When Professor Muller mentioned during class the unpredictability, and sometimes, even frustration of ethnographic fieldwork, Alex did not realize the truth of her statement until having been plunged into the fieldwork himself. Our group of five met together after class on Tuesday, February 22 to discuss a time of common availability to interview Glenn Bryan. This turned out to be a more difficult task than would ever have been expected. As we each went through our calendar for the days and the times that would be free, we realized that we could not find a common date, much less a time, for the entire week ahead. As we continued to eliminate the days, we finally came to an agreement on the night of Monday, March 14- more than three weeks later. Alex volunteered to contact Mr. Bryan and inform him of our availability, but was ill prepared for the challenges that lay ahead.

Alex emailed Mr. Bryan’s office the next day; however he received no response. After a week, he then decided to call Mr. Bryan, who was not available so he left a message with Ms. Valerie Johnson at the Penn Community Relations Office. He then waited for Mr. Bryan’s reply, which eventually came during Spring Break on March 9. However, Mr. Bryan informed Alex that the following Monday, which was the date that our group had originally set and which seemed to be the only date we were available, would not be at all possible for him. Disappointed, yet not surprised since at this point he had already been made aware of the reality and frustration of ethnographic fieldwork, Alex promised he would consult with his group mates and reply by the following week.
Again our group convened after class on Tuesday, March 15 to attempt to find another date for the interview, and again it was with effort and compromise on all sides that we finally agreed on two time slots in the following week. Alex then phoned Mr. Bryan’s office. As he had somewhat expected, those dates did not work for Mr. Bryan, but Valerie informed Alex of a few morning time slots that Mr. Bryan would have available during the week of March 27. Alex once again came back to us to look for our confirmation of the date and time. The two parties had finally consented to the same date this time around. As liaison and contact, Alex felt immensely triumphant and looked forward to the interview that would take place in the Penn Community Relations Office on the morning of Wednesday, March 30- more than one month and one week after we had first set the date.

Our group is really fortunate to have had Glenn Bryan visit our class on Feb 17, 2005. His presentation in class was the basis for the bulk of our research. During his class presentation, he mentioned various musicians who had a strong influence on his own music. He regarded John Coltrane (see Appendix B), Miles Davis, and Joshua Redman as pure jazz artists and made special mention of Liz Wright’s (see Appendix C) musical potential. We subsequently did our own research on these musicians in preparation for the interview. As we read up on the musicians, we realized that many of them went through a musical apprenticeship at the beginning of their careers. We also felt that Bryan’s musical talents were similarly developed by Philadelphia’s “positive feedback system.”¹

During his class presentation, Bryan spoke chronologically about the past, present, and future of jazz in Philadelphia. We decided to structure our interview

questions in a similar chronological manner to help Bryan in the recollection of his experiences and memories during the interview. To prepare our questions, we carefully looked over the notes we took during Bryan’s class presentation and selected topics we thought were interesting for the interview. We also tried to draw a connection between various parts of his class presentation. For example, throughout his entire presentation, Bryan mentioned various factors that had led to the decline of jazz in Philadelphia. Though he addressed these issues separately, we pooled these factors together and requested him to rank these factors during the interview.\(^2\) In preparing our interview questions, we also went through the lecture on field research to select some relevant questions for the interview.\(^3\) For example, we thought that the question on extending jazz to other social events was interesting and wanted to hear Bryan’s thoughts on the matter.

Prior to the day of the interview, we emailed Bryan to remind him of our appointment. We also requested that he bring any relevant recordings, past photographs, and newspaper clippings to the interview. We sent him a copy of our interview questions to give him an overview of the topics that we were interested in. Our group arranged to meet directly at Bryan’s office on 133 S 36\(^{th}\) Street on March 30 at 8.30 a.m. His office was located on the 5\(^{th}\) floor of the building opposite the Penn Bookstore. We conducted the interview in a spacious conference room. Before the interview, we informed Mr. Bryan about the chronological flow of our questions to help him structure his thoughts. We then started the interview by asking Mr. Bryan to give a brief introduction for the purpose of the recording. The interview generally flowed smoothly and Mr. Bryan was very spontaneous in his answers. He always made sure that he fully understood our

\(^2\) Please refer to Appendix A for a complete list of our interview questions.

questions before he shared his opinions. Throughout the interview, Mr. Bryan made several mentions to the topics he had addressed in our class. The review of our class notes was thus useful, as we could better relate to him during the interview. Roy was personally surprised that he could still remember the topics he talked about in class almost six weeks before, and he felt that Mr. Bryan had probably delivered similar talks to various groups of people on the Penn campus and thus had a generally fixed presentation structure.

