

**Mr. Bernard Long, Jr., Madison Senior High School Band Director; Madison, Illinois
Resident; St. Louis Metro Area Musician
Transcript of interview for Madison Historical Society Oral History Project.
Interviewed by Shante Graham, Madison Senior High School Social Studies Student
Date: October 18, 2023**

Shante Graham [SG] 00:00 [Recording Starts] My name is Shante Graham, and today I'm here with,

Bernard Long, Jr. [BL] 00:04 Mr. Bernard Long.

SG: 00:06 Today is October 23, 2023. Today we're going to be talking about the Madison community. So, do you still live in Madison?

BL: 00:15 Yes, I do.

SG: 00:16 How has it been?

BL: 00:17 It's been great.

SG: 00:1 What were some of the things you liked here about your childhood?

BL: 00:22 Um, what I like about the Madison Community is everybody bleeds green. It's a small town, but it has a big feel, through community engagement, and a lot of the heroes and "sheroes" that are born and raised in Madison, Illinois.

SG: 00:37 Okay, that's good. What do you like about "back then" that you don't like about "right now?"

BL: 00:46 I feel like it was more of a community back then than it is now. Fewer people live in Madison, a lot of people have moved out of Madison to look for better opportunities. But I still believe there are great opportunities here. Like I left, and I came back to the community to give back to the community through music education.

SG: 01:05 What made you become a teacher?

BL: 01:08 I like music, and I like education. So, both of those are two of my passions, and they drive me, and they never feel like work. So that's why I became an educator.

SG: 01:18 Do you feel, or did you have, like a childhood job that you wanted to become before you chose teaching?

BL: 01:24 I just always wanted to be a professional musician, not so much... Education is in my family; I have a lot of uncles that were educators. And of course, my father, the late Bernard Long, Sr. was an educator for 48 years. So that inspired me to become an educator.

SG: 01:38 That's good. That's good. I was going to ask you about your father. But can you give me like, some things that you remember about him?

BL: 01:45 So, he was a well-dressed man, he was a stand-up man for the community. He stood up for his students. He was an advocate for his staff. Also, for his parents, he did a lot for the community. He used to do a big carnival. Every fall, he used to do a Halloween parade through the city. Then the kids could show their uniforms--show their costumes off, and then we go back to school and have a party. He loved music. He loved Corvettes. He was on several different scholarship committees in St. Louis. One organization that's no longer around called "Crusaders for Jazz." So, he brought music to his school. A lot of musicians that would come to St. Louis would come and do clinics for his students at the old Blair Elementary School in Newport.

SG: 02:30 Is it a school named after him? It is! His school was, he was a principal for 48 years at Blair Elementary School and they renamed the school Bernard Long, Sr. on his birthday in 2006, which was on September 14. What are some things you miss?

BL: 02:47 Uhm, I definitely miss talking to him; definitely miss his smile. He was one of my best friends. We talked about everything.

SG: 02:56 Okay, let's talk more about Madison. What are some good places you went to after school? What do you mean by that? Like, where did you go to have fun with your friends after school or like just...

BL: 03:08 Alright, so, a lot of times, we didn't have the technology that you all have. So, we played in the streets; we rode our bikes. We played basketball. I was a waterboy for the Madison High School Trojans basketball team. I didn't play basketball. And I've always been into music so, often we would go to St. Louis for different things. Not necessarily here in Madison, I never took any music lessons in Madison, Illinois, but I did take them in East St. Louis, Illinois. In St. Louis at the Central Visual Performing Arts High School. And I did a lot of music camps in the summertime, around the state of Illinois.

SG: 03:44 Well, I know you've talked a lot about your music career. But what ... do you want to go further than what you are now in your music career?

BL: 03:53 Yes. Sure, I mean, I've traveled the world playing music. My ultimate goal, I think, is to become like a dean of a school of music at a university.

SG: 04:01 What's that?

BL: 04:01 So, a dean of a School of Music at a university oversees the scheduling, oversees community work, oversees finances for that school of music, and also the hiring and firing of staff; but also, just the overall culture of the school. So, if you're going to have a jazz program, if you're going to have a steel band program, what kind of marching band would you have? What are the required classes that students need to graduate? So that's what the Dean of a School of Music does.

SG: 04:30 I know you talked a lot about your father, but what was your childhood like?

BL: Oh, I had a very good childhood. It was just me and my sister. She's two years older than me. We did a lot of traveling growing up. We did like I said, went to music camps; we used to go to the zoo. We had a very good childhood. I wouldn't change anything.

SG: What do you remember from "back in the day" then now? Do you feel like anything needs to change with this generation?

BL: Um, some things that was kind of before my time, there were a lot more stores in Madison. We called them corner stores where you can go get soda pop or some chips or candy. There's not a lot of those around anymore. I remember the old Farm Fresh on Madison Avenue. There used to be a store called Food for Less and on Madison Avenue. Hmm, what else? Um, yeah, there were a lot more things to do, more shopping areas, grocery stores, things like that. We didn't have to go to Granite City or Belleville or the next town over to get what we needed for our homes. Respect. That's one thing that I think is missing from this generation, that we have respect for ourselves, for our communities, for our schools, for our homes, that the world would be better. So, I'm trying to build that through our culture here at Madison Senior High School.

SG: Well, thank you for this interview, Mr. Long, and that will be all.