

PAT BURKE

NWT Archives, Northern Musicians Project, accession number N-2005-014, [item number 0025](#)

October 1, 2014

Fort Smith, NT

MMS - So I will just get going here. Maybe I will take you back even before that time. Tell us when and where you were born and sort of what you remember about sort of growing up and the music that was around you and then maybe the first time that you sort of took that step and either got a guitar in your hand or stepped up to a microphone. We could start there.

PB - Well I was born in 1951 in the old hospital here. I've been surrounded with music throughout my life. Very early it was country music. But my dad who fancied himself a singer used to sing some show tunes, right? So he would be singing something from "Porgy and Bess" or things like that, right. An old Irish half breed from Fort Res (Resolution) right? So I never even thought about singing. But I used to sing. I remember we were in our clinic one day so my mom was seeing the doctor and there was a *Johnny Horton* song on the radio and I started singing along to this *Johnny Horton* song and I mean there was nobody else but me in this waiting room and there was a lady at a desk behind me I guess so when my mom came out she said that little boy's got a good voice she said you should put him on this kiddy talent show that CFRN had back then. This was in Edmonton, eh? So anyway my Mom sort of sloughed it off, my son the singer, yeah. I never really got into it but I always sang, I love singing. So take you to the first time I stepped up to a microphone it was an unfortunate set of circumstances that brought me to this. I was in Akaitcho Hall at the time I was about 15, 15 ½, 16 and *Tom (Hudson)* was in a band, *Tom Hudson* was in a band and his grandfather had passed away so he came back to (Fort) Smith from the funeral and I think the band at the time was the start of the "Centennaires" which turned into "Universal Music Machine" (UM²) and so on and so on and so on.

MMS - Who was in the band then?

PB - There was a fellow by the name of (*Lawrence*) *Thrasher* from Inuvik, *David Evalik* from Kugluktuk or Coppermine back then. *Eddie Bazie* and I think it was *Archie Plamondon* played the keyboards. So anyway, like I said I was 15 or 16 somewhere in there and I had never sang in public before. The guys around Akaitcho (Hall) heard me sing because I always sang. I sang along with the records and everything at the time, right? And then before that, we didn't have the cassette tapes or the radios or whatever and I remember having a little rocket radio, if you remember those. Basically what it was this little thing shaped like a rocket that ran on some kind of diode where you plugged into or you hooked onto something wire for an antenna and you had earphones and you dialed it and you could pick up the station. But it was shaped like a little rocket. It was maybe four or 5 inches long. And I used to listen to "Top of the Pops" from Britain and "The Hit Parade"

and those were like a half hour every week. And of course back then I couldn't afford records, I couldn't afford a record player so what the hell was the point of buying records.

MMS - Those shows were coming through. Were they coming through on CBC or were you still...?