After our five group mates had set up a common available date to do an interview with Mr. Bryan, we decided to do some research on him and some other great jazz musicians he mentioned when he visited our class.

Through the Penn website, Fei found an old interview that Penn did with Mr. Bryan in 2002. Mr. Bryan, a current Director of City & Community Relations and Assistant to the Vice President for Government, Community & Public Affairs, is a Penn alumnus as well. He was an undergraduate at Penn, and went on to receive his graduate degree from the School of Social Work. Besides his great effort on smoothing and advancing the relations between Penn and Philadelphia community, Mr. Bryan was also a well-known jazz musician. He had played keyboard since he was about nine years old, and got formal music training then. He performed with many famous musicians, such as John McLaughlin, John Coltrane, Grover Washington Jr., Dave Koz, etc. In addition, he organized his own band, Glenn Bryan and Friends, or Friends for short. Mr. Bryan and his band usually play at Zanzibar Blue every Sunday, because “it’s a quieter day of the
week” Mr. Bryan said in the Penn news interview. Although having two professional titles in totally different fields can be daunting, Mr. Bryan enjoys the challenge.º

On the day of our interview, Mr. Bryan brought us a more recent column about him, a full-page story published in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* on November 9, 2004. The column was titled “By day, Glenn Bryan is the top liaison between Penn and West Phila.; by night, a jazz musician”⁵, and gave us complete coverage about his band, his life, and his work, with vivid pictures where he jammed on two keyboards simultaneously, one for each hand.

Among all the musicians Mr. Bryan talked about in his visiting to our class, we remembered that he mentioned a young jazz vocalist, Lizz Wright, with great passion. With full curiosity and interest, Fei did some research on Lizz Wright (see Appendix C). I could almost sense the spark shining through Mr. Bryan’s eyes, as Mr. Bryan was content to see more and more brilliant youth grew up to be jazz musicians.

When we were told about our project for World Music and culture, Professor Muller emphasized the importance of having the culture of music, the memories of the older generations passed down to new generations. The necessity of such a level of human idea to transfer the knowledge of music and the essential feeling of that music cannot be overstated. It is only after our group’s interview with Glenn Bryan that we began to understand the need for such human interactions.

At the beginning of our interview, Glenn Bryan was very quiet. It generally took him a solid amount of time to think about the answers to some of our questions, even just for some simple questions. It seemed that many memories are so far back that even Glenn

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⁵ *The Daily Pennsylvania*, Tuesday, November 9, 2004
Bryan cannot just recall them at any given instant, even though he was really comfortable about the settings. Jokes were tossed around and everyone was really relaxed. As the conversation went on, and we started asking questions about Glenn Bryan’s past memories, he, on many occasions, dove into a state of deep thought. He would cross his hands on the table, his eyes looking down. It was as if we were digging down to something that’s very intimate and personal for him. Fortunately, as the conversation further progressed, Mr. Bryan started carrying the conversation all by himself. There seemed to be many things that he wanted to talk about but the time was limited. It actually became more and more difficult for us to insert our comments or to elaborate on a topic and to ask more questions because there always seemed to be something new that Mr. Bryan wanted to talk about. He was talking at a much faster pace and just looking at us, even though he was not really waiting for feedback.

The interview room was fairly quiet except for the ubiquitous hum of the West Philadelphia construction and the occasional ambulance. It was warm but we turned off the air conditioner to hear Mr. Bryan’s voice more clearly. He seemed accustomed to the questions as though he had answered them all before and this was his last stop on a press junket, so Mary threw in some opinions of her own in order to change the flow of conversation. We had an interesting exchange of thoughts about vocalists in jazz music, which prompted him to further promote his friend Lizz Wright (see Appendix C), whom he claimed to be one of the only acceptable vocalists in jazz today.

