

Bill Gilday

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MMS: Welcome to this episode of Musicians of the Midnight Sun. My name is Pat Braden, and today I am joined by renowned musician, composer, music educator here in the North, *Bill Gilday*. Welcome to the show, Bill.

BG: Thanks for having me on, Pat. My pleasure.

MMS: Really good to have you here with all of the other alumni, I guess. I wanted to make sure that I got your musical story of coming from the south and coming north, and so it's been interesting in getting these interviews because some of the musicians are born and bred here in the north and their whole experience has been in the north and yet, there's others who come up and bring their sort of musical talents with them and just through osmosis and interactions and all the rest of that stuff that sort of gets passed on to a lot of the other Northern musicians and you did that in a huge way, especially in your years as an educator, that way. If we could just start right at the beginning Bill, if you could tell me what, what year you were born, just so that we have a chronological anchor point there. And maybe tell me about some of your early years where you grew up and also your first musical influences.

BG: Okay. Well, I was born in Toronto in 1947 and went to school there in kindergarten, grade one. Moved up to Mississauga when I was in grade three and took some piano lessons, that didn't last long because I had a teacher who liked to rap your knuckles. And so what I did was I quit and I started improvising on the piano at home. I can remember my mother going crazy with me playing the theme song to "Peter Gunn" with one finger, [sings], about a million times. So anyway, I went to school in Mississauga, Port Credit for about five or six years and then big move came when we moved up to London, Ontario, my dad got a job working for General Motors there and it's kinda lucky for me because he actually had another job offer in a smaller town nearer to Toronto that didn't really have any serious music programs. Whereas in London, that was in the '60s, that was like a hot bit of every kind of music from the schools, to the clubs, to the bands, you name it, to the orchestras. So, I was really influenced by my Dad's record collection in the beginning. I started playing the trombone at a school in Mississauga in grade nine, "Lauren Park" and very quickly became interested in playing Dad's records of marching band music, Dixieland music, and some light jazz collections. Let's put it that way, it's not heavy jazz. So, this was in my grade nine year, I was going home after school and putting records on and just learning to play by ear, along with all these different artists.

MMS: Sorry Bill, can I hold you there? And we'll just rewind a little bit, even before your family made the move to London-

BG: Right.

MMS: What kind of music were you hearing like from the radio and you mentioned "Peter Gunn", before my time that was a television program, if I got it right? But-

BG: Yeah.

MMS: I'm just interested in what was, because it was such a dynamic time coming out of, from radio into television and trying to get the music that's floating through the air. And so, what kind of songs can you remember getting?

BG: Well, I didn't listen to the radio much at all because we lived in a nice, it was a suburban area, but it was right on the edge of the wilderness. And I was a real outdoors kid and sports, I used to play hockey and soccer and all the time I'd be out with my bow and arrow in the fields, doing a little hunting.

MMS: Nice.

BG: And so, I didn't listen to the radio and I only have a few memories of songs that caught my attention. I can tell you what they are. I remember I was captivated when I heard *Johnny Horton* singing, "In 1814, we took a little trip..." I don't know if you remember that song? ("The Battle of New Orleans")

MMS: Yes, I do.

BG: "Along with Colonel Jackson down the mighty Mississippi."

MMS: Yeah.

BG: So, I was about 10 at the time, I think. And I, for some reason decided I wanted to learn that entire song. So I think I got a 45, got my dad to buy me the 45 and I'd put it on at home until I could memorize it. And then I'd walk around town, singing that song. And another song that caught my ear was "The Locomotion". It was very catchy and so I learned how to sing "The Locomotion". But very, very few listening experiences translating into me learning anything from the radio. Honestly, I can hardly remember listening to the radio. I didn't have a radio in my room and Dad had his Hi-Fi set out in the living room and more often than not, he and Mom were playing opera and marching band music and that sort of thing at high volume, dad was a really high-volume listener.

MMS: Get the full-on experience, yeah.

BG: Yeah. So, playing trombone at the school was just a beginning band program. I don't have really fond recollections of that, but the guy did okay, because I stuck with it. And then when we moved to London the next year, I jumped right into the music program and then things just took off from there.

MMS: What was the name of your music teacher that you had, the first one? Do you remember?

BG: Yeah, his name was *Jim Murray* and he was not really a trained music teacher, what they did in those days and we're talking the 50s, is they would take guys out of the military bands after the war and say, "Okay, you're going to be a music teacher now." So, anyway, he retired. Sorry, that was my first year in grade 10 in London. The first year that my introduction to the trombone in "Lauren Park" was... I can't remember the teacher's name, but he was a decent guy. And he had a class full of about 45 of us and managed to keep us all learning. But I did like it. I didn't like school much at all. I wasn't really into academics. And the school in London was "Central Secondary High School", which some of your listeners may have heard of or gone to. It was a big school and it had a large Jewish community and it was all whites. I seem to remember, it was a really white school. But anyway, the music program is what saved me, it's why I went to school just to be part of that.

MMS: Yeah. I'm with you there. Quick question, why the trombone? Did you have a choice or did somebody just hand you a trombone and say, "Play this."?

BG: Okay. Yeah, that's a good one. He gave us three choices and then he would pick one. So, my sister had played the French horn a few years before me, she's older. And I had it in my head I wanted to play the French horn. So, I put down the French horn and then the trombone and then something else I don't remember. But the next day the teacher came in and he said, "Well, I couldn't give you the French horn, but I can give you the trombone." And I was disappointed, but I said, "Okay." And within a couple of days, I'm taking the thing home and suddenly putting on records and playing along with the records. So, I was hooked.

MMS: Wow.

BG: That's how I got assigned to the trombone.

MMS: Yeah. Those kinds of stories where it's just the circumstances or serendipity or who knows what you want to call it, but an instrument lands in your hands and there you are 40 or 50 years later and it's still in your hands.

BG: Yeah, great.

MMS: Pretty amazing that way. You weren't training or anything like that, but you're picking out songs on the piano, and so you grab a trombone and so it's just natural that you're going to grab tunes and melody lines by ear on your trombone too. So yeah, very cool.

BG: Yeah. Dad had a couple of really neat Dixieland records. I remember there was one called "The Left Bank Bearcats", and another one *Pee Wee Hunt*. He was a trombonist. And I played along with those entire records and tried to learn all the trombone solos as they came along and had some success with that.

MMS: That's a great way to learn, playing along with records. I mean, so many of us, even before formal training and everything like that and that Dixieland stuff from experience, I know I

dived in with, into the deep end with a Dixieland Band in Vancouver, in a club one night and they kicked my butt right out of that club. Man, that is some serious music that you really have to know your stuff and feel it as well. So, I mean, for you to be catching even some of the solos that you were learning off your Dad's records is like, that's very commendable that's for sure. So, you're in London and you got the trombone in your hand and you're learning songs by ear at home and stuff like that. Lets-

BG: Learning to read music in the high school program.

MMS: Yeah.

