

Dance and the New Orleans Second Line Tradition

Interviewee: Tyree Smith

Interviewer: Rachel Carrico

Interview date: February 2, 2014

Location: Ochsner Baptist Hospital in New Orleans, LA (interviewee's place of work)

Tyree Smith

0:00:02 My name is Tyree Smith. I'm a member of [Family Ties Social and Pleasure Club](#). I was born and raised in the [Seventh Ward](#). My group, Family Ties, is basically a [Sixth Ward](#)/Seventh Ward downtown group. We've been together, I think, for like now fourteen years, I think—thirteen years—I'm sorry. For thirteen years, I've been with them. We've been together fourteen years, I think—yeah, thirteen years—and I paraded with them twelve years. I just didn't parade the first year. Every other year I've been a solid member with Family Ties, and I'm the secretary of the club.

Rachel Carrico

Okay, fantastic. And so this is a question that I ask every single person I interview. In your own words, what is [second lining](#)?

Tyree Smith

0:00:44 Oh, second lining is do what you want. I mean, it's just basically getting out there, enjoying yourself, having fun, you know, just—like I said, do what you wanna. I was introduced to second line at thirteen when I first moved into the Seventh Ward. We briefly moved and—we stayed in the Seventh Ward. We moved closer to the Sixth Ward where second line always goes down at. So when I basically moved into Seventh Ward, I saw people dancing. I was like, What's going on? I didn't know what that was. And I didn't really know what the second line was until, you know, a couple of guys who I was growing up with used to bring me to the second lines. And when I saw what people were doing and how people were having fun, then I thought that was something I wanted to do.

Rachel Carrico

And then, from that moment, how long was it until you were in a club?

Tyree Smith

0:01:30 Oh, well, quite some time, because, you know, it was—I was young then. I couldn't afford it at that time, and I wasn't really dedicated to doing it. I just loved doing it in the street and—you know, what they call a sidewalk second liner. You know, I just done it for a long time. I think I first paraded—well, matter of fact, I was somewhat king in like 1998 and 1999. And I really, really, really, really enjoyed it. I really had fun. And that's when I knew that I really wanted to join a club.

Rachel Carrico

Why do you think you were really in the second line?

Tyree Smith

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0:02:07 Why do we second line?

Rachel Carrico

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Tyree Smith

Oh, man, you know, it's a tradition, you know, from what I was told. A long time ago, like the slaves—the masters just let the slaves go dance and sing and do all these kind of things on Sunday. And, you know, that's just a tradition that had been brought down from way back when—and we just keeping it up. You know, they have clubs that been around for a long, long, long, long time. And, you know, I think it's just—it's a stress relief. You know, everybody—you know, it's amazing. It's amazing. It's amazing.

Rachel Carrico

And so now you in particular, why do you second line? And I guess if you think about it differently, you know, the sidewalk second lining weekly and then being a member of a club, why do you do that?

Tyree Smith

0:02:56 Well, I'm gonna dance regardless, you know. I'm a dancer regardless. It's just the music, man. The music is just so amazing, man. It's just so vibrant, man. When you hear the music, it just takes you away from everything, and you don't even think about it, you know. And you can look at a person on the side. They don't even know what they're doing. But it's like I said, do what you want. And when you see people doing that, it just makes you want to get into the groove and make you just—do what you wanna do, just cut up, act crazy, you know. It's crazy. It's hard to explain. It's really hard to explain. The music is just so vibrant when you listen—when you hear the music. There's different instruments and—you know—the drums, the horns. It's just like, man—it's amazing. Music is amazing. It's amazing. It's therapy for a lot of people. And I know I'm one of the persons that is therapy for.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, a lot of people say that, that it's physical and mental and spiritual therapy.

Tyree Smith

Yes, it is.

Rachel Carrico

And so, when you were young and your friends took you to you first second lining, you started going back. How did you—? Describe your process of—I don't even really know how to say it—like picking up your footwork, developing your style.

Tyree Smith

0:04:06 Oh, my God, it was hard. It was hard. It was real hard because, at first, I couldn't keep up. I couldn't keep up with—you know, I couldn't keep up with everybody. My friend, he was a

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kind of like heavy guy. He was fat, you know, and he used to get through the crowds. And I was like, Damn, how you could do that and I can't do that? So I really was like off-beat. I wasn't really—like I felt unorthodox. So I started going on a regular—you know, where it was, uptown, downtown—and I just started watching people. I was like, Oh, I got that move. Oh, I got that move. Okay, I could do this. I could do that. So I just kind of like put all that together, and I kind of created my own style with a little swag from this person, a little swag from that person. And that's where I came from. That's what created me from everybody else. You know, it's always basically stealing. All you do is stealing people's moves. So I stole a lot of people's moves in my years. So, you know, I'm just grateful that—when I see people that they can move, they can dance like that, I'd be like, I want to do that. And that's how I was. I wanted to do that because, like I said, it was just—it's just positive. It was something good. So, you know, when I saw—when I went to second lines, whether—like I said, whether it was uptown, downtown—I knew nothing about uptown, downtown. I knew nothing about it. You know, people from downtown didn't like to go uptown. So when I went up there, and I watched how they danced, they danced different from people from downtown. So I was getting that. I was getting this. I was like, oh, man—when it came together, man, I was like, I'm good now.

Rachel Carrico

Did you have any mentors, anybody take you under their wing?

Tyree Smith

0:05:27 Yes, yes, so Mason, the guy that paraded with the [Furious] [Five](#)—a guy named Mason and a guy named Gerald, a lot of guys from out the Sixth and the Seventh Ward. You know, I had a lot of mentors, a lot of guys like, Hey, little brother, slow down. You're kind of moving too fast. You need to pick your feet up. You know, a lot of people gave me a lot of pointers. And when I see a lot of other kids that's out there, like, slow down, little brother, you know—I find myself doing the same thing to them like it was done to me. So, you know, there're a lot of guys that mentored me in second lining.

Rachel Carrico

Tell me about the difference between uptown and downtown dancing.