PB - They were coming through on CBC. You have to remember that Fort Smith had its own radio station with CBC at one point. My dad used to do the Chipewyan language program on the CBC program. CHFS I think it was and then everything moved to Yellowknife of course. We used to have our own programs here. But it was all country music and it is funny because I didn't become a country singer. I wasn't into country right? I sang it but I wasn't into it. So I ended up like I said in Akaitcho Hall at this very young age where *Tom (Hudson)* had gone home for the weekend for his Grandfather's funeral and the band asked me to come up and sing a song. Well I didn't know what the hell to sing. So I got up and I said, "how about Barbara Ann." Remember the old song by the Beach boys? So they started playing and there I am and I went Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba and I just kept going right? With no words, 'cause I screwed up. So they said okay let's started over again and I was really shy. I was really, really shy. So we started it over again and I did the song and I did a couple more and that sort of, it struck me. That's it, that's what I want to do. I want to be a rock 'n roll singer. So right after that a couple of guys grabbed me and said, "well, let's start a band." I said "nah, I'm here to go to school, I want to do other things." But it ended up that I thought, what the hell you know? So *Tony Buggins* was at Akaitcho (Hall) at the time and *Brian Kovatch* and a few other guys so I was talking to *Tony* and I says, "you play guitar, we should play some music." "I don't mind" he said. So *Brian Kovatch* was there and we talked to him and he played Bass, who else can we get and he said what about *Billy Lobb*. He's a drummer. *Billy (William Lobb)* is now the Dean of dentistry at "Willamette University". So here is *Billy (Lobb)* and *Brian (Kovatch)* and *Tony (Buggins)* and I... and then we talked to *Marc Whitford* and he was just learning how to play the keyboards from *Archie Plamondon* who was the keyboard player for the "Centenaires" which became "UM2" etc. So we all started and we called ourselves "The Mystic Monks." One of the girls in Akaitcho was a bit of a seamstress so she made these hooded robes for us. We played our first dance and we walked in carrying our drummer, *Billy Lobb* like a funeral procession type thing and we carried him on stage and plopped him down and then we got on and in our robes we played our first song. And then we got into our regular, we just took them off we just took the robes off and we ran our regular clothes and we played our first dance. And it was, it was a blast. So after that we started playing all over the place. And it is funny because *Tom (Hudson)* and I we would skip right? He started "The Centenaires" and they played together for a while and then I started, well I got into this other band with these other guys and I went back the following year and there was *Tom* with all my band members. So every time that friggin' *Tom* was stealing my band members. You know it got to the point where we were getting older and it was music and we all played. Like *Tom* and I sang in a band together at the same time, a couple of times and then we went on to different tracks. *Tom* kept doing it, he did really good for himself. I didn't get back into it until later. Like I said, I always sang and I would get up in the bars and I went on a 10 year drunk right? Some of it I remember, some of it I choose not to remember and other things I don't remember. But I remember I would get up with the bands as I, they played in the bars. You know everybody would be, "you're good, you're good, you're good."

And I would be like, “yeah right, yeah right, yeah right.” Finally I got into some bands when I was down south. So we did the circuit for a couple of years. And that was a real thrill.

MMS - So the circuit, you were down south, when and where?

PB - Well through northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC right? So we would travel, I think I was in about two different bands, two or three different bands and we would travel around doing the circuit. And one of the bands got an opportunity to do I think it was like 60 Canadian Armed Forces bases around the world and of course I was an alcoholic at the time, I’m still an alcoholic I guess but I was on the booze at the time and I ended up blowing that because of the alcohol. So I didn’t really get back into it until I came home. I was 29 when I came home.

MMS - Can we hold it there?

PB - Sure.

MMS – Going back to the years you were in Akaitcho with the “Mystic Monks”, what years with those have been?

PB - We are looking at about ‘66 to ‘69, 70.

MMS - Wow. Okay.’ 66 to’ 69. So you are out of Akaitcho Hall and Sir John Franklin in ‘69 or ‘70 something like that. And you were down south playing on the circuit...

PB - When I was like 23, 24. I was playing the circuit.

MMS - Okay so through ‘75 and stuff like that.

PB - Yes ‘76. Yes ‘77.

MMS - Okay. What songs were you singing? Just off the top of your head, if you can remember what you were singing in the “Mystic Monks” when you first started singing, what kind of songs?

PB - Oh geez we were doing the early stuff *Johnny Rivers* and *Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels*, “Devil with a Blue Dress”, you know those types of things. I even did the “Israelites”. You know, by *Desmond Dekker*? The words were all screwed up of course but it sounded good, right?

MMS - *Desmond Dekker* was kicking around at that time?

PB – ‘67 he did the” Israelites”.

MMS - Wow so, (*Roy*) *Orbison* were you doing any of that stuff?

PB - I did “Pretty Woman.” That was a big one for (*Roy*) *Orbison* and that is the one I did. But I didn’t do any of the other stuff. I remember I think we did some “Willie and the Walkers” which is a band from Edmonton. And I know *Willie* is still around because...

MMS - I play with him. Yeah that is awesome.