BG: You know, playing concert band music in grade 10. And I don't think we had a dance band in grade 10, but I also that year learned how to play the baritone. The baritone gets a lot of great solos in concert band music. So, *Mr. Murray* asked me to consider playing the baritone so that I could learn some of these solos that he had in mind. So, I did that and that year went by pretty quickly, it wasn't too eventful musically speaking. I mean, I did play the trombone all the time in the band, but it was the next year that really changed my life because of the guy who came in and replaced *Mr. Murray*.

The next guy who came in was named *Jim Davey* and *Jim* was a young music teacher, really nice guy, just had a knack for teaching music to kids. And what he did is, he said, "Okay guys, we're going to start a dance band." And I go, "Oh, that sounds like fun." So, on the very first day he brought in an arrangement of "The Sunny Side of The Street", that was going to be our first tune that we would learn. And he had a good standup bass player, a good lead trumpet player *Dick Eustace* I remember him and a handful of other instruments. We didn't have a full 16-piece dance band at the beginning, even though the arrangement was for 16-piece band. It was like a trombone here, a couple of trumpets there, a couple of saxes, bass and drums. I don't think we even had a piano, but he said, "Okay, here's, what's going to happen. I'm going to get the bass player to start. I'll get him to start playing, (sings walking Bass line) And I'm going, "Holy cow, this is really cool." And then, because we all were able to read music at that point and he said, "Okay, saxes, you're going to bring in the melody now." So, they go (sings melody) And I think he had sung it enough that we had the style, the swing style and it didn't take more than 15 minutes before we're all cooking away "On The Sunny Side Of The Street." And it sounded just so awesome that I knew that there was something in there for me.

MMS: Beautiful.

BG: And so that year we developed a half decent dance band and then the concert band carried on. And then my big break came the next year when *Mr. Davey* asked me to join his dance band. He had a professional union dance band that played every Saturday night at what's called "The 401 Club", down on the 401 Highway. So, it was a full band. There were four trombones and the whole nine yards. So, and he played lead trombone and he put me on second trombone. So here I am playing with the big guns now. And I joined the union, I'm in grade 11 and I joined the musicians union. And it turns out that there were only five of us in London who were playing trombone at a level that could be used in a professional setting. So, I started getting calls from

these other organizations and I started getting work two, three nights a week, making 25 bucks a night in grade 11.

MMS: Wow.

BG: So, I felt pretty good about that. And also got on with the “Summer Concert Band in the Park” Series with *Phil Murphy*, he was a big band director in London. So, I played in his concert band during the Summer Series. And then I got on with this Dixieland band called, “The Aggregation”, their trombone player had left town and these guys had heard about me. Somebody must have told them that I could swing.

So, I started playing with them and that was a great education because *Wally Ewanski* the bass player, had played with *Tommy Dorsey*. His brother *Frank* was the lead trumpet player and he had a real raunchy style of playing Dixieland, like he really knew how to play. The clarinet player was *Tony Caminiti* and he was he maybe 60-ish. All these guys are in their 60s and veteran Dixie players. They had a piano and drums. I don't think they had a banjo or a guitar or anything, so it's a standard six-piece Dixie band and they got gigs. Every weekend we were out there at somebody's barbecue or party in the park or special event. And I was learning all of these Dixieland songs, many of which I had actually learned on Dad's records, so that's where I had a leg up there at least I knew a lot of these tunes already.

MMS: Wow, hold you there I'll hold you there 'cause I got a few questions...

BG: Okay.

MMS: A few questions sort of going back and forth. Amazing. That's like a fairytale musician's youth. That is just amazing.

BG: I was very lucky.

MMS: When you moved from the smaller town to London and I'm thinking around that time as well. I mean, there was a lot of immigrants coming into the country. Were you around, like you mentioned Jewish people and stuff like that, what were you finding other sort of different sort of nationalities of-

BG: They were Italians. And I got called by a guy called *Johnny Amato*. and he had a small band, like about a six or seven piece band and they'd use those “Combo-Orchs” that they're arranged for various instruments. And then he would get gigs playing dances basically, down in the Polish hall on a Saturday night playing with *Johnny Amado*. And it was more music to read by, like he would give us the charts and then lots of opportunities for solos, improvising solos. So that was my experience with this Italian band and then the clarinet player in the Dixie band was an Italian guy too.

MMS: What was the repertoire? Were you playing the pop songs of the day or the dance music from post second world war? I guess in the dance band, specifically in the dance band and the swing band, what kind of songs were you playing and what were you drawing this? Go ahead.

BG: In the swing band it was very much arrangements by *Neal Hefti* and the American style of jazz, big band jazz. And the smaller bands tend to be polkas, there was a lot of polka music and tangos. I'm just having a hard time remembering all that, but...

MMS: The schottisches and the waltzes and the rest of that stuff, and yeah, just the difference in the times too, not so much from now, but...

BG: We weren't playing pop music. We weren't playing "Beatles", we weren't playing folk music. It was more the dancing, energetic dance type music. And the crowds were usually adults maybe in their 40s and 50s and 60s. So, it was definitely music that's going to be harking back to their youth during the war years.

MMS: Yep. As it would be for the musicians that you were playing with, as you say, those guys were...

BG: That's right.

MMS: Up in their 60s and you were the kid.

BG: That's right.

MMS: I know what that's like too. As a musician, I think it really gives you a very sort of firm footing in those styles of music that preceded the popular music of the day and the stuff that's coming out of the radios and stuff like that. So, you can actually, it's not too hard to draw the line and stuff like that to figure out where different influences came from. And just the swing thing that you're talking about too. I mean, you talk about swing and it's really one of the fundamentals of being able to play that style of music. And it was probably imprinted on the records that you played, like even before you even knew what swing was-

BG: For sure.

MMS: Or Jazz was or anything like that. And it's just a feeling that way. And I know for me even as a bass player, it wasn't until my first year of college, really when I was down in Edmonton in my second year where it was like, I finally put it all together and it actually worked where there was a swing to my playing and whether you're the bass player or the trombone player, it doesn't really matter. That sense of swing is so important that way. But again, you would've learned from the masters when that music was being created, like you say, in those war and post-war eras. I guess, I'm just sort of trying to think about the different ethnic musics that you might have been, maybe not playing even just surrounded by and stuff like that. And the different cultures that were coming into Canada at that time, if you remember any of that?

BG: Yeah. I don't think I was directly influenced by other cultures in a big way. I was so taken with Dad's record collection. We had all of the *Glenn Miller* music, for instance. I learned every *Glenn Miller* song that there was. I had three *Tony Bennett* albums. I learned to play every *Tony Bennett* song, along with his recordings. And as an aside, five years ago, we went to New York and we were down near the stage after the concert, because *K.D. Lang* was the big star and *Cindy*

(Bill's wife) wanted to meet her. So, we went down there and she met *K.D. Lang* and then we're leaving the building Cindy says to me, "Hey, did you see who was standing behind you?" "No." "*Tony Bennett*."

MMS: Oh my God.

BG: And she didn't even tell me. The guy whose music I spent hours learning when I was a teenager.

MMS: And even just his voice, whether it was *Tony Bennett* or *Sinatra* or any one of those guys and you talk about swing again or phrasing.