Tyree Smith

0:06:02 Well, the uptown second line is—they kind of dance kind of fast. They kind of like the fast music. You know, downtown, we kind of play like the traditional music—you know, the more traditional music and be kind of slow with it. We have a slow tempo, slow beat. The uptown guys is kind of faster; they move faster. And, you know, you have to be able to know how to maneuver, you know, and be able to understand. Sometimes, like when the band is playing, when they're playing a traditional song, sometimes the beat be off because they're probably playing too fast, or they're probably playing too slow. So that's like the difference between the uptown clubs and the downtown clubs. The uptown clubs are just faster; downtown clubs are just slow.

Rachel Carrico

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And how about the sidewalk second liners? Can you notice a difference between people who grew up uptown and grew up downtown based on how they dance?

Tyree Smith

0:06:51 Yes, most of the times because sometimes, you know, some people stay downtown. They move when they're younger. They stay downtown, and they move uptown when they're still young. So they got that uptown/downtown swag. So they kind of got both of them together, which is great. If you can be able to—you know, you could be able to change over, you cross over—a lot of people can't cross over. Some people are just used to the way they been doing it. You know, that's basically how they go.

Rachel Carrico

Besides speed, are there any other distinctions?

Tyree Smith

0:07:21 Oh, well, yeah, because people—like I said, second line, some people African dance with it; some people reggae dance with it. So, you know, it's all on how your technique is. You know, everybody do everything different. Everybody can put the reggae in it, whatever. I see some people even dance with it, you know, put it on any dance. And that's great that you could do that, but everybody can't do that.

Rachel Carrico

How about you? How do you describe—or how would you describe your signature style, like your own?

Tyree Smith

0:07:57 I can't really say. I kind of got like a little old school thing going on with a little new school with it. You know, like I said, I kind of stole from a lot of people. By the generation that I'm in—I really like the older generation, and I grew up in the older generation. And, you know, as I was getting older, like the fast thing was starting to come into tack. Like the fast beat started to come into tack. They started playing more hip-hop music, so you kind of had to dance like hip hop with second lining. So it was kind of like—it's kind of different. And I don't know; I can't really see how my dance is, my style is. I'm not saying it's unique, but I think it's kind of—it's me. I don't know. I can't really say what it is, you know, because I don't watch myself. When I see myself on camera, I'm like, that's me? Like, yeah, that's you. I'm like, well, I—you know, I can't really say what it is.

Rachel Carrico

And how old are you, if you don't mind saying?

Tyree Smith

0:08:46 Thirty-six.

Rachel Carrico

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Thirty-six, okay. Besides Sunday's second lines, I'm sure you second line at many other places, right? Clubs, family parties, that kind of thing? Is that true?

Tyree Smith

0:09:04 Yeah, like if—like the band play on—like at certain clubs, I really have to be in the mood to dance, you know. Like, if I'm really feeling it, I'm really feeling it, and I'll dance. But see, like parties, I don't really do much dance at parties because—I don't know; I just don't really too much dance at parties. But see, like—excuse me—at the clubs, and if the band is playing and I feel that beat, I feel it, I'll get out there, and I'll do my thing. I'll do my thing.

Rachel Carrico

Does it feel different? Is it a different experience to dance in situations like that, like at a club, versus on the street?

Tyree Smith

0:09:36 No, not really, no. It's basically the same thing. It's just that, you know, when you're dancing in a club, you're stationary, but when you're dancing on the street, you're moving with it. And you're constantly—you know, you're constantly moving. You know, you're from here to there, and you wouldn't even realize that you went from all the way uptown, all the way downtown. So it's not different. It's not different. It's just, you know, you're stationary. That's it.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, and since you're stationary, do you do anything different in the club that you don't really do on the street?

Tyree Smith

No, it's basically the same thing—basically same thing. Well, you know, I probably move around a little more if I'm on the street because there's more space than in the club. It's not too much space because, you know, they got everybody in there trying to dance and everybody feeling the beat.

Rachel Carrico

Cool. So on Sundays, do you have—? Walk me through a typical day when you're going to the second line. Do you get there at the beginning; do you stay to the end? Is there a certain part of the parade you like to hang out in? You know, is there specific shoes you wear, food you eat, something you drink? You know, what's your Sunday routine?

Tyree Smith

0:10:38 Basically, when I get up in the morning, I'm thinking second line. So I already know—I'm already getting out what I'm gonna wear. Certain parades, certain second lines, I'd be like—well, I'm gonna dress up a little bit for this parade. But I already know I want to catch it at the beginning because I want to see the club come out because that's my favorite part, watching the club come out, watching the look on their face, watching them smile and watching them happy and watching them so-called monkeyshine, you know, because when they first come out, that's

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the first thing—you know, when you come out, everybody gonna do what they—their trademark move. And, you know, when you see that, like, oh, all right, that's my boy. So, you know, I always like to watch them come out. You know, I always like to watch the club. I don't care how many people they have, that's the best—to me, that's the best part of the parade, watching them come out, because you can see what everybody do, and you really can basically see what everybody have.

Rachel Carrico

And then do you stay till the end?

Tyree Smith

0:11:29 Always, always—I always stay till the end because it never fails. You know, it never fails that—I want to watch them come out, and I want to watch them go in. You know what I'm saying? Because I like to see who's going to make the whole parade because, you know, it's four hours. It's tough to dance for the whole four hours. It's tough, you know. And you're wearing all this costume, you know, the streamer, the fans. It's bearing. It's bearing. It's bearing. And, you know, I love it, and I wouldn't trade it for nothing.

Rachel Carrico

Is there a certain part like in relation to the band or the club that you like to be in, or do you kind of move all over?

Tyree Smith

0:12:04 I'm all around. I get around. I go holler at the people in the clubs. I go holler at the band. I'm, hey, man, play this song. I see people who I probably haven't seen in a while. I get around. I make my rounds to everybody, you know. I try to speak to everybody when I'm out there. So it's not nothing specific, but if I am out there, I want to be on the sidewalk. I want to be on the sidewalk where everybody is, where it's going down. So that's basically how we do it. Everybody says, man, meet me by the sidewalk on the right-hand side. That's the side where everybody—all the street paraders do—they all go to the right-hand side of the band. So that's how we do it.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, I've noticed that. Do you have any theories about why that is?

