

Rusk: No. No.

Nowicke: That is where some of the others told me that was where they hung out together.

Rusk: Well, Ivan Hammond was always over there. Who else would have been over there?

Nowicke: Sam Gnagey, Paul Krzywicki. Paul was lights. Sam and Don Harry and Ivan all did carpentry.

Rusk: No, I didn't do any of that. I didn't have a scholarship or I didn't have job. I just practiced and took a few classes. Mostly practiced.

Nowicke: They all did that for the money.

Rusk: That was not necessary in my case, fortunately. All things considered I think it was an extraordinary time to be at this particular place. As I look back, I couldn't have done better for myself. As I said, I was totally focused on a career as a performer and not as a teacher or an academic. I've often wondered if a traditional conservatory training might have been better than a so-called university. Of course the bachelor of music in applied performance degree here is not very far away from a conservatory, because there are very few outside classes, very little contact with reality. But still, there wasn't the recognition that it was a pipeline to the performing state. I've wondered about that, but on the other hand, I got to where I wanted to get on schedule, so maybe it was a pretty good place to be.

Nowicke: Did you play an audition?

Rusk: For the music school? Yes, there was. I think it was kind of a formality, as a resident of Indiana I think they pretty much had to let you in. The mortality rate among freshman was

terrible--50% of us were not back the second year, some of us didn't come back the second semester. But the music school required an audition. I played that in the spring of my senior year in high school. Bill Bell was not there which was interesting to me, but Van Haney, and Phil Farkas, and Louis Davidson certainly were. So, yes, there was an audition. I think I played the Persichetti *Serenade No. 12* for unaccompanied tuba.

Nowicke: What did you play it on?

Rusk: At that time I had a Besson BB \flat tuba, God help me, with the lead pipe that hits you in the forehead and that nasty little ball on the end of it. Which... I had some custom work done, I had the lead pipe lowered, I had that ball removed and I had some throw rings put on the valve slides so that I could actually compensate. I just bought that tuba like my junior year in high school and I had no sooner got to I.U. that I realized what I needed was a four valve CC tuba. I traded that in, I think, my first year and bought a Sanders Schertzer that had just been overhauled. Beautiful, pristine instrument, and I bought it from a guy named Ivan Sumner, who was a tuba student of Bill Bell. Ivan was a Texan, and I don't recall if he was getting out of music but he sold me his tuba and I paid \$500 for it, and it was a wonderful instrument. Got me through music school and got me through my first year in the Milwaukee orchestra. I sold that to a student of mine many years later, he put it in the back seat of his car and got about a half a mile from my house when he had a traffic accident and the horn was substantially destroyed. [laughs]

Nowicke: I've never seen one of the old Sanders but people have told me they were beautiful instruments, they had tubing that was graceful and free form...

Rusk: Yes. This was Schertzer of Augsburg. There is now a Johannes Schertzer in the former East Germany who is making instruments too. Schertzer might be one of those hereditary names in instrument making in Germany. This was the Augsburg Schertzer, and they were very lovely instruments. Very similar to the Mirafone 185, not a big horn, not a small horn, but just right for most all-around playing. That is something else I remember about the days here is that I don't think anybody owned an F tuba. The school had one and we would play it a little bit.

Nowicke: One of these [mimes 6 valve horn, 3 +3].

Rusk: No, it was a conventional Alexander F. Out of tune as usual. We learned pretty much to play everything on the CC tuba--a medium size CC tuba. Bell was not an equipment freak. He believed in training the player to play everything. He didn't worry about mouthpieces, he wasn't into equipment, he didn't make very many recommendations when it came to instruments or anything like that. As a result we all played pretty much the same kind of horn. The old Mirafone 186 was a favorite. I think there are three or four in there [the picture] there are two of the Schertzers, I have one, and Andy [Newman]--I think that's the same horn. The new Meinl-Westons were just coming out at that time.

Nowicke: The ones that Bell had worked on?

Rusk: Yes. They were just coming out, but we didn't see too many of them for the first couple of years. It wasn't until after about 1970 that they really started to hit the market. Mr. Bell of course played a King tuba. He had a long relationship with Henderson White of the Band Instrument Company in Cleveland. I suspect that dates from Bell's time in the Cincinnati Orchestra, but there were various instruments that were made for him, I think, by King, so there obviously was a relationship there. He also had a Červeny CC tuba of some kind that he played. They were very similar instruments and I thought that was interesting. Most of us, if we're going to spend the money on more than one tuba we want different tubas, not two of almost the same kind of tuba. His approach I think to professional music, or certainly to tuba playing was that of the virtuoso who could play anything at almost the drop of the hat, and that's pretty much what he could do. He could go from the stage of the New York Philharmonic to Madison Square Garden and play the circus, and get up the next morning and play a recording session for a jingle, and then in the afternoon you know, play in a jazz band. So he understood the realities of the business as they were in his day, and I also don't recall that he was career-specific in that we were that focused on symphony orchestra.

I didn't practice excerpts hardly at all. We played with him out of the Arbans' book, page one through ten, and if it was perfect you'd go on, pages 11 through 20. The infamous warm-up routine which he wrote and made us play, which was, I don't know--20 pages of non-stop scales, arpeggios. I don't know why he called it a warm-up, you were shot after you'd played it, you couldn't go on anyway. That was very important to him. In the second year I think most of us played the Bach cello suites using F tuba fingerings on a CC tuba which is, in effect, a transposition. Here again, it lowers it so that you can actually survive it, but on the other hand, you are learning F tuba fingerings before you even have the horn, which I thought was very clever. I really didn't understand that until several years later.

He was not strong on excerpts as I recall and not too strong on solos. We had to do something for the jury every semester, but that was not a big item in his agenda. He was very disciplined, he wanted to impose that kind of discipline on his students. So everything to be "just so," there was a lot of ground work in terms of, like I say, the scale and arpeggio book, and also the early pages of Arban's can get pretty boring, but it's probably the kind of discipline that will show up later on. The ornaments in the Arban's book, the gruppettos, the trills, the turns, all of that was very important to him and we practiced them and got them right.

So he was very methodical and very disciplined in the details. The overall philosophical concept, or the artistic concept, or the larger issues, I don't recall that he discussed very much. As opposed to Arnold Jacobs, who was mostly philosophy with me, Bell was very much hands-on, nitty-gritty, you know, let's tweak that carburetor and get it running right. So, there was a lot of that, which can get very boring unless you are, number one, very motivated, and here again, he may have been at an early stage separating the wheat from the chaff--those who were motivated enough to put up with those first two years usually went on to better things, some guys were turned off I think, and probably dropped out, and I rather imagine Bell thought that was

alright, because I think he really knew what a tough profession it was, and he really thought, I think that--the survival of the fittest, you know. I don't think he believed there was a place in music for everybody who wanted one. I think he knew that you had to be very good to get anywhere. That's the result. An amazing number of fine players came out of here, and I guess most of us put up with that drill sergeant approach. I wouldn't call it "hazing," but it was very unpleasant many times. I think maybe he was right, absolutely right, in imposing those kind of studies on us and that close attention to detail. That certainly was what was required in the music business that he knew, in his time, and had obviously had a great deal of success at.