PB - He comes up to Yellowknife every now and then. But we used to do, we did one of their songs “Diamonds and Gold”. And that was around ‘68 I guess. And then we started getting into

stuff like “Steppenwolf”. I wasn’t big on the Canadian bands because not till the Juno thing right? Until they started having their Canadian content? We never really looked at our own at the time. And then all of a sudden you’ve got “Steppenwolf” who came from Toronto, from “The Sparrow” and then you got “The Guess Who” from Winnipeg and we did some of their songs. Like, we did “These Eyes”, “Run Away”, you know and we did a lot of the late ‘50s, early ‘60s into the late ‘60s. Those of the songs I’m still doing because 40 years later, 50 years later I’m still singing the same songs I did way back when right? Because I know them.

MMS - Those songs, even the stuff that *Willie (MacCalder)* does, I mean he goes even further back ‘40s, ‘50s and all the rest of that stuff. Those songs are really timeless you know?

PB - No kidding. And we will skip ahead a little bit later but I did Expo right? And (*Rick Paultaruk*) and I went to this little bar. I mean I did my own thing at Expo. He was doing the “NWT Pavilion” but we did this little bar where we just blew them away. Because here I am this big Indian with long hair, singing (*George Gershwin*) right? “Summertime,” I’m singing “Summertime” and these people were just like what the hell is this? This guy’s not supposed to know this stuff. But it was a blast. After going through all the stuff through the ‘60s and having a blast and not really studying like I was supposed to be studying, I went on this drunk and did my thing right. It’s called the lost 10 years of Pat Burke’s life right? So during this time as I said I sang wherever, whenever a band came into a bar I would get up with that band and sing a couple of songs. So we are looking at stuff like “Daniel” by *Elton John* you know in the mid-‘70s, a little bit of disco, a little bit of stuff like this and that’s when I joined these other bands and we started doing the B circuit. We were in *Ida Banks* stable. *Ida Banks* had a talent agency and we were part of part of the groupings in her talent agency.

MMS - You remember the names of some of those bands that you were touring with on the circuit?

PB – Well, I was with a group called “The Grazz Band”. And then I sang with the group “Miss Shelley Rey’s” band. So then we were doing stuff like *Bob Seger* and all these different things so it was a different time, different music and we still did the old songs. Because like I said those are the ones I knew. I think I sang maybe one or two country songs. “Silver Wings” by *Merle Haggard* and I think I even did a *Hank Williams* song. But that was my extent of country music. Of course you’re hearing all these other bands and you really want to tie in with some of the music that they’re doing but because you have a different genre, you stay with the same one that you’re in right? I know a lot of the guys, I met them afterwards, I met one of the guys that was with “The Grazz Band”, I ended up seeing him playing for the show band at one of the really fancy hotels in Calgary. And then this couple of brothers that I played with the “Shelley Rey Band” they ended up in Yellowknife. Just for, they were with the band and they came up and did a gig. But no, it was really good but I made a lot of connections during that time too.

MMS - Probably learned a lot about your voice doing the six nighters on the circuit.

PB - Learned a lot about my voice. Learned a lot about how alcohol and singing doesn’t go together. Because the guy who led “The Grazz Band” had a tape recorder and when I thought I was really good, he played back the tape and said this is what you sounded like last night. And it wasn’t me. Right? It was some drunk that was up there.

MMS - That's a hard one.

PB - So you sort of you get, you learn these things from doing what you do. So you had to stay a little bit more sober or just don't give a shit and you just keep on doing what you're doing. And you end up going down the road. But it was a great experience because we didn't make much money and then disco was coming in and all of this other, like getting a DJ was cheaper than hiring a band, right? So instead of paying somebody \$2000 or \$3000 a week, you are paying somebody \$200 for the whole week to come and play at your bar. I think that was sort of when music started to die, live music started to die. And of course once the prices of alcohol went up, that made it even worse. So now you rarely get a band in some of the bars.

MMS - We are talking still here mid-70s mid to late 70s?