Tyree Smith

I have no idea. That's been going on like that since I've been young, you know. And you probably say, hey, play something, Phil! Play something, so and so. You know, and they hear you. You want them to hear you. And I always tell the band—I'm like, I hear you. I hear you. Keep it coming; keep it funky. You know, I just don't know why the right-hand side is always the best side.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, that's true. Do you have a favorite band?

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Tyree Smith

0:13:06 Oh, I like so many bands. I'm not going to even lie to you. My favorite band right now, as we speak, is [TBC Brass Band](#). It's a young group, young up-and-coming group. I mean, I remember these young guys when they were younger, and they was bringing that funk, and they practiced a lot, and they're bringing it now. You know, I'm always going to be a [Rebirth Brass Band](#) fan, always, because that's the band we really like come up with. And this is—[Tanio's](#) band—what Tanio's band name is? Oh, Lord, I can't think of the name of the band. That's one of my favorite bands also. I like all the bands, though. I can't really—because all of them have their own little sound. You know, some are better than others, but you know, with a little training, a little—you know, everybody's going to be where they want to be at. You know what I'm saying?

Rachel Carrico

Do you have a particular song that's just your jam, when it comes on, you—like, if you're not dancing, you've got to start dancing?

Tyree Smith

0:14:00 Oh, my God, I can't—I don't know the name of this song. TBC, they just started playing it. I cannot think of the song. I swear it's on the tip of my tongue. Every time I hear this song—ever since I was young, I always did like this song. I just can't remember the name of it, but basically not one song. I like all the music. You know what I'm saying? Anything can get me pumping. If you just beating on the drums, I'm gonna jump up, so, you know, just—it's crazy, man.

Rachel Carrico

And how do you keep your energy up? You do the whole four hours. How do you do it?

Tyree Smith

0:14:36 Drinking, drinking, I have to drink. And if I don't drink, I won't be turned up.

Rachel Carrico

What's your drink of choice?

Tyree Smith

I drink [1800 Silver](#). I drink tequila.

Rachel Carrico

You bring your own?

Tyree Smith

Oh, of course, every weekend. Every Sunday, I go to the second line; I always have my drink.

Rachel Carrico

Well, all right. Do you ever climb? Do you ever climb up on top of stuff, or did you when you were younger?

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Tyree Smith

0:15:06 Never, never, I never climb. I know one thing. If I get up, I probably can't get down. I watch these other kids that are doing it, and I'm like, they got heart because I'm scared of heights. So I won't ever do nothing like that.

Rachel Carrico

Did you see this past Sunday? Did you see [Bin Laden](#) up on top of that structure?

Tyree Smith

Yes.

Rachel Carrico

I was so scared for him.

Tyree Smith

0:15:26 He always do that, though. I hadn't seen him in a while.

Rachel Carrico

I know.

Tyree Smith

He said his mother had been sick, and he had been out of town, so that's why. You know, he was sick. He was back down. And he was in the hood, as he so-called said. He was in the hood, so he wanted to be there, you know, experience [CTC](#) [Cross the Canal] second line, which was a nice second line, beautiful day.

Rachel Carrico

It was a beautiful day. It's true. So when you said—you mentioned earlier that second line is do what you want it, and people can put whatever their training is, whatever their move is into it—totally true. But when you see the people that you see that you want to imitate, you're like, Oh, they got that move. I want to do it. What are the hallmarks of a really good second liner?

Tyree Smith

0:16:07 Oh, that's a great question. It depends. If you're parading in the street, to just last, keep moving, stay busy, because the cameras are always watching you. When you parade, you don't want no one to see you. You don't want nobody like, Hey, they're not doing nothing. They're not doing nothing.

Rachel Carrico

You're thinking about when you're in a club specifically.

Tyree Smith

0:16:31 Yes, like if you're in a club, if you're parading with a club—like if you're in the street, if you're street parading, if you—you know, with a club, you always have to be moving. You

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always have to do something because, like I said, the cameras are always watching. You don't want nobody be like, they look all right, but they're not doing nothing, you know, because basically the club makes the band, and the band makes the crowd. So it's all neck and neck. Everybody has a job they need to do. You know, if the band don't see the club doing anything, you know, the band's not gonna pay for the street, so that's basically how that goes.

Rachel Carrico

So stamina is a hallmark of a good second liner.

Tyree Smith

Hell to the yeah. Yeah, you have to have stamina.

Rachel Carrico

What else?

Tyree Smith

0:17:08 You have to have stamina, endurance. You know, you got to—you know, I'm out of shape myself. I'm out of shape. I must say, I'm out of shape. But I find the energy. I find the energy. You know, like I get down for a while, and I look and see people say, Oh, you're tired. No, I ain't tired, but I be tired. So you have to—you know, you don't want nobody to see you like that, so you've got to be energized. And I'm not an energetic person. I'm lying. I'm an energetic person, especially when I'm drinking. So, you know, hey, that's my power pill. That's my boots right there. Once I go to drinking, and I hear the music, it just brings me to another world. I don't think about being tired. I don't think about fatigue. I don't think about anything. I just think about, that's my song, and then suddenly I go off.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, a lot of people talk about that aspect of sort of being transported, like not being on this earth anymore.

Tyree Smith

0:17:58 Oh, yeah, it takes you to another element. And I used to always tell my mom that; she doesn't understand that. It's just brass music. I say, no, mom, you just don't understand. That's my favorite, favorite music ever, of all time. I don't know—when God created instruments, Lord, he knew what he was doing because when you put all these different instruments together, and you get that unique—that gritty sound, it's crazy. It's crazy, man. It's crazy.

Rachel Carrico

So as a club member of Family Ties, you do a lot of things to prepare for the parade throughout the year. What's the behind-the-scenes preparation? Those of us who just show up on parade day, what don't we see that goes on?