As I say, I studied with both Mr. Bell and Mr. Jacobs simultaneously and there were significant differences in their approach. Mr. Bell didn't really like to answer questions, and I'm the kind of a person who always wanted to know the "why" of something, because if I understood the point, then... My assumption was how you got there maybe was not so important as getting there. Mr. Jacobs was quite a bit more interested in talking in the end result, or what's at the end of the road, and he was a lot less interested in how you got there, because he didn't have so many rules as Bell.

Now Bell, when I met him first, his wife had just died a year or two previous and he was really depressed and seemed not to be all that interested in things anymore. He was only 63-64 when I met him. He seemed older. He wasn't interested in discussion. He usually had a way for you to do it, and you did it, and that was it. He didn't want to explain why you did it that way, he didn't have a Choice A, B, and C, there was one way--you do it?

Nowicke: Would you go in knowing what you would be playing in your next lesson?

Rusk: Oh yes, like I say, he was very methodical, the Arban's book, it would be maybe 10 pages a week, but they had to be damn near perfect. They had to be up to his standards. If you look at the opening 100 pages of Arban's and imagine spending four hours a day practicing that kind of material, you can see that it would test your patience, especially if you were raring to go. But here again, the discipline, I mean, that discipline does show up in the professional player later on. There are, I think, a lot of examples of very talented people who tend to bypass those kind of studies and maybe have a career for a while, but they almost invariably run into trouble. The old pros are the ones that this early discipline always shows through, their careers go year after year after year. I have noticed that, that there are these *wunderkind*--boy virtuosos that come out of the woodwork and like a comet soar through the night, but they're burnt out pretty much by the time they get to the western sky there. I think the discipline and the foundation he provided his students was probably right on. As much as I hated that warmup routine, I must say, that since then I have about all the technique I need to play anything, and my sight reading has not been a problem. So, I think a professional player has to have that grounding.

Nowicke: Did he do the expanded note drill too?

Rusk: That, as you phrase it, does not sound familiar to me.

Nowicke: It might have come out in one of his later books.

Rusk: The only book that he authored that I worked out of was that daily drills and warmup, you know, with the crazy scales in three octaves or whatever it is. He had written many books previously, but we didn't work out of any of them. When you use that phrase, it's not...

Nowicke: Let me get it.

Rusk: If I recognize it, I will probably call it something.

Nowicke: It goes with long tones.

Rusk: No, I don't remember this. I don't remember long tones. This would have been more of a Jacobs study, it seems to me, than a Bill Bell. He was more interested in the technique.

Nowicke: This was out of one of the later iterations of Bell's book. I think in the picture of that he's holding onto the King.

Rusk: Is that the inside cover of the book?

Nowicke: It was a reissue, 1975.

Rusk: There was something similar to that at the end of each section in the warm-ups. There would be in the different key, and then you would "schmear" (as he called it) down a ridiculous 2 ½ octaves to start on the next one, then when you were finished you'd have to schmear up three octaves. So there was some of it, but that kind of a drill, per se, is not familiar to me.

Nowicke: I don't see where that was indicated in the book where that was indicated that you were supposed to do that between the notes.

Rusk: It's probably something like the Emory Remington trombone warm-ups--you had to have been there. We all could still do it--I doubt if any these guys are still actually doing it on a daily basis! [laughs]

Nowicke: I'll have to ask them about it.

Rusk: I'll bet most of us could still do it, and do it from memory. In a sense--I don't want to say it's antithetical, but it's not what an orchestra player needs to be good at. In other words, the flexibility, the technique, the practice room-recording studio approach. We were wonderful quintet players, but it was a rude awakening to get a professional job and suddenly have to come up with about three times more tone than you had ever done in your life. I think most of us have changed to bigger horns, and when you play whole notes at the top of your lungs, you know, it

does things to your embouchure. You develop a wonderfully solid tone, I mean, the tuba player's stock in trade is tone quality and not technique. Double and triple tonguing for eight bars at a stretch does not occur in the orchestral repertoire, and that was very interesting for me. Had I gone to New York as a free lancer right out of I.U. I think that would have been wonderful, because I was set up to play almost any kind of music, but there was no steady work, even in those days. My idea was to make a major orchestra. There was a period of adjustment after I got the job, let me tell you! [laughs] I was not prepared for that in Bill Bell's studio.

Tape 1, Side 2

Nowicke: That's one of the reasons I was asking people, did Bill Bell play his own warm-ups? I wouldn't have know that that wasn't just a slur, that it should be a smear.

Rusk: He was--I wouldn't say "funny" about breathing--but I recall here that he, first of all, believed in "nose breathing" and I wish my nasal passages were open enough to permit me. They shut down about 1968 and they haven't been open enough since. He used that as a rhythmic device, and also used it to keep the embouchure on the mouthpiece at all times. He thought that once you got the set-up, you did very little to disturb it.

Nowicke: He would not have approved of the pivot system. [laughs]

Rusk: No. Well, I think that was actually all right, but he thought it was critically important to get the embouchure and then keep it. That meant, frequently, not breathing through your mouth, which is not what Arnold Jacobs would prescribe. Here again, you take your choice, they both had wonderful careers, but you want to go one way or go the other.

Nowicke: It makes you wonder about his septum, too.

Rusk: Here again, it's the band influence on Bill Bell and his early training, presumably by Iowa cornet teachers or something. It would certainly explain why he had the virtuoso technique, the range, the wonderful double and triple tonguing. He was basically playing like a cornetist would on the tuba, because I wonder if he ever had a tuba teacher? He understood what the musical result was, and he compared himself, maybe, to the fine cornet soloists--which is great. I don't recall that he was noted for his great, big, bombastic tone, or I don't recall that he played big tubas. His emphasis was on ensemble playing--in the sense of smaller sounds, blending, not sticking out--playing very well in tune, so on and so forth (all of which are great).

Nowicke: If you are playing in a band, you are playing in a section.

Rusk: Absolutely. It should be that way.

Nowicke: Like a bass player.

Rusk: I think maybe in the old days it was that way, instead of a bunch of guys competing against each other.

Nowicke: You were mentioning before we turned the tape on about the sound Sousa would have wanted, or other people would have wanted in their *bands*.

Rusk: There is that reference, that he wanted the bass sound to *spread* across the band like the frosting? Or frostiness? Did he say “frostiness?” on a cake. Obviously Sousa did not hear the tuba as solo instrument.

Nowicke: He always had tuba soloists--even in the Marine Band.

Rusk: That’s something else, when I talk to Fred Williams I’ve got to ask about the Herman Conrad solo.

Nowicke: I don’t know. When Sousa was writing then, he was writing for two parts. He was writing for an Eb and a BBb.

Rusk: Did it say Eb and a BBb, or was it just in octaves?

Nowicke: No, it said (I think) Eb and a BBb. They’re very specific in Walter Smith’s letters, talking about so-and-so plays the Eb in the Marine Band and who plays BBb tuba.² They had a Swedish guy who played BBb.

Rusk: Did that hold true in his civilian band as well? Because the pictures don’t ever show a smaller tuba. Now, there might have been Eb Sousaphones, but they are hard to spot in a photograph.