BG: Absolutely.

MMS: Those guys, masters, so I mean, as far as you're playing sometimes melodies, I mean, when you're improvising and as well, just having that really good melodic sense as well, so wow that's a very full education that you had there. Geez, where was I going to go after this here? And so you're in London, that's pretty close to the Toronto thing and are we talking mid '60s, early '60s here?

BG: Yeah, this is early '60s. Let's see, I started high school in about '59 and I think I finished grade 13 in about '65 or something like that. So yeah, that was like the first half of the '60s that I was getting into all these bands in London.

MMS: Obviously you were a member of the union and making pretty good money, thank you very much for going out and playing on the weekends.

BG: Yes, absolutely.

MMS: And your parents were cool with all of this? They were supportive?

BG: Oh, they loved it. They thought it was great. Yeah. I could even afford to buy myself a car. I had a couple of secondhand vehicles that I bought over the years to get myself around with. My first car was a '59 Chev with the big fins on the back. And that got me through the mid '60s, I couldn't start driving till I was 16, so that would've been about '63. So, I had that '59 Chevy from '63 into maybe '67, '68, at which point I blew the engine for driving too fast and I bought an MGB, British Racing green MGB.

MMS: I can see it now.

BG: For my last years in London.

MMS: I can see the trombone case sticking out the back seat right there.

BG: I went to all my gigs in that.

MMS: Yeah. And most of your gigs in the immediate London area or would you...

BG: Most of them were in London and then the occasional gig would be in a town like a military base, North of London or a small town south. You know, half an hour to an hour's drive away. So, but most of them were in London.

MMS: Nice.

BG: I'll just say that as an aside that *Jim Davey* that band teacher, he only stayed with it for about five years and then he quit. I graduated from high school and the next year he quit and became an Air Canada pilot. And he just retired from that about five years ago. And he also just retired about two years ago, his big band that had carried on all these years, his big band is called "Basically Basic". And you can see that on YouTube I think, or it's out there somewhere, really great big band. And one of the trombone players in that band was the guy that I played with. He was one of those five that I played with all those years in the various bands and he's still at it, *John Thompson*.

MMS: Wow.

BG: Yeah.

MMS: Wow. That's incredible, commendable all the rest of that stuff too. And to have, I mean, they wouldn't have been young men but fairly young men at the time that they were teaching you. But obviously they were men of good character and driven and to just have that kind of influence as a young player, I know can make all other difference in the world. That's for sure.

BG: Yep, for sure.

MMS: Yeah.

BG: Yep, for sure.

MMS: Did you keep in touch with any of these guys, even after you moved north and stuff like that?

BG: I did not. Of course, there was no internet and stuff like that. So no, I didn't keep in touch. It's only in the last few years that I've reconnected with them on Facebook and had a few Facebook chats and thanked *Jim Davey*, for instance for the influence that he had on me and all that he gave me through getting me into his big band. So yeah, I kept in touch in a small way in the last few years.

MMS: When you were in London and you're playing a lot and you're not able to get out and see too much, any memorable concerts or live events besides the ones that you were playing at, within any style of music, I guess that you remember?

BG: There was an R&B band that came up from Toronto in the late '60s and with a front man who was really showy guy. And I remember being blown away by that. He had some horn players doing the R&B stuff in the band. So, I kind of got turned on to that sound, the Motown music and R&B music. During those high school years, I went to see *Count Basie* and *Woody Herman* in London at big venues where you could wander around and wander right up to the stage and watch the bands from the edge of the stage. So that was hugely impactful in my mind, seeing *Woody Herman* and "Woody Herman and the Herd" and then *Count Basie*, all of these guys traipsing around the country playing 250 gigs a year, living out of suitcases, but man could they play, you know what I mean? And it's just that's their life and so incredible for me to be able to see that. I missed out on seeing *Louis Armstrong*. He came to town and for some reason I missed that. And then I took a drive to Detroit with a couple of friends in about 1969 or something and attended a concert at "Cobo Hall", big, big venue in Detroit. And so, that's where I saw *Art Blakey's Band*, *Jimmy Smith* on the Hammond B-3. There's a variety of artists, *Nina Simone* was there. That was a really impressive concert. And the people attending the concert were 50% were the black community. And man, those guys know how to dress and they love to wander up to the stage and shoutout to their brothers on stage.

MMS: What a beautiful experience.

BG: Again in 1969, I know that was the year because that was the year they landed on the moon. By now, I was in the music program at Western (University). And so I got out of high school and I didn't go into music right away. I made the mistake of going into sciences and maths and stuff and it turns out I didn't like it and I failed miserably. So, the next year by the good graces, a few of the music professors who knew me through the bands, I had been kicked out of Western and told I couldn't come back. I didn't even write my exams, it was so bad. I skipped most of my classes.

So anyway, they got me back into the music program. And so that's where things started to take off. Right away I got offered a position playing in the "London Symphony" as a bass trombonist. They needed a bass trombone player, so I got my first experience playing in a symphony orchestra. And those gigs were weekday rehearsals, probably once a week on a Tuesday night or something, you'd go and rehearse and then you'd have a concert every month. So, it didn't really conflict with my dance bands and other small combos that I played with. But I was really taken by the orchestral experience. I don't know, have you ever played on stage with a large symphony orchestra, Pat?

MMS: Only once. And that was with the "Edmonton Symphony" and it was a pops concert, so we were doing, I think...

BG: Okay.

MMS: I think they'd brought in *Big Bird* and *Oscar the Grouch* or something like that. And so I was the electric bass player, but I mean, my God, just to be in the middle of all of that sound was incredible.

BG: Well, that's the thing, it's not the same as listening to a recording. You're enveloped with the sound of 75 or 80 players and the strings are just amazing, that was another big moment in my musical enlightenment playing in an orchestra. So, I kept on playing in orchestras all the way through university. Within a couple years, I became the principal trombone player for the "London Symphony" and had three years at that, right before coming North.

MMS: Beautiful.

BG: I joined a rock band who needed an organist. So, I learned how to play the Hammond B-3 and played in a rock band. I don't know how I had the time for it all, but I did it. And then the university had an awesome concert band that I played first trombone in for at least three years. And then much to the chagrin of the director, I chose in my last year at "Western" to join the music faculty choir, the student choir. Great director, *Harold Johnson* was his name. And that was another kind of an awakening, singing in a really expert university choir with a great director, lots of different repertoire, so that was another dimension to my music education being in that.

It's not the first time I'd been in choir. When I was in high school, I was in my church choir, "The Anglican Cathedral" in London, had an excellent director named *Elwyn Davies*. He was modeled after "The British Boys and Men's Choir". So, it was a boys and men's choir and we sang all the highfalutin, Anglican music, anthems and stuff with a great five keyboard organ in the chancel. And that was another fantastic experience. I know I'm kind of going random here on you.

MMS: No, this is all really good that way, because it sets things up for later years. Let's go back to your rock band. What kind of songs were you playing in your rock band when you were playing the B-3 organ?