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Tyree Smith

0:18:38 Oh, my God, the fussing, the cussing, the getting mad, being late with dues, being late with payments, have to get a shirt, have to—you know, it's a whole lot of things that—you know, behind the scenes that people don't know. And that's why when you do parade that day, you just look back, and you're like, man, I struggle a whole year to prepare for this, and man, it's worth it. And, you know, I get out there—you can spend 700 bucks on a pair of shoes, and you get out there, and you just basically tear them up. See, it feels damn good, too, you know. Are you crazy? I wouldn't spend all that money for this. You just don't know. You have to do it. You have to experience it. And I tell everybody, If that's something that you need—like if you want to do—like if you ever want to second line with a club, do it. I say, I promise you, when you do it, you're going to—oh my God, you're gonna feel so great. You gonna be like, I ain't never. I ain't—because I just want to do it one year. I just want to do it one year, just to do it. But once I did it, I found—you know, going to meetings, just the fellowship, the brotherhood—you know, it's just the knit with the guys. And I was like, man, it's like this is my other family—extended family, like these are really my brothers. I could come to them—I could tell them anything. And, you know, like I said, we fussing, we cussing, and we probably fighting. And, you know, it's just all that just to get to this one day, and it's worth it. And they make you feel—you know, you feel grateful for that day. Like you just feel good, and you just feel like, damn. And a whole year I left on doing this because I wanted to do that. You know, I deprived this because I wanted to do that. It's a struggle. You have to be dedicated. You know, you really have to be dedicated because I don't—I see a lot of kids that started with us, and they didn't finish. So you just—money just went down the drain, man, so it's hard. It's hard. I promise you it's hard.

Rachel Carrico

But the benefits must be really huge for people to stick with it because it's such a commitment of time and energy and money.

Tyree Smith

0:20:34 Yeah, it's money. It's time. It's time-consuming, you know. It's really time-consuming. My girl always be like, Oh, you don't got time for a second line. I was like, You just don't understand. Oh, you're spending so much money. And I'm like, Oh, you just don't understand. I was like, man—and it's like—I remember a couple of years ago, we were doing our own decorations and man, I was beat. I was beat. I was so tired. I was like, Man, I just can't do it no more, man. You know, we have so many members. It's so—like you just—this one area here, you got like twenty people up in here gluing hats, gluing this, doing that, sticking clothes up in this venue. And once you see it and once it's over, you just—you know, you're grateful for what you did because—not just because—about the parade, because, you know, that's something that you did from your heart, something you did yourself. And we've done that a couple of years. We've done that a couple of years.

Rachel Carrico

Do you now get them made by somebody else?

Tyree Smith

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0:21:26 Oh, yeah, [Kevin Dunn](#), he usually does our decorations. A couple of years, we've done them ourselves. We went to a couple other people, and Kevin Dunn is like the guy we always get our decorations done from. You know, he's like one of the best in the city.

Rachel Carrico

And how much does each member wind up spending per year on average?

Tyree Smith

0:21:46 Oh, it depends. It depends. One year, we came in gator and leather. One year, we wore mink. So it varies. It varies. You know, it varies. If you want to be, you know, considered as one of the top clubs, fashion is everything. You know, it didn't used to be like that, but now fashion is everything because you want to make a statement, you know. You want to make a fashion statement and—not just a fashion statement, you want to make a fashion statement, and you want to get out there, and you want to monkeyshine. You want to move your feet, too. And that's why I say camera pays a lot. When the camera catch you looking good but not doing nothing, you know, that's not good. So fashion is everything, but also moving your feet and doing what you're supposed to be doing is also the thing, too, because, you know, when you parade, everybody has a position they need to play. Like, if—you know, we probably be three and three, you know, three here, three here, three here. You have a position you need to play. You need to make sure you stay in your position. Now, if you move out of your position, someone's supposed to take your position. So, you know, it's a lot of rules.

Rachel Carrico

So you have like a spot on the street where you're kind of supposed to stay?

Tyree Smith

0:22:55 Exactly.

Rachel Carrico

Oh, wow.

Tyree Smith

Exactly, you know, and if you don't stay in your spot, you'll get fined.

Rachel Carrico

Kind of like a marching band.

Tyree Smith

0:23:02 Yeah, you get fined. So if you don't get on your spot, that's fifty dollars. Yeah, you'll get fined. So there's a lot with it. There's a lot with it. It's fun. It's fun, but it teaches you. It teaches you, you know—it's a lot with it. It's a lot with it. It's a lot with it. You know, it's fun and games also. You know, it's all about having fun, but it's about being serious also. You have to be professional. It's like a job. You have to be professional about it because—you know, some people get out of character, you know, bring out your character. And, you know, you have

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position. You're on the line. You can't let nobody bring you, you know, into that world when it's your day, when you're supposed to be having fun. So let that go, and you do what you do.

Rachel Carrico

And so it could be thousands of dollars a year, right?

Tyree Smith

Yes, thousands.

Rachel Carrico

And Family Ties originated as an actual family, right?

Tyree Smith

0:24:00 Yes, predominantly cousins, some brothers. I just fell into the loop of the in-laws. I fell into the loop. I knew one guy that was parading with them. He was like, Hey, man, when are you going to parade with us, man? The first year they paraded. And I was like, I didn't know y'all was creating a club, man. I didn't know you was even in a club. He was like, Yeah, you know, we got a club. I said, Man, maybe next year. So the day that they paraded—the day they paraded, I was like, It's in the hood! I'm like, Man, it's coming in the hood. So when they paraded, I was like, Man, here goes some of my money right here—the day they paraded. I was like that. And when I got in the club, I was like, Damn, that's his brother. That's his cousin. It's like, Y'all kin! He was like, Yeah, man. So that's where we kind of came up with the word Family Ties.

Rachel Carrico

And besides preparing for the parade, what other kinds of activities go on?