Nowicke: I don’t think so, I’d have to look.

Rusk: There is a famous photograph of the Marine Band playing a concert on the south lawn of the White House in 1904 or something? The band is photographed from behind, so what you see are the tuba players. Everyone last one of them is playing a monster--must be a contrabass BBb tuba with a 20-24" bell, some are top action and some are side action, but they are all playing very, very, large tubas. Obviously they wanted the tuba to put that bottom layer.

Nowicke: This [Sousa’s biography, *Marching Along*] isn’t indexed well enough to find that tuba quote.

²Probably wrong about what the part actually says--on reflection I can’t recall that there were separate parts copied out. CEN.

Rusk: It's in there--but you've read it.

Nowicke: Yes.

Rusk: That's a very good reason why every tuba player should own a copy of Sousa's autobiography.

Nowicke: That and it keeps Paul Bierley in groceries.

Rusk: Well, that's up to the individual. You can spend your money on whichever edition that you want. Also, there's another discussion--a comparison between the symphony orchestra and the wind band. Sousa makes the claim that the bass tuba can do everything and more than the string bass can do, and you can play it on the march. So, he stuck up very much for some of the instruments. That was the height of the profession it would seem in 1900, there was no Philadelphia Orchestra, there was no Cleveland Orchestra. The Sousa Band, the Pryor Band, might have been...

Nowicke: When did Philadelphia start?

Rusk: 1915 or thereabouts.

Nowicke: When Boston came down and played in D.C. Walter [Smith] wrote about how they played very well, but he thought they looked grungy. He wrote a letter complaining about how the brass instruments were all dirty.

Rusk: Well, this was a military bandsman, I'm sure.

Nowicke: I sent a copy to the Boston Symphony, they were pleased to have it.

Rusk: I'm sure they were, the "aristocrat of orchestras." I think that the money and probably the fame was in the concert band field, absolutely.

Nowicke: They were the matinee idols.

Rusk: August Helleberg was the first tuba player of the mighty Chicago Symphony and he quit and went back to the bands after a season. You have to assume that that kind of work attracted the best players with the best instruments. Of course the advent of the 52 week season is a relatively recent development. I don't think many orchestras had a 52 week paycheck as late as the 1970.

Nowicke: No, and some of the guys would be off playing in Asbury Park in the summer because the season wouldn't go on.

You were saying a lot more about what the instruments sounded like back then...

Rusk: Well, I don't know, of course, but if you play old tubas.

Nowicke: You were speculating.

Rusk: Yes, but the famous Helleberg mouthpiece has come down to us, as has the big Chief, John Kuhn, the Fred Geib mouthpiece. There are still those mouthpieces around and they are almost invariably large mouthpieces.

Nowicke: They were also large men— big people, big faces, big horns.

Rusk: Was it Jack Richardson the Sousaphonist in the Marine [Sousa] Band was 6'8" or something?

Nowicke: Yes, he was big.

Rusk: Towering over the rest of them.

Nowicke: That's why people thought in some of those photos that it really wasn't Bill Bell, because that's a little bitty guy. Well, it wasn't that he was a little bitty guy, it was that he was 6'1" or 6'2" and everybody else was really big. He didn't look so large then.

I've also heard that Helleberg would design a mouthpiece for every horn.

Rusk: I don't believe that. The Helleberg mouthpieces that have come down to us were manufactured by the Conn company. If he whittled them out one at a time, it doesn't say Conn Helleberg, and I've never seen anything but a Conn Helleberg. I think that legend got started because they were using the old fashioned cutters that would wear, so the beginning mouthpiece on a production run would be a lot different than the last mouthpiece on that production run because the cutters would dull, they'd sharpen then, and the mouthpieces kept getting smaller. I am very skeptical about that and I really don't think there is such a thing as tailoring a mouthpiece to a tuba to that degree. I mean, it's worth looking for mouthpieces, yes, but you don't don't tweak a mouthpiece to a tuba to that degree and have it really end up in the sound. I am very skeptical of that story. I would assume that the Helleberg decedents are still alive and well and living in New York City. Someone ought to give them a call and find out if August or the two boys had any mechanical ability. I don't know. It would be a wonderful thing to track down.

Nowicke: I asked Abe Torchinsky if he had ever met any of the Hellebergs. He met John once.

Rusk: Harvey Phillips knows him, or knew him. Presumably they had kids, and they would have had kids, so that would be four generations ago, three generations ago. But there might be

Hellebergs alive today who know these kind of things. It would be a wonderful project for somebody.

Nowicke: [Shows photo of Bill Bell in *Hallelujah Trombone*]

Rusk: With a moustache? Is this Bell with a moustache?

Nowicke: It was probably written on the back, it's the Cincinnati Symphony being a band when they weren't being a symphony.

Rusk: Fillmore Band, 1927. I think Bell did have a moustache for a while at one point.

Nowicke: He did in some of those Sousa Band pictures. It's hard to ID people if you only know them at a particular point in their lives. I look at these [photo of I.U. tuba ensemble, late 1960s] and think, "Well, there's Winston..." but I wouldn't have recognized Sam Gnagey, I would have recognized Paul Krzywicki, but of course I don't know the rest of you.

Rusk: There are a large number of Texans over on this side.

Nowicke: [Laughs] Large number of Texans!

Rusk: Suspicious number of Texans. Bert Nordbloom, he was from the Philadelphia area. I'll bet Krzywicki would know where Bert is. Rapp is supposedly here in town. Waxman is from Long Island. That's me, that's Sam, Andy Newman, Harry, Krzywicki, Sam McFerrin, Winston, that's Bert. I wish I could remember his name, and that's Sharon the euphonium player.

Nowicke: What happened to her? Became a euphonium player. Well, she wouldn't have had a service band option back then, so what do you do with a euphonium?

Rusk: I really don't know what happened to her. I don't know what happened to a lot of these guys.

Nowicke: Andy Newman is not a doctor, went into graphic arts and is very successful. He does a lot of covers for top-selling books.

Rusk: Winston we know. As far as I know, none of us have been arrested or committed suicide. Might be a fair amount of heavy drinking, but no one came to a disgraceful end I'm happy to say, yet.

Nowicke: He looks a lot younger than every body else. I don't know if he was or if he was just...

Rusk: No, he was a freshman, an incoming freshman. Floyd Cooley--if this--this could have been the spring of 1967 so Floyd Cooley, so this could be the fall of 1967 and Floyd should be there.

Nowicke: He studied with my teacher Bob Whaley when he was in high school.

Rusk: Was Whaley in Iowa at the time?

Nowicke: Or Kansas, one of those indistinguishable states.

Rusk: Most famous tuba players seem to come from Iowa.

Nowicke: [laughs] May be a requirement. So, Ivan was designing tubas, in college. When did you first start?

Rusk: Ivan Hammond, we had an Ivan Sumner. He must have been doing grad work while I was just an undergrad.

Nowicke: He came in here fall of 1959 before Bill Bell. He enjoyed I.U., he spent a lot of time here.

Rusk: Almost 10 years?

Nowicke: But he went off and played in Québec, and he went off and played in North Carolina, and came back...