He seemed eager to leave the conference room and show us examples of what he had been talking about, so we finished the interview with some mandatory questions, got his “sound bytes”, and left to go see his office. Mr. Bryan was extremely eager to show
us jazz music and clips in his office. His passion for jazz was clear at that point. While we were in his office, he showed us pictures of his old days and more importantly, he wanted to play us clips from Pat Metheny and John Coltrane. I had the feeling that he would have showed us entire collection if he could and was not a little bit tired in doing so even though the interview had already been around 2 hours long, which presented sharp contrast with the difficulty we encountered in trying to schedule a time for the interview.

Glenn Bryan’s office was a treasure trove of interesting photographs, awards, and memorabilia. The most striking aspect upon entering the room was the large black and white photo of him and his father outside of an old jazz haunt. Mary commented on the photo and he seemed to light up while talking about the memory of that day. While the rest of the group was asking about other interesting things in his office, Mary noticed a framed photograph of Mr. Bryan with former President Clinton. “How do you know President Clinton?” she exclaimed. He looked up from the computer screen where he was busy loading iTunes to show us and said, “Oh, yeah that was from awhile ago…” before being caught up in the jazz again. He seemed much more interested in having us listen to examples of jazz than talking about all the famous people he knew. Mary was very impressed by his clear demonstration of priorities.

Mr. Bryan preceded each new music clip with “Oh, and wait, you have to listen to this!” or “Oh, and here, this is even better!” like an enthusiastic teenager. After showing us numerous examples of different kinds of jazz, we asked him if we could take a group photo with him. His secretary was kind enough to take our photo, and afterward we thanked him for all of his help. Upon leaving he offered us copies of the issue of the
Daily Pennsylvanian in which he was profiled, which he had in a stack in his front office. We took a copy, thanked him again, and left.

During the interview, the one thing that struck Steven the most was Glenn Bryan’s passion for jazz. Glenn Bryan has gone out of his way to bring jazz back to Philly and to foster the growth of jazz in the Penn community. Mr. Bryan mentioned his involvement with the Jazz Band at Penn. Later we learned that he has also been inviting Penn Jazz members to perform with him at Zanzibar Blue.

In completing this interview, Mary learned several aspects of journalism which will help her in the future, should she choose to continue in this field. For example, the best quotes come from spontaneous questions. That way, the interviewee, here Mr. Bryan, does not feel compelled to answer with the same response he has undoubtedly given several, if not hundreds, of times before. In doing so, we can learn more about his true feelings on the subject, instead of just the same sentiments he has expressed in numerous other templates, which we might have just as well found on Google. This made the interview both an intellectual and personal experience and exchange, instead of just another assignment to complete.

Reflecting on the interview, Steven is still slightly troubled by how Glenn Bryan mentioned “Jazz is different for everyone.” It is obvious that Glenn Bryan doesn’t agree with the new genre of smooth jazz pioneered by such musicians as Kenny G. However, jazz in the traditional sense is losing ground to other forms of popular music like rock and pop. Steven believes that he can almost see the culture of jazz becoming an indigenous one in the future. However, jazz cannot be preserved without human interaction. It’s a very improvisational genre, which makes it a lot more reliant on human interactions to
pass down the spirit than other forms would. Steven felt that spirit in our brief interview from Glenn Bryan, but that interview doesn’t capture even half of what jazz means to him. So, what should we, as the new generation, do? Steven recalled the time he went to Penn Jazz Band’s performance. It would appear that most of the pieces they played were written down on scores and only one piece was composed by a member of the band, and of course the original piece was delivered the best by the band. Steven wonders where jazz is going if the majority of us don’t even listen to jazz, while the few of us who play are mostly limited by stuff written down on paper for us. Jazz is a culture, and without the human factor, without the understanding being passed down from person to person, it doesn’t feel the same. To preserve such a culture, we have the responsibility to become more proactive in doing projects such as the one we are doing in music 050. For on a very cynical note, what happens to jazz form when these people leave us? We can only hope that some people will learn the spirit of jazz, preserve it in their memories, and pass it down from there.

April 18, 2005 – Final Revision