Tyree Smith

0:24:57 We give dances functions. We give out kind of functions. We give dances. We'll give a dance at least—we have a raffle. My club, Family Ties, they are—one of my club members' mother, she works at a nursery, so they donate toys to the nursery, or they give all for the kids. We do bus rides to the casino. What else do we do? What else do we do? What else we do? What else we do? We do all kinds of things to try to create revenue. You know, we do all kinds of things. Raffle is like the number one thing that we may do—do a raffle or a dance. We just had a dance not too long ago, about a month or so ago. You know, we did real well, too. We did it with [Unbreakable Men](#). That's a group that's now inquiring with us. They're parading on the same day that we parade now, so it's going to be like three divisions. We have a ladies' division, that division, and my senior club. So we're trying to expand. We trying to get it the biggest we can get it.

Rachel Carrico

And so some of the functions are to raise revenue, some are just like to build community, and then some are philanthropic, like working with the coat drive and toys and that sort of thing.

Tyree Smith

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0:26:14 Right, right, right, right, right. We're trying to—like this year, some of my members—me and Jermaine, we even—[Volunteers of America](#)—we even went to Volunteers of America, a race that we participated in, passed out water to all the runners. It was great. We're just trying to just do things in the community, for the community, you know, just trying to give back because, you know, we spend thousands and thousands of dollars, and we don't look back and think about it. And, you know, there's a lot of people that need help, whether it's just talking or just financially. A lot of people need help out here, so we're just trying to just give back to the community in any kind of way that we can. We also perform in the Jazz Fest, too. We also perform at the Jazz Fest. So that's great. That's great that we do that—thirty minutes. It's hot as hell, but hey, it's worth it, you know.

Rachel Carrico

Why is it worth it? What's the benefit?

Tyree Smith

0:27:19 Just the people from different countries, states, just being amazed of what we do and just the costume—you know, just the people being amazed at what we do, you know, because people don't realize about second lining. Like, I have a friend that's from Chicago. He was like, What's the second line? And I bought him to the second line, and he was like, What is this? And when people see you getting out there, you dance, and they're just so amazed. They get out there, and they dance with you. I feel good for them because they are having fun. Any time you see somebody having fun—I see somebody having fun—that makes me feel like I'm doing my job because it is a job when I'm out there doing it, you know, because I'm entertaining whomever and whoever.

Rachel Carrico

So the day of your parade, you're about to come out, the door opens, whatever happens—

Tyree Smith

0:28:07 Butterflies, butterflies—I have to use the restroom. I really have to. Like, every year before we parade, I have to use the bathroom. I don't know why. I'm not a camera person. I don't really like the camera. But once I get out the door, I'm good. But once the camera is on me and I'm out getting out there, I'm just looking at all these people, and it's kind of frightening to me, and I don't know why. I've been doing this for too long for me to be that way. It's always been like that. But once I get in the street, I'm good. It's a great feeling, though.

Rachel Carrico

Do you plan what you're going to do?

Tyree Smith

0:28:37 I just let it go as it come. You know, sometimes, I'm like, When I get out there, I'm gonna do this, but it never goes as planned. It never goes as planned because prior to—the cat parading before me, he might of stole my move. So I can't do that because he has done it, so I

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don't want to do the same move he did. So I kind of try to improvise and try to, you know, do something else.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, exactly. So we talked a little bit before the recorder was on about your other club venture, D2. Do you want to talk about that as well?

Tyree Smith

0:29:06 Yes, ma'am. I formerly was with D2, which was the little brother club of Family Ties, which was the second division, and that's what D2 stands for. We had approximately eleven members, some of the best dancers in the city, I promise you.

Rachel Carrico

Did you handpick them?

Tyree Smith

0:29:26 No, I really didn't. I just asked like two cats, do they want to parade, because they was cool with some other cats. He was like, Hey, man, I wanna do it. I was like, Well, hey, you want to do it? He was like, yeah, so I really didn't handpick them. And, you know, one of my favorite clubs of all time is the [Sidewalk Steppers](#), and they always had great dancers—always had great dancers, always, always did. And we were kind of like the baby Sidewalk Steppers because I felt I had just as many great dancers as they had. You know, we probably know a lot of cats have their own different styles, but, you know, just like them, they had their own different style. So, you know, I just thought that was a great concept. And, you know, everybody was telling us like, Man, y'all got a lot of great dancers. Y'all got to do your thing. And we did. We had fun that day when we paraded, so it was great. It was great.

Rachel Carrico

We paraded in—it was 2013, right? October.

Tyree Smith

0:30:16 October, yes, the first Sunday in October—we always paraded on the first Sunday in October. It was a beautiful day. You know, we thought that—they just thought it was going to—matter of fact, it was supposed to rain that day. It was supposed to rain that day. And I don't know, God just pushed those clouds out of the way, and we had a beautiful day, and nobody got hurt. There was no drama. So, you know, everybody enjoyed themselves, and everybody had fun, everybody, even my members. And I was just happy to see them have fun because that's something that they never experienced. You know, and it was like, man, I want to parade. And we all put our heads together. We came up with a game plan, and we did it. And it made me feel good because we also brought it through the neighborhood, and a lot of old folks that was in the neighborhood was like, Why y'all don't ever bring it to the hood? And that's something that we did. And, you know, the whole neighborhood—they just loved us for that. They loved us for that.

Rachel Carrico

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And you also had this in recent months, the branding of the t-shirts and like the swag and stuff.

Tyree Smith

0:31:15 Yeah, that was one of my club members, Jermaine Pine. You know, he was like, Man, we got to create our own image. And I was like, Well, how can we create our own image? He was like, You know, I have to do the shirts. I was like, Well, yeah, we can do the shirts then. So what our thing was, our theme was, like, every week, we'd come up with a different theme. We'd come up with a different theme, you know, to try to get some followers. And oh, my God, we had some followers. We had like a lot of D2 followers. And every week, you know, everybody was like, What's the theme going to be? What's the theme going to be? What kind of shirt y'all wear? And that kind of made us feel good because everybody was like on our side, like what we were doing, you know, so it was great while it lasted. It really was. It was great while it lasted.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, it was kind of cool the way it sort of almost created like this—not another club in the second line, but sort of, you know, because every week it was something new.