Rusk: I remember Ivan was always over in the stage shop in East Hall making things. Now, you tell me that that was his job, but I remember that he made mutes a lot, it seems to me. He was always tinkering when I thought he should ought to be practicing. I never saw him around the music school, he was always over at East Hall. I think he was making mutes, but I don't recall that there was any work done on tubas by anybody, because, we didn't know anything, and number two, you'd think twice before you started tearing apart your tuba.

Nowicke: During this time period he had a D tuba made.

Rusk: He wrote me a letter, it must have been in the early-to-middle 1970s when I was in Milwaukee and he said, "I'm trying to get a grant to get a double tuba made, in the key of G and D." He said, "Would you please write a letter to so-and-so supporting this idea, and oh, by the way, don't tell them I wrote you asking you..." So, I stroked my beard for a few days over that one, and I couldn't quite see the point of a double tuba in the first place, because it has to be one or the other, it can't be both, and number two, who needs a G or a D tuba? I couldn't quite see the value of those keys. After 20-some years, I still don't quite see the point of it. It may be that

he thought those being orchestral keys, or string keys, maybe the intonation would be better, or something.

The few double tubas I've ever seen were not successful. I played one in Hamburg, the Gronitz F-BBb tuba it was, they admitted off the bat that it was a pretty good F tuba that they'd added some stuff to make a BBb, and they were apologizing for the BBb. There's a guy, Frederick Young, in Pittsburgh, Dr. Young, the infamous Dr. Young.

Nowicke: Of mouthpiece fame.

Rusk: Didn't he make some kind of a tuba like that. Have you ever met anybody who bought one?

Nowicke: Nope.

Rusk: That takes the fun out of owning two or more tubas. Why should you have one when you can own three?

Nowicke: Ivan had the double tuba made.

Rusk: By whom?

Nowicke: Alexander. It has double-length rotors, and he took it down to Bob Pallansch who mined three ounces of...

Rusk: And one bell?

Nowicke: I guess so.

Rusk: Has to have one bell--well, it's either optimized for F, or C, or G, or D, then he would have a change to go from one key to the other. He would also have to have extra branches, I would presume.

Nowicke: I've never seen the instrument.

Rusk: It's technically feasible, it's actually quite simple to do that, except the results have never really seemed to be that sterling.

Nowicke: Yamaha has a double tuba.

Rusk: In what keys?

Nowicke: I think it is C and F. Ivan said it's more of a compensating thing. I haven't seen it, Sam Gnagey has one.

Rusk: He has one?

Nowicke: Yes, Yamaha was selling them--from what Ivan said--in Japan, and this instrument came from some guy who had bought it in the Netherlands and brought it back over.

Rusk: I wonder though, the automatic compensating system instruments are, in effect, double tubas, because the B \flat euphonium, if you hold the 4th valve down, you have a perfectly acceptably in-tune F euphonium, except that the sound is not good. The same is true of the Besson F tuba, the compensator, if you hold the 4th valve down, you have a pretty good C tuba. So, in a sense those are double tubas, except that's not--a double tuba ought to be good in both keys. I'd be surprised if in fact that is the case. I've not seen one.

Nowicke: I guess all the valve mechanisms are fairly close to the lead pipe on this. I've only had a vague description from Ivan, I've not seen it, obviously I need a road trip. My double-tuba road trip.

Rusk: Where does he live now?

Nowicke: Sam's in Fort Wayne.

Rusk: I know where Sam is, but how about Ivan Hammond?

Nowicke: Ivan lives in Bowling Green.

Rusk: That's actually not very far from where I live. I mean, Toledo's an easy three hour drive and Bowling Green is just south of there. I may call him up and go over and look at that, just to satisfy my curiosity. I don't see that it really is feasible and where you end up with a quality instrument.

Nowicke: He's still sold on the idea, he's not all that thrilled with his, but he had a lot of fun.

Rusk: OK, fine, that's something.

Nowicke: He had a D tuba and an E tuba.

Rusk: Just to prove the point, or did he actually take these on stage?

Nowicke: He took them on stage. He liked them, he said D and E aren't a bad key if you're playing in an orchestra.

Rusk: Yes, but you'd have to learn new set of fingerings too.

Nowicke: No, he doesn't, he transposes clefs. He also told me he had an extra step-valve put on so that he could avoid 2&3 as much as possible.

Rusk: OK, people think I'm crazy, huh? [laughs]

Nowicke: It's been really interesting talking to Ivan.

Rusk: Oh yes, he's an interesting guy and I'll give him credit for being highly creative, and obviously his mind works in those areas, he's trying new things. Eventually you might come across something worthwhile. Thomas Edison probably had his share of failures, I don't know.
Nowicke: Ivan has better personal hygiene than Thomas Edison.

Rusk: I wouldn't know, I didn't know Tom Edison.

Nowicke: From the reports, you wouldn't have wanted to have been in the same room.

Rusk: He was a character, but the main thing I remember about him was that he was always over there tinkering. I don't think he was working, he'd go over there and make things just for fun. I thought it was more of a hobby than a job.

I wasn't aware that Krzywicki or those boys actually worked over there.

Nowicke: Yes, apparently Dick Snyder--everybody he hired to be in the crew there were tuba players. There were 20-some of you there would have been people doing things you wouldn't have been following.

Rusk: I told you early that we weren't necessarily all that close. Oddly enough, I never once was assigned an opera orchestra. I never played *Parsifal*, I never did an opera. I did *Nutcracker* three years in a row, but I never actually played in East Hall except for the *Nutcracker* performances I think (which might have been at the auditorium).

Jacobs gave me some very good advice my very first lesson. He said "You should train yourself as a musician who plays the tuba." At that time I was very much interested in all the other instruments. I was playing flute and playing saxophone, and you name it, I was horsing around with it. So I spent a lot of time listening to other instruments, trying to steal repertoire, or steal whatever I could learn about music from the other instrumentalists. I think I might have spent more time with other...

Nowicke: You weren't an Ed major were you? So you weren't taking these things for methods classes.

Rusk: No, at the one time in high school that was the height of my ambition and I thought I'd better learn how to play all the horns and learn how to conduct. So I pretty much that before I

got to school, I'd done it high school. Then the good news is, Jake says, "You can learn from other instruments." I very much took him at his word, the bad news is sometimes the embouchures are not compatible with a fine brass embouchure. So he told me I'd better give up the saxophone. I believe I was--yes, I was on the Righteous Brothers Band for some little strange tour in central Indiana once, I was playing baritone sax behind the Righteous Brothers. He was right, you know, the embouchures are not compatible and you really can't play all the instruments in the band.

But, the music can be learned from listening to other instrumentalists or singers. That's another thing that I recall vividly about I.U., the record library, and some of the incredible treasures that we had there. I spent a lot of time listening to flute players, cello players, singers--I think more so than the average tuba player might.

Nowicke: When you were talking about your dental problems and winding up on tuba because of getting your teeth knocked out--what was the first tuba you were given to play?

Rusk: I'm sure it was a Sousaphone.

Nowicke: Eb cor BBb?