PB - Mid-70s. Late 70s mid to late 70s. When the music started the live music started going and it was a sad time because I mean, a lot of people went to the bar just listen to the music. You know and the drinking was sort of secondary. It wasn't a big thing. Now you go to the bar to drink, right because what else is there? Watch big screen TV watch football games and get drunk or whatever. Of course I quit back then. I quit in '79, I quit drinking. So it was about that time I guess, I met up with some people here. *Pat Buckna* was a fellow that lived here and he had a bit of a studio. We did some songs and did some stories with a fellow you know very well, old *Jim Green*. So you put the music to some of Jim's poetry and they did some recordings as well. But I talked to a lot of other people. I met a lot of other people as well. *Pat* talked me into going to what is it, "Folk on the Rocks" in 1980 I believe. I think it was the second one. That's when I started getting back into music again because I had been away from it for a couple of years. I got married, we had kids and blah, blah, blah and I had to go to work but I started getting back into it and again "Folk on the Rocks" gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of different people. A lot of players who became, either they were famous or became famous and are still going today. Plus it would give you a chance to meet up with a lot of people from the north that I knew. And what was really funny, I did a festival actually this year, in the fall, in August. And there was a lady there who used to live in Yellowknife but she played in Iqaluit when she was young. And one of the guys she played with, who played guitar, was a guy that I played guitar with in Akaitcho Hall when he was there for a year. So it's almost like a big family type thing with musicians who come out of the north right? Like, I look at *Tom Hudson*. Tom and I grew up together, we were little kids together. So before the music started with both of us we used to play hockey. We used to, you know, do all kinds of, the hunt. Whatever.

MMS - Yeah just the kids.

PB - We did all these things together. We were kids right. And then we got into the music stuff of course we all went different ways. I found that I wasn't too bad so I was invited a couple of times to "Festival by the Sea" which I didn't go to because I don't like flying. I played a couple of times at "Folk on the Rocks" and 26, 27 years ago a few of us got together and we started the "South Slave Friendship Festival" and I think that was more of a point to put a little poke into Yellowknife and say okay we can do this really cheap, our music is just as good as what you can bring in and most of them are local. So we sat down one day, there was myself, *George Kurszewski* and *Dennis*

Bevington. We thought, well we should have something going here musically. Why don't we have a homecoming? And we thought, well okay, let's take a look at what we have and what we had. So we looked at going back to the late '50s, early '60s and onward, right, so it ended up about '64, '65 was the last person that we could think of or the person at that end of the spectrum that we could think of. And we thought well, let's have a homecoming and bring some of these people back and let's put on a show. So we got together and we, of course applied for the funding, sent out the feelers but within half an hour we thought we were looking at people who either started in Fort Smith and their music with their music or were born here and played or came when they were kids and started playing, when they were kids. And we had a lot, we used to have a lot of bands. Just in Fort Smith alone. More than Yellowknife even. And we sat down for half an hour and came up with about 80 names of different people who played music in Fort Smith back in the early days. And we got 40 people to come in for this, the homecoming. And that was the first "South Slave Friendship Festival" but it was called "The Fort Smith Homecoming" and rather than have it over a number of days, we had a dance on the Saturday night and then on Sunday we had a concert, a four hour concert at the high school and it went over really well. We didn't make any money of course that's not what we were in it for. The talent pool was something else. It was a professional show that was put on, the musicians, you couldn't ask for better. They were all professional. Even though they weren't professional, they were professional. So that's when we decided, well you know, maybe we should do something in the summertime. We have a beautiful park. We have a stage in the park. We're on town Council.

MMS – We're running the town now.

PB - Let's do something. And that's how "The South Slave Friendship Festival" started. But during that time, like I said, I played a couple of times at "Folk on the Rocks" and I was really disillusioned with it because it started off as "The Society for Encouragement of Northern Talent" (SENT) which was a really good premise and it worked. It worked really well for the first couple of years that SENT was involved right? Because it did give us an opportunity to see what they play, what they play like, how they put on a show in the south. And it gave us that opportunity to say, "hey, you know we can do this too." And after that it got to the point where the big bands started coming in. *Doug and the Slugs* you know, all these different heavy name groups in southern Canada. Who stayed at the Explorer Hotel and got a nice chunk of money for coming up to "Folk on the Rocks" while we the Northerners got \$100 and a billet, you know and I thought, there is something wrong here. This is our show, this is... and that's the way it goes. I think to this day the still the same although they are more Northerners who now have Junos and...