BG: That was the pop stuff, that was *Tom Jones* and that was *Beatles*. And that was the pop songs of the the late '60s, early '70s, because I left London in 1972. So, this all happened in the last few years before I left town. So, I do remember it was a rock group and playing pop music of the day. I don't think I mentioned in this interview that I had one time on stage with *Duke Ellington* and his band. That was during the London Symphony years when I played with them in the late '60s, early '70s. *Duke Ellington* was traveling around North America with his band. And their gig was, they had arrangements that were for symphony orchestra, plus the *Duke's* band.

MMS: Yes.

BG: So, we got one of those gigs. And, I remember just sitting there in the trombone section at the back of the orchestra and to my left, 10 feet over there, was *Cat Anderson* on trumpet. And then in front of him, *Johnny Hodges* on saxophone and directly in front of me, about 20 feet ahead of me, was the *Duke* on the grand piano. And so we played, I don't know, an hour or so. And all of these soloists would get out of *Duke's* band and walk up to the front and play their solo, and then wander back to their chair, while we accompanied them on these arrangements. So, that was a pretty magical experience to have that one time with the *Duke*.

MMS: And I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong, being in academia that way and it's a bit of a sanctuary in that you're going there and you're learning and you're being challenged and all the rest of that stuff and it's a very safe and secure place that way, as opposed to the "Count Basie Orchestra" or take your pick of any rock band that way. And like you say, you're living out of a suitcase and at the end of the tour, you're basically you have what little money you have left and you're homeless.

BG: Yep.

MMS: So that kind of thing. And I guess this maybe sort of comes in, you're going through all of these explorations of different kinds of music through your college, university years. And there was ever a point where that was, I wouldn't say a calling, but it's like the life of a quote unquote professional musician that way, even though you already are, but you're playing gigs and you're still in academia that way. But I mean that pursuit, if you know what I'm trying to get at, of being on the road or being a studio recording musician or something like that?

BG: Well, that was my goal, was to be a working trombonist. And I even outright said, I did not want to be a music teacher. I was at the faculty of Western, a big part of it was the music education department. And most of the kids there were in it to become music teachers. And I stated outright, I said, "I don't want to be a music teacher." And that's why I took the composition and the performance route. And I didn't do a lot of the education courses that the other kids were doing. And one piece that just popped into my head that I should have mentioned from the high school years is when I was in grade 12, a guy called, *Malcolm Hines* and myself, we were in "Central High School" together. We wanted to expand on this thing about the dance band, because *Malcolm's* father had had a dance band in England when he was young. And so we got this idea that we were going to look around all the high schools in London and find the best players and form us a 16 piece dance band. And we did. So we got these guys together and bought a bunch of charts and bought some of those cardboard, fold out music stands so we'd look like a real band and started rehearsing in school gyms and music rooms for a month of Sundays kind of thing until we had enough repertoire. And then we started getting high school dances, like the prom, that kind of thing. And playing for our own age group, which seemed to go over quite well. And also we played at "The Western Fair", which is in London, Ontario. So that was a fun time. The second trombone player was named *Gary Morton* and he went on to be the chief arranger for the RCMP Band in Canada. And more recently he's retired and he's got a show band that he takes around to weddings and whatnot. I've seen him on the internet. And so he's still at it. He ended up going to... "Berkeley (School of Music)", yeah. He went to Berkeley and that's where he learned to be an arranger. He became the RCMP's Main Arranger. I ran into him once when I think it was in Ottawa and that band was playing, so I went over and saw the band and then came up afterwards and we had a chat about his career and how mine had fallen away from being a performer and being a music teacher. Yeah, so *Gary*, I don't know if he's still at it, but that was another interesting experience forming our own dance band, like an all-star high school dance band.

MMS: Those would've been early television days. Did you ever get into a television studio with those-

BG: Yes.

MMS: Huge cameras and stuff like that?

BG: Yep, I do remember that. I can't remember exactly which band it was. I don't think it was the Dixie band. I think it was maybe a dance band, might have been *Jim Davey's* Dance Band. And I remember being in the studio for three hours and it was hot and the lights were bright and we had to do take after, take after take. It's not exactly a fun experience. And then there was the *Tommy Banks* experience, which was a whole different experience. That was fantastic, that's 1972. Do you want me to jump to that year and tell you what went on there?

MMS: Sure.

BG: The year that I left London, I came out west to get married. I had met *Cindy* the year before, when I took a trip up north and ended up for three weeks out in Fort Rae (Behchokò). And I don't know, did I ever tell you this story of how we met? I could make it pretty short?

MMS: Please do.

BG: Yeah. So, there was this anthropologist in London who wanted to take 15 people to the north and he got a grant to spread out around the lake into about five different communities and spend a couple of weeks, each of us spend a couple of weeks in one community and then come back to London and write some findings about how the Aboriginal people are living and what our experiences were. So anyway, we came into Yellowknife on a beautiful day. It was like June the 19th, 1971. And they took us over to *Bobby Overvold's* place down on 54th street, up on the rocks and they had a picnic for us. And then they took us down to the float base and old, *Mr. Erasmus* ferried us across by groups of four and five to Joliffe Island, which became our first home in Yellowknife.

So, we camped out on Joliffe Island the first night, and we were all dazzled by the sun going down and coming back up a couple of hours later. And it was during that time that we all chose the community that we were going to spend two weeks in and I didn't know one from the other. So I said, "Well, I'll take whatever's left over." What I didn't know is that people were vying for the places that you could fly to. So, I ended up with the place that you had to go down the dusty old highway to which was Fort Rae (Behchokò).

And so the next day we had our chance to go uptown and walk around Yellowknife before being taken to our communities. And I was walking around town and I bumped into a lady called, *Phoebe Nahanni*. She was from (Fort) Simpson (*Éíídlıı Kúé*) and she was the liaison for the anthropologist to make his connection with the communities. She was an indigenous woman and she was chatting with another indigenous woman in the lobby of the Yellowknife Inn. So, I went over and was introduced to this very nice young lady. And then an hour later, I'm driving down the highway in a pickup truck and taken to Fort Rae (Behchokò) and dropped off at a trailer. There was a teacher leaving town who had left the trailer for the anthropologist's group. So, I went in with two other guys, there were three guys and we went into this trailer and I'll be damned if it wasn't *Cindy's* trailer.

MMS: Oh, wow.

BG: So, you talked about serendipity?

MMS: I was, yeah. I was just going to say, yeah. It all lines up.

BG: And so anyway, when she came back, these other two guys, their eyes started bugging and they started going after her big time. And I was a shy kid and I just stayed in the background and I had my classical guitar with me and I was trying to learn how to finger style and play some classical guitar stuff. So, after about two days, I went and spent some quiet time by Marion Lake and took my guitar and *Cindy* came and she sat down. So, that was the beginning of, something clicked there and she had to leave town within two days. She had volunteered her trailer, and so we were sleeping on the floor in the living room and one guy on the couch and the night before she left, she came in and she lay down beside me and gave me a kiss and said goodbye.

MMS: Wow, beautiful. Beautiful story.