Rusk: No, no, it would have been a BBb, the Eb was nonexistent in our school system, and apparently we had a deal with the C.G. Conn company, because we saw mostly Conn instruments. Down here at I.U. I saw mostly Conn trombones and a lot of Conn French horns in those days. It wasn't until I got to a professional orchestra that I started seeing Bachs and Geyers or Holtons. Indiana was certainly a big Conn state at that time, so I played a Conn Sousaphone all through junior high school and high school.

Nowicke: Until you bought your Besson?

Rusk: Yes, which at the time it seemed like a good idea. That was the advice.

Nowicke: Did you buy that in Chicago?

Rusk: No, we got in from the local music store as I recall. At that time Selmer was importing Bessons. So the local music store called Elkhart and they ran one over the next day, it was that simple. It was my first tuba, and it was nice to have your own instrument, you could get into it, take it seriously, practice and all that. It would have been just as easy to buy a nice four or five valve CC tuba at the time, as opposed to a Besson. Bessons have stood the test of time, it's a hundred year old design, it's served the Empire around the world, but it is not necessarily a high-quality professional contrabass tuba.

Nowicke: It's a fine anchor.

Rusk: Well, if you could get that bell in and then drag her a little bit, yes. What else?

Nowicke: Do you have a “Bydlo” story for me?

Rusk: No, I never played “Bydlo,” I shouldn’t say this--he’ll never hear it. Our first trombone player had about three ex-wives, and about 10 ex-children, and a couple of ex-Irish Setters, and he needed the money. He would get in there before the season started and make sure that he played all the tenor tuba, the bass trumpet--

Nowicke: He got all the doubling pay! [laughs]

Rusk: Absolutely! Of course, “Bydlo” for the contrabass tubist would be a total pain in the ass, right in the middle of a concert, “Great Gate of Kiev” and all that, to have to put that little thing on your face, and then, what’s worse is then to have go back to the big horn. So I was always very glad to let him do it. When I was young and stupid and in South Bend as I recall I actually did play it in on the BB♭ tuba. I used a cheater mouthpiece so maybe it wasn’t very good, but that was actually the last time I had to play “Bydlo.” I prolonged my life! [laughs] He needs the money, fine, let him do it. I had a very, I think, conventional career.

In this day an age a professional player can’t afford to have the behavior that they tell stories about in later years. There really aren’t too many alcohol problems, there aren’t too many drug problems, there aren’t too many psychological problems. The modern symphony orchestra is about as interesting as a room full of accountants. We don’t have the characters, but you get the steady paycheck, you have the Blue Cross-Blue Shield, you have the pension plan, and the least you can do is show up on time ready to do the work. With the competition today, if you get the symphony job or something along those lines, you’re very jealous, you keep it.

Very few people are actually fired from symphony orchestras any more. We’ve reined-in our weirdo behavior and I don’t think there will ever be stories about modern players like there were in the old days. We just don’t have the characters any more. We can’t afford to be that way.

My profession, my business, I took it seriously, as does everyone else, so there weren’t too many things that went wrong, there was nothing too funny that ever happened, certainly not in my department, because the tuba player is an easy target, you know. I never forgot that there I was in a room full of 90 musicians, a conductor, and 2,500 paying customers, and there was no place for the tuba player to hide. So, you take the profession seriously, you take (hopefully) your colleagues seriously, and you take the music seriously, and funny things just don’t happen any more. [laughs]

The funniest thing I believe, we played a Walter Piston concerto for orchestra, and I was playing a Holton that was made for me (it was a fine instrument) but of course I had to adjust the valve slides (as I had been taught to play). The second movement is, I believe, a passacaglia that starts out with a tuba solo in the very low register. So, I’m back there adjusting my 1st valve slide as I play, and I had to go down to like a low F, and I adjusted just a little bit too much and I pulled

the slide out and there I am, nothing is going on until I get that in. Afterwards I was at a party and the conductor was there, who was at that time Kenneth Schermerhorn (used to be a trumpet player) he's an American, and he knows what life is like, so he looked at me and he laughed and he said "I've seen your little plumbing problem." I said, "Yeah," and that was the end of it. There was no vindictiveness, no repercussions whatsoever. I think he appreciated the fact that I was trying to play in tune, and trying to do a good job, and stuff happens. It probably happened to him. Occasionally trombone players let the slide go when they go out to 7th--not very often, but it happens.

Nowicke: I don't think anybody plays without triggers anymore.

Rusk: I've never actually seen that, I know that it does happen, but I've never saw it in 25 years. Our guys never let it go. I never saw it, of course, here again, it's a \$600 item. They wouldn't have bought it if it wasn't a good one in the first place, they sure don't want it damaged.

Nowicke: I wonder if that happened more when there were bass trombones with--

Rusk: The handles? I don't know. We don't see those in this country, I guess they don't play them in England any more either, they use the conventional Bb /F. The "kid shifter" they were called weren't they? You could reach out and move the kid in the front row with the thing? [laughs] Here again, it's the sound that is lost. Nobody knows what that is supposed to sound like.

I think the modern symphony orchestra is pretty much a profession like anything else and the people take it very seriously and things run very smoothly, that's why orchestras are so good, because you have steady, reliable, dependable people who like being there, like the stead work. The free lance scene I think is just nowhere any more compared to what it was in the 1950s. I think so much of Harvey Phillips, I call him "The King of the Free Lancers" but I mean that in the best sense of the word. He came up in an era when there was all kinds of work, and he played all kinds of engagements and he rose to the occasion every time. As a result, he got a very wonderful education in music that a lot of us will never have because we don't have those opportunities any more. He never played in a symphony orchestra (as a contracted, regular player) but my goodness, having to cope with all those recording sessions, and brass quintets and solo pieces. You know that's an education that no one will ever have.

Nowicke: And the circus!

Rusk: Yes, sure. You name it! But that was the life of the professional musician. Today it's tenured symphony orchestra and it gets to be a little--well, I shouldn't call it "boring," let's call it "stable," because everybody is making house payments, and the got a new car and they got a kid on the way, and people like that tend to be pretty boring! [laughs] but that's the way it is.

What else do you need to know from me?

Tape 2, Side 1

Nowicke: [You didn't work on]...excerpts with Mr. Bell. When you got to the orchestra was it a surprise?

Rusk: Not so much the music because I was over-compensated. Any tuba player is *over*-prepared to play in a symphony orchestra. I mean, it's really boring, and it's not very hard, but it's the concept of having to balance three trombones, five French horns, four trumpets. In my orchestra we had nine string basses, and they were up on boxes. So, just the difficulty of being heard, making myself heard in that din--I was not prepared. My teacher Jacobs, who was 90 miles down the road when I moved (I couldn't get away from him! He was either west of me or south of me my whole life)--I was continuing to work with him, certainly when I was in the Milwaukee. He suggested that I buy a larger bore tuba, and it was his idea that I buy a Holton. Holton was still making the big, they called it the 98-CC, and then they called it, I think, the 345-CC. They were still making those occasionally in the early 1970s so I put my bid it.

Nowicke: I've only seen the big BBbs, I've never seen the CCs.