Tyree Smith

0:32:09 Yeah, we had a movement going on. We called it the D2 movement. That's what we called it, the D2 movement. And, you know, like I said, everybody knew it was us because you see like twenty individuals with the same color shirt on, and it was like—and everybody was like, man, every week, man. All the cats that that knew me, it was like, Man, every week, y'all are like bringing it. That's what's up. That's good for the second line game. That's good for the tradition. That's good for the club. That's good that y'all brothers stick together like that. That's good. So we need that, you know. We need that. And that's something that we was trying to keep going, like every week, every week—hats, shirts. We even had shirts for females, shirts for kids. We had like a little movement going on. It was something positive that we was trying to keep going.

Rachel Carrico

And you were telling me when I got here that D2 recently disbanded.

Tyree Smith

0:32:57 Yeah.

Rachel Carrico

Do you want to talk about that?

Tyree Smith

Yeah, certain—you know, in every club, there're going to be people in your club that's—just by certain circumstances, certain things happen, you know. And there was a little member that was in my club, you know, just hanging out with the wrong crowd, I guess. And his flaws reflected the whole gang, you know. Due to his flaws, we had to shut down the gang, you know, due to the police getting involved and names being thrown out there saying D2 was a gang and we were

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drug warring. And, you know, we're not about drugs. We're not about none of that. We're just about having fun and making people laugh, and we just brought the tradition, you know. It's just something we try to keep going. I have kids that wanna parade, and I don't want them to look at me as no drug lord or no gang member or nothing like that. I don't want them look at me like, My daddy get it in. My daddy get out there, and he'll have fun because that's all that's about, having fun.

0:34:00 And I want everybody to know that D2 is a social and pleasure club—social aid and pleasure club. D2 stands for Division 2, the second division of Family Ties. And People was getting that name misconstrued. It was called Deslonde Boys, and it was so much negative things that were going on out there. And I didn't see anything positive coming out the D2 thing, so, you know, I got with some of my senior clubs and with some of my members, and I decided to just shut it down, you know, because it didn't make no sense for nobody getting hurt or going to jail behind that name. So I just thought that would be the best thing, not just for the community, for the club, for my senior club, for my club members. You know, I want them to understand that life is good and, you know—who wants to spend the rest of their life in jail behind a name? So, you know, I just looked at the bigger picture of it, and I just thought that would be the best option for everybody within my club, to shut it down.

Rachel Carrico

For people who associate second lines of violence, what do you say to them?

Tyree Smith

0:35:05 It's ridiculous, man. I've been to several second lines where I've seen shootings. And, you know, my mom was always scared that—we had an intervention on this weekend. And my mama was like, you know, I'm always praying. My family's a praying family and always prays for us when we go to the second lines. We pray that they don't do this. We pray they don't shoot. You know, my mama, she loves that I love this. And, you know, she's always scared. When I parade, when I go out there—when she go out there, she always like, I hope they don't shoot. That's something that she always think about. And I just don't understand why these cats would do this, why these cats do this kind of thing. You know what I'm saying? I just don't understand it, especially for the Mother's Day thing. It's just too many people out there. It's too many targets. And, you know, I just feel the law needs to punish them, like, severely for things like—for second lines, stuff like that, because, man—it's hard to explain, like, stuff like that. I really can't. At a parade, why just open fire? I just don't understand that. I really don't.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, in that particular incident, I heard people kind of liken it to a shooting—opening fire within a church.

Tyree Smith

0:36:23 Open a fire within a church?

Rachel Carrico

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Like it was as if someone had walked into a church.

Tyree Smith

Oh, okay, okay.

Rachel Carrico

Because that's how special second lines are.

Tyree Smith

0:36:31 It is. It is. And, you know, it's something that—I live and die for them. I hate when we don't have a second line on a Sunday because that's something that I can do—like I said, it's a getaway. It's just like church, you know, because you see the same—it's like a family. Like, you know, we meet up the same. It's like the moment when they go to church every Sunday. You meet up with the same people every week. You do the same thing. Get drunk, have fun, dance, clown, laugh. You know, it's the same thing. So I don't understand why people would try, you know, to break this tradition, because that's what it seems like it's coming to. People are scared to go to second lines now, man. They really are. And that's bad because second lines are not—it's not supposed to be nothing violent. It's supposed to be about having fun. You know, it's about culture, tradition. And they're breaking—they're really breaking that down because people don't really want to go because they're scared of what's gonna happen. You know, the police is out there. The police, they're doing their job, but there's only so much that they can do. It's massive. The crowd is massive. You know, the police are all—you can't watch this one. You can't watch that. There's thousands of people out there. So, you know, it's just so easy to get caught up.

Rachel Carrico

I wanted to ask you also about Katrina and the impact—if you saw any impact—pre- and post-Katrina on the second line tradition. Yeah, I'll stop there. Have you seen a change or an impact on the storm and the rebuilding and the way the city is now? Have you seen a change in second lines?

Tyree Smith

0:38:07 Do I see a change in the second lines?

Rachel Carrico

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Tyree Smith

Clothes are not as traditional as they used to be. Like I said, like before Katrina, you know, the club will get out there and probably—I'm not going to say buy anything or get anything—it was like. And like now, since Katrina, like the prices of a lot of the club—like, the parade stuff has really gone up. Like, it's really getting expensive. It's really getting expensive. And the tradition is still kind of there, but it's more like a fashion thing now, you know. Like I said, it's not like—before the storm, you know—I can't really explain. Like, before the storm, everybody loved everybody, and all clubs were together. All clubs were together. Like, now, the storm has like—

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everybody's like kind of divided. This club is talking about that club. That club is, like, talking about that club. And, you know, I just—you know, I don't know if the storm did that. I can't really say that. But, you know, Katrina was just bad. You know, it really was bad. It was kind of good for—it was good for certain people, and it was bad for a lot of other people—you know, well, what you took out of it. It was a great experience for me, though.

Rachel Carrico
Was it?