BG: So, anyway, I didn't know how to deal with that, because I was only 23 or something and I was obviously enchanted with *Cindy* and yet here I am, I've got to go back to London and I'm due to teach at a music camp for three weeks in the end of July. And I've got my orchestra gig coming back and coming up again in the fall and all my bands I'd be returning to. And so while I was at this music camp, teaching kids, it was concert band music, I got a letter from *Cindy*. So there started a letter writing exchange that went on until Christmas. At which point I had invited her to come down to Ontario over her school break. She was completing her degree in education at U of A (University of Alberta). So, she came down at Christmas and we had two, well, 10 days together, we had only had three days together prior to that. And then after writing all those letters, we had 10 days and then she went back to university and I went back to my gigs and the orchestra. And at the end of May, when the orchestra played its last concert, I had my bags packed and I was going North.

I wasn't going to write letters forever. So, I came up to Yellowknife and I stayed with *Evelyn Nind* and her family. They put me up so that I could find some work and then maybe hitch hike out to Edzo (Behchokò) on the weekends because *Cindy* was teaching at the school there. And so I halfheartedly looked for work for a few days and didn't find anything. And then I hitch hiked down the highway on Thursday afternoon or something in my first week and a guy called *George McCallum* picked me up. He was from Edzo. And so he gave me a ride to the school. I told him where I wanted to go and he dropped me off at the school where *Cindy* was teaching. That was the "Chief Jimmy Bruneau School" in Edzo. And I went into the school office and I bumped into *Dan Schoberg*, who I'd met the year before, when I was staying in Fort Rae (Behchokò). And he was the principal and they were just planning on this new school, over in Edzo. Anyway, I went over to *Dan* and I said, "Remember me?" And I don't suppose he got any worked for a guy like me. He said, "Go see that guy over there." So, I went and saw *Big Bob Bates*, I don't know if you ever ran into *Bob*. And so I told *Bob* what I was about and how I had come to spend time with *Cindy* and hopefully get some work. He said, "When can you start?" I said, "When do you want me to start?" He said, "After school today."

"You are going to be the recreation director for the kids who stay in the residence. Because the guy who was doing that, I fired him yesterday." So anyway, I had about 20 kids all from probably grade three to grade eight, staying in the residence there under the care of house parents. The Tłıchǫ had their own house parents there. And then I would have to provide activities either indoors or out, depending on the weather. So that's what I did for the next month, I guess it was only about a month because school would've ended at the end of June. And then in the evenings I would go and spend time with *Cindy*. And it was during that time we decided to get married. And I said, "Look, I have to go back to Ontario to do the music camp again, I'd made a commitment to that. And then let's set a date to get married and I need to go up to Deline and visit your family and get your father's permission to marry." Because at that time I was a member of the Bahai Faith and one of the rules was you had to get the permission of all natural living parents in order to get married. So, I did, I returned in the middle of August and I flew to Norman Wells and *Cindy* and her dad had come down the Bear River and then down the Mackenzie to Norman Wells, they had taken two days to get there and stopped in Fort Norman overnight, because one of her dad's, well his dad's brother and his wife lived in Fort Norman. And anyway, they picked me up and then we took a boat ride back to Deline. And again, it was a two day trip in probably an 18 foot aluminum boat with about a 40 horse motor and stayed overnight in Fort Norman. So anyway, on to Deline and wow, what a time that was. I spent 10 days with *Joe Kenny*, traveling in his boat to set nets and collect the fish and boat trip down the little river to go up into the hills and cut logs for some houses that he was wanting to build. So, cutting and stripping logs and then carrying them all the way down to the river. He was in his 60s and here I am 24 year old, I was really struggling and he wasn't. Same thing with the fish when we were taking the fish out of the nets, my hands would last in the water for maybe 10 seconds before I'm breathing on them and putting them in my armpits. He never once did that, any of that. Guy had veins, he has large veins, no problem with cold water.

MMS: Wow, that's amazing. That's almost like a whole other education happening there. I mean that's another part of it too.

BG: Yeah, it was.

MMS: I mean, you had spent time in (Fort) Rae (Behchokǫ), the summer before and stuff, so maybe not so quite hands-on and all the rest of that stuff, but still to-

BG: Well, that was a good cultural experience because it was treaty days and they had people in from all the communities and they had this huge drum dance with a couple hundred people. And they started off by having a double circle of going around and shaking hands. I don't know if you've ever been in one of those.

MMS: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

BG: And so I shook everybody's hand, including *Joe Kenny*, that's where I met *Cindy's* Dad and then learning to be in a drum dance. The difference between drum dances then and now is back then everybody sang, it was so powerful. And you know, I was really moved by that. And now when I go to a drum dance, most of the people don't know the songs and they're not singing in

many of the communities. So anyway, that was a formative experience to hear the power of the drum dance and the singing that goes along with it.

MMS: And I'm also sort of thinking, I mean, as you're reflecting back to what you were talking about when you were a young lad and out taking your bow and arrow out into the bush and here you were like, you're stepping right into a novel of some kind that way. So yeah, amazing, amazing full circle there for sure.

BG: Yep.

MMS: So, from Deline and that experience, what happened next?

BG: Well, the big thing that happened was the day that I was leaving Deline. I got up the courage to ask *Joe Kenny* for permission to marry his daughter. And you know what he said? He said in his broken English, he said, "If you marry my daughter, you stay here." And I go, oh, there goes my music career. So, I said, "Okay."

MMS: Wow.

BG: I said, "Okay, *Joe*, I can do that." And so we went and got married in September and attended the U of A because it was decided that I would get my teacher's certificate, finish those courses that would enable me to be a teacher and she would finish her degree. And then we would try to get a job back up north, which we did. So anyway, during that year, 1972, '73, that's when I heard about *Tommy Banks* Band and I went and I checked to see if that's something that I could get into. Well, turns out they needed a second trombone player. And so I went down to the union and I went and saw, what's his name?

MMS: *Eddy Baynes*.

BG: *Eddy Baynes*.

MMS: Still there.

BG: I know. So I went and I talked to *Eddy* and I told him who I was and I said, "Look, I know you've got a residency requirement of six months or a year or something, but *Tommy Banks* really needs a trombone player and I really would like to play and I'm the man for the job. I've got the experience." So, he said, "Well, I'll tell you what, we'll waive the requirement because right now I don't think there are any trombone players that *Tommy* could hire, so you go and see *Tommy* and see if he'll hire you on." So, I did and I had to go see *Harry Pinchin*. So anyway, *Harry* was the contractor for *Tommy's* band and he said, "Look, in order for me to hear you out, to make sure you're up to snuff to play in the band. I want you to come down to the Cosmopolitan Band Rehearsal, Tuesday night or something, and I'll have a listen to you then. You can sit in with the band as we rehearse." It's all concert band music. So, I did, I went and I played famously and he said, "Hey man, you're good. Okay, you're on." So, I got the gig playing with *Tommy Banks* Band for the year and they would do one show a month in the... What's it called the Student Union Building?

MMS: Yep.