Rusk: They'd make about five or six of them about every two or three years. Some of them were pretty bad, a couple of them, two or three factory CCs were wonderful instruments. I think I got the second best one I ever played. Mike Moore of the Atlanta Symphony has absolutely the best Holton CC I've ever seen (more power to him).

At that point, I remember my tuba was finally ready, I drove down to Elkhorn to pick it up. I came back for a Friday afternoon rehearsal. The first piece on the rehearsal was the Ives *Variations on America*, the William Schuman arrangement. There's a very famous Chicago Symphony recording of that, which I had listened to. So, I walked in there with my brand new Holton tuba and we started in to play it, and the scales fell from my eyes. It was a revelation to me. Everything Arnold Jacobs ever taught me fell into place, it made sense, and for the first time, I'd really found my voice as an orchestral player. So, I played the Holton for 11 years (I think it was) it was an excellent instrument. I had very good success with it.

Then I got to thinking that maybe Mr. Jacobs wasn't going to be there forever, after all. It looked like it, for all of those years. I thought, "Gee, I wouldn't mind auditioning." That was just about the time that the new Hirsbrunner York copy came out and it seemed to be the hot set-up, and I started worrying about my horns. "Shouldn't I have a better tuba than my Holton?" I had a chance at that time to buy a great big York BBb tuba from a repairman in Rockport, Illinois. He had lost one of the valves and couldn't find a replacement or he wouldn't have sold it to me. He wanted \$275--250--so I gave it to him. Then I thought, "Well, what am I going to do with this big old thing?" Then I realized that the similarities between this big old York BBb and my Holton were striking. Then I went down and saw Jake's tuba, took a few measurements, and all of a sudden, I'm starting to realize, it's the same horn. All three of them were the same horn.

It turns out that in the year that Holton moved from Chicago to Elkhorn he was buying his tubas from York and putting "Holton" on them.

Nowicke: Ah, they were "stencil horns."

Rusk: And there is, hanging in the Holton museum in Elkhorn, a 1917 "Holton" (so it says) that I'd swear on a stack of Bibles that was made in Grand Rapids, Michigan. So, the relationship there was highly incestuous, and that big model Holton, which they actually were making from World War I, all the way through the 1920s and the 1930s (I mean, they had that horn that far back) was taken from the big York.

Now, Mr. Jacob's Yorks, the two of them, the legendary horns (and this is, as near as I can tell, the only source of the legend) were those two great big instruments that he owned. The other CC tubas were the 4/4 size, and they are not uncommon, but a lot of people see the 4/4. They were all right too, but the mystique of York comes from the two horns that Jake *had*, and I think, more to the point, that Jake *played*. If somebody else had owned those tubas I don't think they would be quite as famous.

Anyway, I realized that I might have a chance here to make myself a very interesting tuba, or at least one that might sound a little bit better than my Holton, and might give me a chance at the Chicago Symphony job. So, that was the genesis of the whole thing, and he very graciously provided me access to his tuba that summer. I don't know how many times I rode down to Chicago to take measurements off his horn, take them back and put them on my horn, but it took me the entire month of August just to get the bugle--the open CC horn cut and proportioned so that I would get the sound and the intonation. Then I bought another horn to get the valves off of, and at that point it just came to life. Here again, a wonderful instrument.

I was going to leave it at a four-valver, except there was one note on the horn that wasn't within 2 cents of perfection. I mean, it was so well in tune, there was no low C# because you have to have--so, I thought, "Well, I'm so close, I'm going to get that one note right." So, I scrounged a 5th valve and put that on there so I could get myself a perfect low C#, so I had a 5 valve tuba. I don't know if the Lord was looking over me, or whether it's a heck of a lot easier than I think it is, but I made myself one heck of a tuba, that Jacobs several times commented that my horn is as good as his good horn. He had two of them, one was lesser.

Nowicke: Yes, the one that had had the [original] lead pipe lost.

Rusk: I was in his basement and we were playing then, and he kept playing my E and he said, "Well, you know, your E is a little sharp." "Yes Sir." So I played his tuba, his E was flat! I didn't say that, but the reason mine was sharp was because he'd been lipping up his flat one all these years. I didn't say anything, but it was very difficult to tell the two. I went away, just so happy. I finished my career in Milwaukee with the York. It didn't do me too much good at the audition, but I had a wonderful instrument to play and I still do. I don't know how word got out,

because I have never advertised, I have never claimed to be in business. I don't solicit business, but word got out and guys started calling me. I branched out, I had some luck in converting Holton BBbs to Holton CCs. I've done a certain amount of work with Martin tubas (which are wonderful instruments by the way) and of course, Yorks. York made over the years five different sizes of tubas, two Ebs, and three BBbs and I've worked with all of them, and some of them can be superb instruments, some of them are losers.

It was always my ambition, and it still is (as a matter of fact) to somehow return the American tuba concept, or the philosophy back to the United States. It's bizarre to see the Europeans and the Japanese makers and now there are makers in Brazil, all claiming to make the same kind of tubas that we made back before World War II.

Nowicke: Which is what they're trying to do with the 52J.

Rusk: That sounds like a Conn number. What is a 52J.

Nowicke: It's a new UMI product that's made out of all King parts but they are calling it a Conn.

Rusk: Is that the new small?

Nowicke: Yes, I'll show you a picture of it.

Rusk: I played one. See, I appreciated that horn because it's an American instrument.

Nowicke: .680 bore or something? Little guy with a big bell.

Rusk: 3/4 - 4/4

Nowicke: [points at RM 15] That's .740.

Rusk: That's considered a 3/4 instrument too. The new Conn would be in that all-around niche, here again, referring back to the old days.

Nowicke: I like the fact that it looks like a tuba. It looks like this Martin. It's a cute tuba.

Rusk: Well there is a look, but there is a sound that goes with it. I've always said the two classic tones were the Alexander and the Holton.

Nowicke: Nothing but the Martins have that bell flare.

Rusk: The rapid flare--that's a typical American feature.

Nowicke: There's a Martin euphonium--it's even more than that, like 10 to 1.

Rusk: You're sure it wasn't a damaged instrument.

Nowicke: No, I've seen several of those they were just incredible [visually]. I enjoyed the look.

Rusk: Here we are with the jet-age or the computer-age or whatever--

Nowicke: --and we want the Airflow Chrysler.

Rusk: There's almost no sense of national identity when it comes to music anymore. It's very difficult to pick out the Berlin Phil from the Chicago Symphony, from the Boston, from the London, from the X--you know, 20-30 years ago it was easy to guess the orchestra because they played in national styles, and they were all valid for some things.

Nowicke: Walter Smith went up and worked for Holton in Elkhorn when he retired from the Marine Band. At that point they were trying to build an American Horn because there wasn't one.

Rusk: French horn?

Nowicke: Yes, there wasn't a horn at that point--everything was imported and mostly singles.

Rusk: This would have been in the 'teens and the '20s.

Nowicke: He went up like '21. He wrote some about his design work with Holton, and then, unfortunately the later correspondence is gone. It's too bad, because it was fairly interesting.

Rusk: Why wouldn't it still be in Wisconsin somewhere?