Tyree Smith

0:39:17 I kind of got away from just a New Orleans living, just being here, because that's all I know is New Orleans. I'd never been anywhere else. And I kind of got to migrate, like a lot of other people—kind of got my head out of the clouds and just being just secluded to New Orleans because that's all I knew. And I was missing a hell lot of it. All I thought about was second line, second line, second line. I thought we would never get back to New Orleans. I thought New Orleans would never be back. And we did come back, and I saw the city was kind of trying to get back. And we're still not all the way—[somebody yelling in the distance]—I'm coming! We're still not where we need to be. [somebody yelling in the distance] Gotcha. We're still not where we need to be, but we're still in the rebuilding process. You know, a lot of things have changed since the storm, and it really has to do with the tradition, with the clubs. A lot of things have changed with the prices of, you know, the materials on second line stuff. It's crazy. It's crazy because it's higher demand now. It's really higher demand now. You know, New Orleans is second lines, Jazz Fest. It's a tourist city. It's a tourist city. So people want to see this stuff. So, you know, people going up on all this stuff, you know, all this, because they want to see it, and they're going to be crazy enough to buy it. We're going to buy it because, you know, we want to keep the tradition going.

Rachel Carrico

I've heard people say that after the storm, they feel like the parades are more mainstream. There're maybe not so much tourists, but a lot of people there now who didn't really used to go before the storm.

Tyree Smith

0:40:50 What? A lot of people at the second line?

Rachel Carrico

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Tyree Smith

Yeah, like a lot of white folks—a lot of like white folks didn't used to go to the parade because they were scared. Now, they're more involved, and that's great. That's good. That's good because they're trying to keep the culture and the tradition going also. So, you know, it's good that we got other folk involved. You know, it's just not no Black tradition. It's not no African—it's everybody's tradition. Whoever can keep the tradition going, we need to keep it going, you

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know, because they got a lot of people trying to stop this because of all the violence and all the stuff that's going on within it. And, you know, if a second line pass this way, I promise you—and somebody gets shot on that corner—in the news, they will say the second line passed that. It was due to the second line. And they try to make like second lines are so bad, and it's not. That's what they're trying to do. So that's great that we got different people out there. You know what I'm saying? Because, you know, people think—it's not just Black folk that's out there, no white folk out there—they got Chinese folk out there. They got all kinds of people out there. You know, people be more leery about, Yeah, well, I ain't gonna shoot in the crowd if they've got white folks over there. Yeah, well, I rather you be like that—because if they got Black, so you would just shoot over there. You don't really care. So, you know people—it got these little young cats thinking that. You know what I'm saying? And prior to—before the storm, they never really didn't have white folks out there. They really didn't. You know, I'm glad that they're out there. I wanna show off for them, let them see what we can do, what we do. So, you know, we even have the guy that parades with Prince of Wales, Joe. He's a white guy. He has his own club. So, you know, it's good—culture's good for everybody, not just for Black people. It's for everybody.

Rachel Carrico

One last thing I wanted to do if you have time. Okay, I have just a little bit of video clips and different styles of footwork from different parties. And I wanted you to just watch it and tell me what you see in these different clips. Like, Oh, yeah, that's definitely a type of footwork. Oh, okay, see, he's doing toe drag or whatever—the toe drag or the—you know, oh, that's more old school. It's hard to talk about positions on the video. You can kind of be like, Oh, yeah, that's what I meant.

0:43:12 [video playing]

Rachel Carrico

So these guys are just—we're just kinda coming out of Treme Center.

Tyree Smith

Treme, that's [Dumaine Gang](#).

Rachel Carrico

Uh-huh (affirmative). Okay, so those guys, if you're looking at their footwork, what would you think? How would you describe that?

Tyree Smith

0:44:13 Well, it easier when I look at the footwork.

Rachel Carrico

What did you see?

Tyree Smith

I can tell where they're from.

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Rachel Carrico

Yeah, where are they from?

Tyree Smith

He's from uptown. I mean, no, he's from downtown. He's from downtown, across the [Canal](#). You can basically tell where someone is basically from by the way they move.

Rachel Carrico

What are they doing that lets you know that?

Tyree Smith

0:44:39 It's just the movement. It's just the movement. I don't even—I can't see this guy, but this is like a guy that's from like the Seventh Ward.

Rachel Carrico

This guy here?

Tyree Smith

Tall, kind of skinny guy.

Rachel Carrico

His name is Ja'rell, yeah.

0:44:51 [video playing]

Rachel Carrico

He's wearing the star—the socks with the stars on them.

Tyree Smith

Yeah, he's a busybody.

Rachel Carrico

What do you mean by that?

Tyree Smith

He moves—he's always moving—a tremendous amount of energy.

Rachel Carrico

It's true.

Tyree Smith

And I tell him, man, I can't dance with you. I'm not trying to keep up with you. It's good to see that he's energetic like that. As matter of fact, that's one of my club members' son.

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Rachel Carrico

Ja'rell?

Tyree Smith

Yes.

Rachel Carrico

Oh, really? Okay, so when you see him dance, he's busy, he moves a lot, he's energetic. Any other thing you notice about characteristics and how he dances?

Tyree Smith

0:45:41 He has his own unique style. He has his own unique style. He really does. And I don't know where he gets it from because his dad doesn't dance like that.

Rachel Carrico

Oh, really?

Tyree Smith

We have a whole clique of guys that he dances with—that he's with.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, he does.

Tyree Smith

Yeah, they all get that. You can basically tell where somebody's from by the way they dance. Like, basically you could tell.

Rachel Carrico

And Ja'rell was—he's from—

Tyree Smith

He's from the Seventh Ward—Sixth Ward, I'm sorry, Sixth Ward.

Rachel Carrico

Now, this woman here in the yellow shirt, she seems pretty incredible [Terrylynn Dorsey].

Tyree Smith

She's from uptown. She's from uptown. That's Bebe's [phonetic] daughter. She could dance her ass off.

Rachel Carrico

Yes, she can.

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Tyree Smith

And I remember when she couldn't do anything.

Rachel Carrico

Really? When she was a little kid or what?

Tyree Smith

0:46:36 Yeah, she could not dance—a couple of years ago.

Rachel Carrico

Really?