BG: At the theater there. So, I got the second trombone gig and *Big Miller* was their opening act. So anyway, the band would start to play before Tommy's guests would come on. So, we're going to warm up the audience and *Big Miller* would come out and he'd start singing. And so we'd play a couple of tunes and he'd sing. And then he would chatter between songs and laugh with the audience and get them all worked up. And then after he was done, we'd go on with the show and then *Tommy's* guests would come on and we would play and then another guest would come on.

MMS: Wow.

BG: Good singer, though. Good singer.

MMS: Entertainer, yeah.

BG: Yes.

MMS: Just a monster, I mean, he was legend. I followed you down to Edmonton 10 years after that and that's when I got a chance to play with him. And he came up here a couple of times to play the Commissioner's Ball gigs or something like that.

BG: Is that right? Wow.

MMS: And would bring some Edmonton musicians and cut the cost and all the rest of that stuff. And there's a Bass player, who could do the gig up here and stuff. Quick question, because just for me, one of the guys that I hold near, dear to my heart, was a guy named *Bobby Stroup*, who was a trombone player as well. I'm not sure if he was part of *Tommy's* band at that time.

BG: I don't think he was. And I certainly heard the name, but I've never met *Bob Stroup*.

MMS: Yeah. Now, he was a real gentleman. And I remember, I got to play with *Tommy* once and that was in a barn outside of Edmonton. And, I didn't know how to tie a tie, so. So, *Bobby* could see this happening, he was such a sweet guy and he just sort of came up here and he goes, "Okay, here Pat, it's like this." "So, here's the simplest one and there you go, there you go, you're tip top, you're ready to play now." Again, those guys were really just prince's, gentleman. And that for me, a huge part of it, I guess, was just that professional part of it, getting dressed up in the suit, and looking good, and playing the parts and all the rest of that. That was a real driving force with me, so that's really cool that there's that common, person that way in *Tommy Banks* and just some of those guys. Because again, like I say, 10 years later, those were the guys that I was bumping into as well. You were taking education courses there in that year that you were there and playing with *Tommy Banks* and all the rest of that stuff. Was there interaction within the musical faculty at the university?

BG: Yeah. I also played in the "Symphonic Wind Ensemble" with *Malcolm Forsyth*. *Malcolm Forsyth* was teaching at U of A. He was a composer, and a trombonist and lecturer. And so, I auditioned for that and I got in. And that's where I met *David Hoyt*, who you've probably met

over the years. He's come up here a few times with his French horn. So, there were mostly students in that wind ensemble. I don't remember there being any of the faculty members. Well, maybe I should let you jump in there and see if there's any gap you want to fill in.

MMS: You talked about your last year in college university, in the choir program, was there any of that happening at U of A that you were able to be a part of?

BG: I wasn't part of anything, I would imagine that *Leonard Ratzlaff* was doing his thing at that time with the "University Mixed Choir". And there's a guy called *Bob De Frece* who had a "Come all Ye" student choir and he kept that going for many years. Who knows, he might still be there. But no, I didn't get involved with the choir community. I was just in the education program, learning instruments and playing with the (*Tommy*) *Bank's* band and spending the rest of my time with *Cindy*.

MMS: Yeah. No, sounds like a wonderful way to spend a year in Edmonton.

BG: Yeah.

MMS: So, you ended up getting your degree.

BG: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

MMS: And when *Cindy's* Dad said you have to live here, did he mean specifically in Deline or...

BG: He meant in the North.

MMS: In the North. Okay.

BG: Yeah. And his reasoning was, and he explained this to *Cindy* and she explained it to me, was that he had seen too many of the girls marry white guys and go away and never come back. And he didn't want that to happen to him. Yeah, so I honored that. And so at the end of the Edmonton year, both of us got offered teaching positions at "Jimmy Bruno School". Me as a grade five and music teacher, and *Cindy* as a grade one teacher. She could speak T'licheo so that's why they hired her to teach there. And so, that was probably the toughest transition in my life to have to go from my life as a musician to, as a life as a music teacher in an indigenous community, where half the kids could hardly speak English. So, that was a bit of a shift. And what I remember about that was, it was really hard on me at first. And it didn't take me long, probably maybe three months where I kind of looked myself in the mirror and said, "Look, stop making yourself miserable and feeling sorry for yourself, just try to enjoy it, and work hard and do your best." And it turned me right around, then I started to enjoy my teaching and communicate with the kids a lot better. And I was teaching music, and I was teaching ukulele, recorder, and guitar and singing. So, I had a lot of fun with that. And I still get these 50 something kids on the street in Yellowknife saying, "Hey, I remember you, *Mr. Gilday*, you taught me how to play the guitar," that kind of stuff.

So, there's a lot of kids that learned guitar in my classes there. And so, that went on for six years. We stayed in Edzo. Her Dad died in 1978. And, I did not then feel obligated to stay in the north if I wanted to try something in the South. So I asked *Cindy* how'd she feel about moving down Edmonton way to see if I could get in the "Edmonton Symphony", and maybe get some other gigs. So, we did. We moved to Morinville, where I got a job in Bon Accord, which is a 15 minute drive out of Morinville, teaching kindergarten to grade eight, music and math, well math was just the junior high ages. So, that was my first experience teaching band.

MMS: Yeah. You were in (Fort) Rae for what years, you said six years from...

BG: OK, yeah, that was from '73 to '79.

MMS: Okay.

BG: And then, we moved to Morinville in '79 and stayed only two years. The reason we left there was not because I was unhappy teaching there, but *Cindy* was really unhappy living there. No lakes, no fish, no caribou. She just was not happy. And by then, we had two kids, we had *Leela* and *Jay* was born, and actually *Carla* was born my last year there. So, we had three kids and she's at home. And just like you have a proverbial fish out of water, she just was not happy.

MMS: Understandable. Yeah, for sure.

BG: Hot and dry Alberta without any lakes to go to.

MMS: Yeah, for sure. So, did you seek a job out back north or did one sort of...

BG: Oh, that's a very interesting, this is another serendipitous thing that happened. We talked about maybe trying to get a job down in Ontario, where my folks lived so we could spend a little time with them and let them see the grandchildren. And I got offered a job in Lucan, which is the home of the *Black Donnellys*. And, Lucan is about a 20 minute drive from where my parents were living out in the country there. So, I thought, "That'd be perfect." And then after I got the job offer and I accepted it, the guy phoned me back the next day, the superintendent phoned me back and said, "By the way, you've got your Ontario teacher certificate, right?" And I said, "Nope, I got Alberta's." And then he said, "Oh okay, well, problem, you're going to have to come down here in the summer and enroll at the teacher's college here and get your certification from Ontario, because I can't offer you the job without Ontario certification."