Nowicke: Because he sent his letters home to Michigan and they were lost someone in Michigan. They put things out in the barn, things got damaged by water, eaten by rats. It's too bad because I don't know anything, really, about the later part of his life.

Rusk: I wonder if there has ever been an American horn concept, as there is, certainly, American trumpet playing, American trombone playing, American tuba playing. Has there ever been? Because the early double horns, like the story of the 8D--the classic Conn 8D--it was a copy of a German horn, that, was it Pottag? Or Horner brought back from vacation. They just copied some German design. There was no American horn philosopher to do the design or to lead the way.

Nowicke: All the Germans in Chicago.

Rusk: All the horn research was done in Germany. A lot of the tuba research was gone in Germany too.

Nowicke: You have your Geyer and your Kruspe...

Rusk: Schmidt, Alexander.

Nowicke: I think except for sheer size there wasn't anything American about...

Rusk: The 8D?

Nowicke: ...And some of the other models. They just got bigger.

Rusk: I presume that you could trace the history of the cornet, the Herbert L. Clarkes, the Walter Smiths, the Del Staigers and the Bellstedts (who was all of a sudden born in Germany) but he was over here. Can you trace the history of the cornet back to Europe? Was there in the year 1900 or 1890, was there a distinct American sound that the American virtuosos had? I'm sure there was a French school, there might have been--there still is, a British school.

Nowicke: A lot of those guys were self-taught.

Rusk: So they really wouldn't have had any influence from the outside world.

Nowicke: Walter Smith didn't have a teacher at all--he wound up teaching. He worked, he had an Arban's book and he listened to singers.

Rusk: This is also true of Arthur Pryor. He doesn't claim anyone as being his trombone teacher unless it was his father or some guy. So, these were like American originals. But then, if you look at the symphony orchestra.

Nowicke: They dabbled too--these were people who probably played more than one instrument and they played in whatever ensemble was playing then. Walter played violin in a quadrille band, and his father played violin, and his sister sang, and his sister played piano.

Rusk: It's hard to believe that the foreign influx of instruments and players in that era, from, say, 18--well up until World War I, that's was when the immigration pretty much stopped. All of those bands had Italians, had Frenchman, had Scots, and all kinds of Europeans in them. At that time the European identifies were more distinct than they are now.

Nowicke: The Italians in the Marine Band were kidnaped by a Naval officer and brought over.

Rusk: Were they all clarinet players by the way? They were famous for woodwinds.

Nowicke: They were various things, he just brought a band back to D.C., here's your band.

Rusk: My point is that I think it's a shame that we have merged. I wish the Germans still played like Germans, I wish the French still played like French, and I wish that the Americans had their own identity. I think we had it, I think we've lost it.

Nowicke: What about the trombone?

Rusk: I don't hear much difference any more, in the year 2000. Now, in 1970 there would have been an audible difference, and certainly in 1950--a world of difference. It's blended, it's too easy to get on a jet and fly some place. Georg Solti sent Jay Friedman to give the Orchestra of Paris trombone section a lesson. I thought that was incredible! Why didn't he let the French trombonists sound like they do and let Chicago--everyone thinks they have to sound like Chicago and of course, they miss the point half the time.

There is, and I there should be, this American tuba concept, and I wish we could define it a little bit better, and I wish the American makers were a little bit more cooperative, and the American players were a little bit more interested. I mean, we have the best players in the world, it's literally in the last ten years that the Germans or the British have caught up. We had tuba virtuosos 100 years ago. There are places in Europe where you can't even *major* in tuba if you go to the local conservatory. Frankly, in Germany and Holland, half the brass players are Americans anyway. So, I really think that it's time for the Americans--isolationism!--I guess--musical isolationism.

Nowicke: Tubas are mainly built by one conglomerate.

Rusk: They all sound the same any more. The old American band tubas are the best, the Martins, the Yorks, the Holtons. I never liked the Conns so much, and I've only seen one or two Buescher tubas in my life. The King tubas--I was never keen on them, but we did it right 75-80 years ago, and I wish we could still do it.

Nowicke: Maybe this new King-stamped-Conn 52J will become a popular choice.

Rusk: It has to sell well or it won't be around in three years.

Nowicke: I'm seeing \$6500 to \$10,000 if you can believe that.

Rusk: About a year, they'll be lucky to do 50 horns a year.

Nowicke: I mean the price.

Rusk: They're starting out low, but that's going to go up. The good news is that they didn't have to spend any money on new mandrels or anything. They had 100 years worth of stuff in the attic to choose from.

Nowicke: Just go up and pick out the right jigs.

Rusk: Both Conn and King have a history of tubas, so it that wasn't too tough. I guess the tough part is, why did they take so long?

Nowicke: What happened with the horn that Harvey was supposed to make?

Rusk: I think you can still buy one. When the Canadian Brass started their band instrument company, everybody thought it was "cute" because nobody thought that they would be the biggies. Well, that kind of failed, or they lost interest, but that ended. Then the Getzen Company (who was making most of their instruments anyway, or finishing them and selling them from Elkhorn) looked at some of the horns that were developed by the Canadians and said "Why don't we just keep making those," they took the tuba, which is the York 3/4 CC that I do. We hit the market about 1994 or '95 with that. I said at the time, "I wonder how long it will be before everybody else has a tuba in the same niche." It took longer than I thought, but here it is five years later. Bach never makes tubas, but I'd be surprised if they don't come along, just to compete in that same niche.

Nowicke: That's about the same bore as Harvey's?

Rusk: The Holton is a smaller bore, the Getzen and the King/Conn are both .689 but they're attached to horns that give you a pretty beefy--you might call them 3/4s but they are awfully stout 3/4 and they would be excellent horns for kids to go all the way through school, get their jobs, play the audition, and then worry about a big horn. Instead of incoming freshmen looking for Holtons. Can you imagine someone playing their senior recital on a Holton or one of those great big noisemakers?

Nowicke: Abe told me about buying that nice little tuba, but then he said he didn't have a use for it, and that was why he sold it to Harvey.

Rusk: Didn't make enough noise for the orchestra.

Nowicke: No, and he said he sold it because he was asked to find a good tuba for Harvey. He bought it because it was a good tuba, and he bought it from Fred Marzan.

Rusk: So, Marzan goes back to the '40s or the '50s. New York or Philly?

Nowicke: Yes, New York.

Rusk: There's a shadowy figure in our history--deservedly so from what I hear. That must have been something to go to a big music store in New York City with a couple hundred bucks and buy those kind of horns.

Nowicke: Apparently how he would pay for his lessons was to go around to pawn shops and find like decent oboes and things and resell them, and that would pay for his trip and his lesson. He happened to find this nasty old black tuba, and cleaned it up a bit.

Rusk: Oh right! Because it was made in the early '20s, 1921-1923 or somewhere in there, Harvey said. I'd forgotten about that.

Nowicke: It's a great story.

Rusk: He has so many horns I can't keep track of them. Then Bill Bell poses on his album cover with not his horn, but Harvey's horn.

Nowicke: I like the sociology of all this--this doesn't happen now because there are more good tubas. Back then they were calling each other, "I have a student who needs a horn, do you happen to have anything." Now you go down to one of the three tuba stores and there are 30 instruments to try, and they all play pretty good.