MMS - Yeah, a few more.

PB - You know, and are nominated than ever before right? Because back in our time who do you get discovered by? You know? Nobody.

MMS - Well that was 30+ years ago so...

PB - It's like where do I sell myself?

MMS - Yeah. Well the whole even the Canadian music industry at that time was okay so that's right around the time the Canadian content thing was going on and it was just like you say we were starting to reluctantly embrace our own.

PB - Exactly.

MMS - But I mean 1980 it was just... Yeah.

PB - It was just sort of the tail end of it and they did bring in the big bands, we did see a lot of the stuff, I got to hang out with *The Holmes Brothers* you know. I got to hang out with *Buffy (St. Marie)* I got to hang out with *Alanis Obomsawin* I got to hang out with *Stan Rogers, Heather Bishop*, you know some of the big names in folk music right? And they were really good and really good people. You know just great people. But as I said I think, I thought we have just as good talent up here as they do anywhere else. And I think it's time to open it up. So when we started the "South Slave Friendship Festival" our premise was, everybody is a star and nobody is a star. We don't want any divas coming in. Or devos sorry.

MMS - Yeah or devos. I know that term a lot.

PB - So it was like leave your friggin' ego over there. We don't need it. Come in and play, let's have fun. And that's what it was. We started out as something for the musicians which ended up as having this whole peripheral thing that was really good for the crowd because the crowd enjoyed all the music. And a lot of young people started at the "South Slave Friendship Festival". *Shane Daniels* for example, was 12 years old when he first came and played at the South Slave Friendship Festival.

Bailey Mackie. She was like 12 years old, it was the end of the show and I think I closed every show except for two that I wasn't at. But it was my time to shine, it was my little 45 minutes or whatever, half hour. And *Duane* said can *Bailey* sing a song? So I said yeah. You know whatever. I'll give her the time to sing a song. And she got up with her little almost toy piano and she started doing "Imagine". It was one of those magic moments. Where all of a sudden here is this 12-year-old kid, this young kid, playing on her little piano, singing "Imagine" and all of a sudden there was 15 people, 20 people on stage that are backing her up with backup singers and everything else so it was one of those magic moments that just happened. And since then there have been a lot of magic moments at this little festival of ours. You know? For me the biggest one was when my granddaughter got on stage and was singing. And that was something. To me that was something. You know, it was extremely special moments. There were a lot of flubs sometimes. That's one of the things, when I get up on stage, it's not the money thing. It's not anything else. It's to go up and have fun. I have maybe 7, 8 players on stage with me at the same time because that's what I like. Let's go on as a group and let's just do this thing and let's get her done. Let's have a blast. And unfortunately some people miss that part because it's at the end of the thing and they missed the best part because we have the musicians up there that's going to give you that wall of sound, that's going to fill in everything that should be filled in and it's not a three-piece band, it's not a four piece band, it's a whole group of people at the end of a really nice weekend. And for the most part a lot of the audience is gone a lot of the other musicians have already flown back to Yellowknife or flown home or whatever because of the planes and everything else. We still have

a blast. I still love to play music. I'm 63 years old now and I started when I was 15. And I'm still going. And I figure if *Mick Jagger* and the boys can do it, so can I. Why should they have all the fun? But the funny thing I guess I have to go back a bit again was during this time, I was never a country singer. But I did get to represent the Northwest Territories at the '93 "Bud Country Talent Search" and I thought what the hell am I doing here? Right? And there I met some really nice people. And one of them was a young fellow from Calgary who is now a major star, a country star out of Nashville. *Paul Brandt*. He was something like a 19-year-old kid that was at this talent search and you know what he didn't win, I didn't win. Some kid from Winnipeg won or Manitoba one and I never heard of him again. But there were three of them, three of them that were at that talent search. That became fairly big stars. And *Paul Brandt* was one of them.