Tyree Smith

She just started—really like started coming to the second lines. And, you know, her mama could dance real good. Her mama, as a matter of fact, parades with the club.

Rachel Carrico

Oh, okay. Yeah, women, in general, seem to be some differences—not all the time, but some differences in general between how women and men second line.

Tyree Smith

0:46:57 Right, right, right, right, right, I know some women that can get it in, that can dance better than some guys. I know a handful—when I say a handful, a handful that can really get it in. I'm like, Wow. They have guys second-guessing, like, I'm not going to dance with her. We go around. And the women are like, Yeah, you better go around 'cause you know I'm gonna tell you—boy, you better go ahead. That's the brag thing we do—you know, I'm better than you—whether you're male or female. We still do it with each other, and we cool as hell. You could be from downtown, and I'ma still knock at you. You know, that's just something that we do. We feed challenge. You know, we challenge each other. It's not trying to make you look embarrassed; it's just trying to get your game up. Hey, I want you to get it in. You know what I'm saying? So that's been going on for years, second line battles. So it's great for the culture.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah.

0:47:56 [video playing]

Rachel Carrico

That right here, that's Skelly [Wellington Ratcliff].

Tyree Smith

That's my boss. That's my dude.

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Rachel Carrico

Yeah.

Tyree Smith

I talked to him Sunday. We talked on Sunday. We had a whole conversation on Sunday.

Rachel Carrico

And then this guy—

Tyree Smith

He parades with the—

Rachel Carrico

Pigeon Town.

Tyree Smith

[Pigeon Town Steppers](#), yeah.

Rachel Carrico

So now he looks really different from the other guys we just watched.

0:48:21 [video playing]

Tyree Smith

He has his own style. He's uptown. And he's kind of older cat, so he's going to be old school, but he kind of got like a little hop, hop, hop with it. But he don't have a hop, skip, hop, skip with it. You know, different people dance off different instruments. Me, I dance off the drum. You know, when I dance, I dance off the drum. I love the drum. That's my instrument. You know, I like the horns also, but the drum is something I dance off. When I tell people when they dance, you know, you dance with all the instruments, but I say, Tune out all the instruments and just think of one instrument that you wanna dance off. And that's how you pick your tempo. That's how you know your tempo. That's how you know how to dance. You can't just dance off everything because you'll be wild. You'll be all over. Just take one instrument. And you mention that instrument, and you're like, Oh, this one. And when you know the song, you know the breakdowns, you know everything, so you know how to dance off it.

Rachel Carrico

Do you dance to the snare drum?

Tyree Smith

0:49:23 Yes, the snare drum.

0:49:27 [video playing]

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Rachel Carrico

Okay, then here's a guy up on this porch.

Tyree Smith

Ronnie Lee, out the Ninth Ward.

Rachel Carrico

Uh-huh.

Tyree Smith

That's where?

Rachel Carrico

What's that?

Tyree Smith

I was trying to say, Who is that?

Rachel Carrico

Oh, I don't know.

Tyree Smith

I thought that was that guy with a skirt on.

Rachel Carrico

Oh, no.

Tyree Smith

Work that skirt, that's what they call him.

Rachel Carrico

Work that skirt, yeah. He's been there the last two second lines.

Tyree Smith

Yes, he had. I hadn't been seen him in a while, though.

Rachel Carrico

Me either. And this is Leo [Gorman]. I know he's in the [Big 7](#)—up on top of a lightbox.

Tyree Smith

0:50:20 Now, see, I won't do that because I probably won't get down. No, I won't do that either.

Rachel Carrico

(laughs) At the top of the bridge. Okay, so now here are some white folks going in.

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Tyree Smith

Yeah, kind of offbeat, you know.

Rachel Carrico

A little bit.

Tyree Smith

0:50:41 But they got some of them that could get it in that I've seen. You record everybody. That's good.

Rachel Carrico

I try to. And then, there's Scottie, this guy. He's a white guy who—he's somebody who is really working on his footwork.

Tyree Smith

Pudgy [phonetic], out the Sixth Ward, parade with [Sudan](#).

Rachel Carrico

He's really working his hips in that clip.

Tyree Smith

Oh, you was at this parade?

Rachel Carrico

Oh, yes, all four hours.

Tyree Smith

Me, too. I didn't see you out there.

Rachel Carrico

Well, you didn't know me then.

Tyree Smith

Yeah, but I didn't—I kind of notice new faces.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, all four hours I was hiding under my umbrella.

Tyree Smith

She can dance. She's from uptown.

Rachel Carrico

She can dance.

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Tyree Smith

And she's—I remember her when I was younger.

Rachel Carrico

Was she always like that?

Tyree Smith

0:51:37 Always, always, always.

Rachel Carrico

Yeah, she has a lot of energy.

Tyree Smith

Oh, yes, indeed.

Rachel Carrico

She's not twenty.

Tyree Smith

Hell, no, she's like in her fifties. And that's good that she still got that energy to do that, you know. No matter how old you are, man, you know, once you love this, you take it to the grave. You have to. It's just in you.

Rachel Carrico

Okay, so here's some white ladies. This is the [Lady Rollers](#). And so this is the [Pussyfooters](#) coming out. So these ladies and Poppy Tooker, as far as I can tell, they're not really working any footwork, right? They're not really concerned about that.

Tyree Smith

No, they just—they model walking, line walking.

Rachel Carrico

Line walking, and is that still second lining?

Tyree Smith

0:52:30 Yes, it's whatever you—anything is second lining. Whatever you do, whatever movement you do, it's all second lining.

Rachel Carrico

Footwork is just one category in that.

Tyree Smith

Yes, no matter what kind of footwork it is, it's all footwork. It's all the same.

Interviewee: Tyree Smith
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Rachel Carrico

Well, those are all my questions. Anything else you want to ask before I turn this off?

Tyree Smith

I thank you for the interview.

Rachel Carrico

I thank you for your time.

Tyree Smith

Anytime. Anytime.

0:52:54 [End of Recording]

Transcribed by Adept Word Management, Inc 6/28/2022

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