Rusk: They're all the same tuba.

Nowicke: OK, they're all the same tuba, but they play pretty well. It's not like you find "the gem," you find the three Kings.

Rusk: I think the tubas, I've seen this about the last 15 or 20 years, they're more consistent and they are better in tune, but the reason they get more consistent instruments is they're using machine-made parts, hydraulic expansion. That implies using a thicker metal to withstand the stress--a "trash rate" is not acceptable. If I were doing something like that, bending a tuba branch, I'd say, "Well, one out of ten, two out of ten, that's life," but they don't see it that way so they have to use thicker metal. It comes out of that mold really stout--it's dent-proof, and so on and so forth, but when you put that tuba together and play it, there's a certain *sound* to those parts. It's subtle, you can work with it, but you are never going to find that great "magic" tuba coming out of new makers.

Nowicke: I guess the three Kings the ones that Bill Bell and Joe Novotny and Abe Torchinsky had, they said that those were like the "best."

Rusk: Did they all come at the same time, or did they come over different years?

Nowicke: They all got them about the same time, I guess. Abe and the third valve slide moved up around, and then Mr. Bell and Joe Novotny thought that was a pretty good idea so that they did it too. I've never seen the horn. You had the horn didn't you?

Rusk: I had a King CC tuba--a rotary valve CC tuba, I didn't have Bell's horn.

Nowicke: You didn't buy that from Abe? You bought his Eb?

Rusk: I bought an Eb tuba.

Nowicke: I've never seen that instrument, and he said it was a fairly heavy-gauge metal, but I don't know on what *scale* that's "heavy-gauge."

Rusk: You'd have to kind of measure it, and you'd have to know what you are talking about. I'm sure that the impression of that horn is that it was fairly stiff and thick, but I wonder if it was thicker and stiffer than anyone else's. Those had to be all hand-bend, those bows, and that's murder and I'm sure if they could do it, the thinner, the softer, the better.

Nowicke: Yes, but not like the Červenys that were coming out in the 1970s that you could go like this... [feigns bending bell with hands].

Rusk: Yes, but you know they had a certain identity to them, a certain sound that wasn't all that--the intonation was suspect--but they had a sound and the "Piggy" I guess it was called?

Nowicke: It was a nice tuba if you weren't a very clumsy boy [laughs].

Rusk: I know what you are saying, but still.

Nowicke: They were delicate.

Rusk: OK, but let's that you don't need an accident-proof tuba and you're looking for a musical instrument or a sound. They had, I thought, a distinctive sound and I appreciate that. I bemoan the sameness of all the tubas and all the tuba players now. I *wish* that we had more identities, instruments, players, and certainly orchestras, and even national identities. It's getting to the point where there's no point in having more than one orchestra. One orchestra could do all the recording, it wouldn't have to worry about ticket sales, they could just--all the CDs, all the radio broadcasts.

Nowicke: You were saying something when I flipped the tape about how much your orchestra was broadcast.

Rusk: Oh yes, well, we were actually the summer replacement for the Chicago, but we had, I forget, it was over 200, or almost 300 stations nation-wide.

Nowicke: Not in Detroit!

Rusk: Ann Arbor, Western--WMUK, isn't that what it's called up there in Bronco country? I think it was up there at the Interlochen station. They have a repeater station at the Great Black Hole Arts Camp north of Muskegon. That's not the right name but you know what I mean.

Nowicke: Blue Lake.

Rusk: You know what I mean.

Nowicke: I was there.

Rusk: "Black Hole," is that which sucks in all the other... Yeah.

So, we had a wonderful exposure and that's a terrific thing for the reputation of any orchestra. I don't know, there seems to be a problem these days, some of the big orchestras don't seem to be broadcasting any more. It's hard to find the Boston Symphony, it's hard to find the New York, the Philadelphia I haven't heard on the radio in years--but that's fine.

Nowicke: Detroit is.

Rusk: Yes, Detroit.

Nowicke: With Dick Cavett.

Rusk: Yeah.

Nowicke: Why?

Rusk: But still, orchestras like the Minnesota, and the St. Louis, and the Cincinnati--the Indianapolis Symphony is on in 12 more minutes. Orchestras like that deserve to be heard now because they are so much better than they used be. It's very difficult to tell the "Big Five" from the "Top Twenty" any more.

Nowicke: They are professional and they have very good people working very hard to get into them.

Rusk: I think if you can promise a guy \$25,000 a year, health insurance and some kind of fringe benefits, I think you can probably have a pretty good orchestra anywhere.

Nowicke: When Paul Bierley retired from Columbus there were like 100 people who auditioned for it.

Rusk: Yes, that was the biggest career mistake of my life. I was going to do it too, but it would have been a step down from the Milwaukee, except they are now--is that not the largest city in Ohio? Columbus?

Nowicke: Perhaps.

Rusk: Cleveland--not to mention the area? Yes, but that has grown, they handed that guy the teaching gig at Ohio State, and whoever that is.

Nowicke: Jim Akins.

Rusk: He's got himself a very nice position right now. That has turned into something great.

Nowicke: It was his teacher's job, it was Bob LeBlanc's job. It really didn't hurt that he was already in the city and playing in the orchestra.

Rusk: But I think now you go to the Columbus Orchestra, and "Oh, by the way," you teach at Ohio State. In the old days, it was you teach at Ohio State, and "Oh, we need a tuba for our community orchestra." It's flip-flopped.

Nowicke: Unfortunately Bob LeBlanc never got to play in there because Paul Bierley had the job. Bob was Paul's substitute.

Rusk: But the point is, you can have a professional orchestra as soon as you get the funds in this day and age, you don't have to hold out for the Bill Bells because there's 50 tuba players who can do that job, who aren't even *in* an orchestra. Multiply that by three for the trombones, and you know, I don't think there's any great shortage of English horn players. I mean, there's a bunch of English horn players. So, you know, when the people in the community can get together and they can ante up that kind of money, they are going to have a fine orchestra. Or, they could have a fine concert band, or a fine British brass band, or whatever they wanted. The times are changing and I don't think that symphony orchestras are being born on a daily basis.

Nowicke: You reach a saturation level.

Rusk: There are many cases of symphony orchestras having to take a couple of steps back.

Nowicke: I found it very interesting when I came here that there really isn't one. What there is is a bad community orchestra.

Rusk: In Bloomington?

Nowicke: Yes. Where I came from, Kalamazoo, that is not a bad little symphony.

Rusk: You're not that far from a lot of other cities around there.

Nowicke: But that's a pay job, and they don't really want students in it any more than they can help.

Rusk: Are you far enough away from Indianapolis to have a professional orchestra? It's only 53 miles, and Louisville has a decent orchestra, and I would think Evansville is probably...

Nowicke: But in Kalamazoo you have South Bend, and you have Battle Creek...

Rusk: ...And Grand Rapids.

Nowicke: Oh, gosh, and Grand Rapids. I forget them.

Rusk: That's Michigan's second city, and it's probably Michigan's second orchestra.

Are we finished, I am so dry I can hardly talk. I have no idea what you wanted from me.

[end of interview]

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