And then what I said to him was, "Well, you know what?" "I've started a summer music program at the "University of Calgary" to learn the Kodály method of education." And it's what I really want to do, because I realized when I was teaching band in Morinville, that I needed some way of teaching, well, not just band, but classroom music too, I felt like I was always grasping at straws and kind of inventing things. I didn't have a clear direction. And I had a friend teaching in Edmonton that I'd gone to Western with and she was a Kodály instructor. So, I visited her a few times and her husband was my composition professor, *Alfred Fisher*. And so, she talked to me about this Kodály program and she said, "Bill, you should really, really consider that." And she said, "*Lois Choksy* will be coming up to Edmonton once a month to give an evening class for

teachers who might be interested to check it out." So, I did that and I got turned onto the idea of learning the Kodály pedagogy. And so, I told *John Barron*, the superintendent. I said, "John, I can't accept your offer because I need to go to Calgary, instead of coming to your teacher's college, I need to go to Calgary and get this Kodály thing underway." "And, I've got a job offer in Yellowknife to teach at a school there." So, I turned him down. And so, one interesting thing about his turning me down because of the teacher's certificate, was I was telling the NWT, *Jim Walker* certification guy, this story years later. And he said, "Let me check that out." So, he checked it out and he came back and he said, "He was wrong, you did not have to have the Ontario teacher certificate. That must have been some bee in his bonnet and he wanted you to do that." But he said, "By the regulations, you could have gone there with just Alberta."

MMS: Wow.

BG: So anyway, that's how come we ended up coming to Yellowknife and me taking the job at "Mildred Hall". Now meanwhile, back in Calgary, a couple of interesting things started to happen there. One of the courses I took was The History of Canadian Folk Music. And once I got into that stuff, I really enjoyed it. And when I came back to Yellowknife, I got together with *Jack Wedel* and *Dave Speakman*, a couple of choir guys from the United Church. And I asked them if they'd be interested in learning to sing some traditional Canadian folk music, if I do the arrangements. "Well, yeah, sure." So, I started arranging songs, which was easy for me to do and we would rehearse over my place. Remember the old brown house beside Northern United Place on Franklin Avenue that got torn down a few years ago?

MMS: Yes I do.

BG: Yeah, that was where we lived. And, *Jack* lived in Nordic Arms and *Dave* lived down on Con Road. Anyway, they'd come over to my place once a week and stay for a couple hours. And, we started learning all these folk songs just for fun. And pretty soon, a guitarist came along by the name of *Rodney Davies*, and he joined in with singing and playing guitar. I was playing guitar too, not very well, but I played the guitar in the early Gumboot years. And so, "The Gumboots" were born out of that experience with folk music at "University of Calgary". And another thing that I really got turned onto was children's choirs, that's a big part of the Kodály music education. So, when I came to "Mildred Hall", right away, I started choirs and I had a grade two, three choir and a grade four, five, six choir every year there. And each choir usually had between 60 and 80 kids in it.

MMS: Wow.

BG: And I put on a big concert at Christmas and spring, so that was a big thing for my musical development, was learning how to direct choirs. And I loved it, I really enjoyed that. And then, the Kodály pedagogy really served me well, it's what guided me through all of my teaching and it made so much sense. It was a music literacy program. You teach kids to sing, that's the basis of it. You make it fun by playing lots of musical games. They can hear what the notes are after they've been trained, and then they can write them down, because they've been trained to do the rhythm and the melody. And then, they can site read them. If you can throw a new song at kids

who can do this and they can site read it, never having seen that song before. So, that's what learning to read music is all about.

MMS: Brilliant. You were there for a long time. I mean, you're-

BG: Yeah. 1981 to 98 and I took a year off. That was a significant thing to do too. Let's see, in about 1986, I wrote a musical for the kids at "Mildred Hall", called "Trying Out". And, it was a full blown kids musical that we put on at NACC (Northern Arts and Cultural Centre). And, *Leela (Gilday)* was the big lead in that show. And then, I knew about the "Toronto Children's Chorus", just through having been in music education. And I checked to see if it would be possible for *Leela* to audition for the "Toronto Children's Chorus". And then if she were accepted, I would apply for a leave of absence. I had gone on the 4 over 5 program, which is where you get paid 80% of your salary for four years, and then you can take a fifth year off without being penalized. So, *Leela* went down with *Cindy* on a business trip and set up an audition with the director of "The Toronto Children's Chorus", a lady called *Jean Ashworth Bartle*. And so, *Leela* was successful with her audition, and we accepted and we arranged to move to Ontario for a year.

So, got us a nice place out in Etobicoke and spent the year there. And so, that was a big education for me. I don't know if you remember "The Yellowknife Youth Choir", but it was born out of my experience with "The Toronto Children's Chorus". She allowed me to go to the rehearsals and observe, and then she had a mandatory summer music camp for new choir members, or for all incoming choir members in August to prepare them to do some vocal training and to prepare the repertoire because it was a high level choir.

They were singing four-part harmony, challenging music all the time. And, they were expected to really know their stuff. So, I went to that training camp and I went to her rehearsals. And when I came back to Yellowknife, I decided, "You know what?" "I want a choir like that." "I know that it's a smaller population and it's probably not going to be as good, but I'm going to give it a try." So, I started "The Yellowknife Youth Choir" in about 1988 with about 20 kids. And I started it in October and kids like *Jennifer Steven*, and *Carrie Stillwell*, and *Don Stillwell*, *Leela*. I don't know, a bunch of kids who'd been in my Mildred Hall choirs. And we learned some Christmas repertoire, and then carried on with spring. And then I held auditions in the fall and had my first full year with "The Yellowknife Youth Choir" and carried that on for 10 years. So, that was another big part of my life in Yellowknife, was 10 years of two rehearsals a week from September to June, every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon from 4:00 till 5:30.

And we learned tons of fantastic repertoire and the kids just loved it. They really did like... I couldn't believe that they would come out on a Sunday afternoon when their families were going to the cottage, and they would come to choir rehearsal because they just loved it. Some of the former members do contact me once in a while and say, "Wow, I'll never forget that choir and the music we learned, it was a fantastic experience." Oh yeah, so that whole "Mildred Hall" period was a busy time, it was "The Gumboots", it was the "Yellowknife Youth Choir" and my junior high school band program. I actually started that band program after a trip to Calgary. I took my choir to the "Kiwani's Music Festival" in Calgary. And we had raised enough money, that I had a nest egg of about \$12,000 left over. And so, I went to the principal and I said, "It would be really nice if we could have a band program at Mildred Hall, in addition to my

classroom music program." And he said, "Yeah, let's go for it." So, I was able to buy a set of musical instruments to outfit a whole class. And, I started the program at 7:30 in the morning, three days a week. They couldn't put it in the school day for me at the beginning. So, I toughed it out in the bitter cold and got the band program up and running in that first year. And then the second year, they put it right in the school day. And so, for the last several years at Mildred Hall, I was able to have a junior high band program.

MMS: So through all of your children's choirs and junior high school music programs, and taking a year off to give *Leela* the opportunity to be with the "Toronto Children's Chorus", was "The Gumboots"... Were you able to keep that going or dropping in on that? Or did you have to leave it behind through all of those really, I guess busy years?

BG: No, I kept it going. The only time I dropped it was the year I moved to Toronto and the guys kept it going. By then, there was *Bill Steven* on guitar and singing, *John Bunge*, singing. I can't remember if *Dan Lee* had joined the group by then. I don't think so. So anyway, when I came back from Toronto, the guys had kept it going and it was a basic folk repertoire, influenced a little bit more by *Bill Stephen*, who was interested in the folk music of the '60s. So, they were playing a bunch of songs and they didn't really have arrangements of those. So they just kind of, well, they would wing it and they'd harmonize. So, when I came back, started rehearsals again and kind of solidified the group with membership with *Chris Philpotts*, *Dan Lee*, *Bob MacQuarrie*, *John Bunge*, myself, basically six guys. And, I started arranging all the music in mostly four-part harmony, occasionally three parts. And we would rehearse on Saturday mornings, and while not all the guys were that strong at reading music, they were pretty quick at picking it up by ear, if they couldn't fully read the music, like *Bob MacQuarrie* couldn't really read music, but he was good at picking it up by ear.

Anyway, we worked really hard at honing these four-part arrangements and getting into *Norm's Studio* (*Norman Glowach*, "Spiritwalker Studio") and recording them. And then, something happened in 1990 that really changed the direction of "The Gumboots". There was a nightly news program and the broadcaster was the famous *Barbara Frum* with CBC. And one night I was listening to her broadcast and she had a guy on the radio from Coppermine (Kugluktuk), named *Billy Adamache*. And this guy told his story of how he had gone out spring hunting with his snowmobile, got caught on the wrong side of the river when the ice broke up and spent two weeks trying to find a way to cross the river. His snowmobile had broken down, ran out of gas or something. And then long story short, he ends up making it back to town in two weeks, where he found that they had given him up for dead, they'd had a memorial service. His wife had sold his traps. And so, I don't know if you ever heard the song called "The Resurrection of Billy Adamache".

MMS: Oh, yes.

BG: But I got on the phone with *Bob* and I told him about this story and he said, "All right, well, I'll see what I can do." Because I knew that he was really strong with poetry, and literature and stuff. So anyway, the very next day, he presents to me the lyrics for "The Resurrection of Billy Adamache". I worked on the music for a few days, took it to a "Gumboot" rehearsal, we learned it, we recorded it, got it to CBC and they put it on the radio.

MMS: Question, was that the first original song, were you...?

BG: It was.

MMS: It was, hey. So, that was...

BG: It was the first. And that's when I thought, "Okay, there must be lots of material out there that we can start writing our own material," so we did. And so, it turns out that *Chris Philpotts* was a strong songwriter, and he contributed a number of songs to the repertoire, along with, usually with *Bob's* lyrics. *Bob* did 95% of the lyric writing for "The Gumboots". *Bill Stephen* tried his hand at a few songs with *Bob's* lyrics. *Rich Hintz* came along a little later and *Ray Bethke*. *Ray* really took up the songwriting in the last album, he wrote half the songs on the last album that "The Gumboots" did, that "Road's Less Traveled".

MMS: And obviously, as you say, there's sort of a wealth of epic Canadiana stories that could be drawn through history and all the rest of that stuff. Northern themed...

BG: Yeah. *Bob* was a history teacher, so he really knew his stuff and he could put together a great set of lyrics about *Matonabee*, and *John Hornby* and *Crowfoot* and all these sailors that came through the Northwest passage. And, he really had an amazing way of pulling all that material together and putting it in a three, four minute song.

MMS: You guys really sort of hit your stride, I remember through those years. How many albums did you guys record?

BG: Four.

MMS: Four albums. Wow.

BG: Yeah. "Spirit Of the North", "Northern Tracks", "Search for A Passage", it was called, and then "Roads Less Traveled". And then after that was over, the fire was going out for me a little bit. I kind of, like *Bob* was long gone from the band, so I didn't really have a lyric writer anymore. And I got *Steve*, it was *Steve Lacey* and *Ray Bethke* were in the group at the time. And I called them for coffee over at the coffee shop, and I put it to them, I said, "I feel that it's a good time to call it quits, we've had a good run of many years." And the numbers of people showing up at our annual concert was slipping. And I thought, "You know what?" "Let's just stop while we're ahead here and say we had a good run." So, we quit about, I don't know, six, seven years ago.

MMS: 2015.

BG: Yeah.

MMS: 2015

BG: I would say it was about then, yeah.

MMS: 2015. And so, your run would've lasted, gosh, that's... If it was 1990 that you first recorded "The Resurrection of Billy Adamache", I mean, that's 10, that's 25 years, that's the hell of a run.

BG: Yeah. The group lasted about 25 years.

MMS: Wow. that's an incredible run. You owe that band, that legacy, like nothing really, if you had that much of a run. For me, it's five or six years, if you have that much of a run, you're doing amazing. By 25, wow, that's like "The Rolling Stones". You guys were "The Rolling Stones" of Northern Canada.

BG: Yeah. Well, remember I got in with "Drunken Forest" there and that lasted all of two years, I think. The guys started leaving town, so the band pretty well gave it up. That was a fun gig.

MMS: Yeah. Some of them are shorter lived and all the rest of that stuff, but again, it's the chemistry that happens with that group and you nail that focus of what the group's about. And it just gels, and you move with it and six years can go by in no time. So, you guys really hit it there, for sure. And another legacy, a huge chapter of time in music in Northern Canada, that way, much less the younger musicians that you influenced as an educator in the schools, either directly or indirectly. So I mean, it's one heck of a legacy you've got here, Bill, it's really amazing to hear all of this because I think one of the first times I met you, I was playing with *Sandy Wilson* and *Colin Bergen* in "The Hoist Room". And you-

BG: Yeah, that's in my notes here. I was going to mention that.

MMS: You just stopped in and pulled out your horn. And it was just like, "Oh my God, this is such a treat."

BG: I did want to add that, I was always mindful of not pushing my kids to be musicians or feel that they had to join my choir, or band or that sort of thing. I was careful of that. And I think in the end, it worked out because they loved music and they just, they loved to do gigs. And I gave them opportunities, which they took and I taught them in a way, which was gentle. Although, I have to laugh because I saw *Jay (Gilday)* in a concert at NACC. It was on TV this week where he said, "Yeah, we used to have this family band, and my dad would trot us out every once in a while to sing," like he resented it. But it's funny, I don't remember him resenting it at all. I mean, they seemed happy enough to sing, we'd sing Christmas carols in three part harmony.

MMS: Yeah. Geez, and look where it got him, eh?

BG: Yeah.

BG: Anyway, I appreciate the fact that you get out there and you play with *Leela* once in a while, and that was a beautiful video you guys did up at Pilot's Monument though last year. I was just really taken with that, that's very nice.

MMS: Your daughter is at the top of her game. She's just burning and man, can't wait to see what she comes up with next. It's an honor to work with her and to interpret her songs and her music that way. She's a complete professional and treats me the same. something I always look forward to playing with her.

BG: Oh, that's awesome.

MMS: This has been just wonderful to hear your musical life story, Bill and not to say that I was counting the minutes or anything like that, but I mean, easily, the first 45 minutes, almost to an hour was spent in Ontario and your experience there that you brought up to the North here as well. And these stories are just really epic. And I really appreciate you taking the time today, all the time that you've given me here, Bill, for sure and-

BG: No problem.

MMS: ... and sharing your story with us. Thank you so much.

BG: Oh, you're welcome.