Like I said. You are doing this music thing well for the last 30 years in that time I met a lot of good people and a lot of really great musicians. I did a show with *Susan Aglukark*, who's a really fine singer and her band that was comprised of *Terry Tufts*, *Jon Park Wheeler* and some of these main session musicians out of southern Ontario. And these guys play on a lot of albums, they do their own thing as well. It just so happens that, it was a funny little story. We were figuring out the songs that we were going to do with the show so I brought the CD that I had with my songs on it and *Jon Park Wheeler* was listening to a and he says man those riffs sound familiar he says. And *Terry Tufts* says, "well they should" he said "that's you playing guitar." So anyway he figured out how to play his own stuff anyway.

MMS - How did that CD come about?

PB - Well basically that was one of the in the last part of the *Les McLaughlin's* thing with the "CBC True North Concert" series and all this other stuff right and *McLaughlin* did, he promoted a lot of CDs for a lot of young artists coming up and loved the older artists as well. I think *Tom (Hudson)* did one of the CDs as well. And I didn't get a chance to have my own CD but that's where I met some of these heavy-duty hitters. Like... *Randall Prescott* who is a Canadian producer of the year for like, since God you know? And his wife actually does the backup singing on my CD on one of my songs and a guy by the name of *Don Reed* as a fiddle player. *Don Reed* has played for people like *Dolly Parton* and *Kenny Rogers* and there he is on the CD that I'm singing on, right? It's something else. So what happened was I got a call and they said we would like you to do your songs on a CD for CBC. So on a wintry day I drove up to Yellowknife and we got together with these guys but the night before a couple of friends of mine were jamming at their house so I went over and *Dave and Sherry (Dave and Sherry Sveinsson)* to *Dave and Sherry's* place and we were doing some music there. And *Norbert (Poitras)* was there and he recorded some of it. So the next night of course he plays one of the songs that we did. "When a Man Loves a Woman" right? And I love that song because it is something that I have done way back when. I haven't done it in the long time but a way back when, *Percy Sledge*. And I just blew it out, I just couldn't hold that one back. And *Norbert (Poitras)* played it the next night on CBC so I guess he went out to pick up (*Randall Prescott*) and some of the other guys, the techs, they brought them back into Yellowknife and I was singing and *Prescott* says, "can you put a little more oomph into it." And I says, "I'm doing as much oomph as I can here." And he says, "I don't know" he says, "man, on our way in from the airport" he says, "we heard you doing that "When a Man Loves a

Woman” and he said “that’s the kind of oomph I want in this song.” So I said, “OK, that’s what you get.” So he was the one who produced that CD. And then of course there was the shows that they did the “True North Concert” series, I did two of them. And the last, well both of them here I guess. So I met guys like *Joe Loutchan* and real heavy-duty northerners. The last “Friendship Festival” we had, one of our friends from back in the ‘60s came up to visit from Fort McMurray and he stayed in our camper. And it was *Ted Wesley*. *Ted Wesley* was one of the first guys out of the North who was nominated for a Juno. And I asked him to play and he played a few songs. So it was really good to have him here for that. Like I said nobody is a star and he wasn’t a star he was my friend who got up to sing for me and that was basically it. So those type of things happened. We had the guy that used to do one of the country and western shows. He came into (Fort) Smith one year. Damned if I know his name. But anyway he was here and he was a country singer too and he got up at the festival too, just did a couple of songs. You know and it was no, he didn’t play the big star he was just another one of the musicians that got up, that was backed by the local boys and did his tunes. So it was great. We had a really good run. I’ll put it that way.

MMS - How many years, how many festivals?

PB - 24.

MMS - 24. Okay. Going all the way to 2012 so you would’ve started in ‘88?

PB - In ‘89 I think we started. I actually got the picture from ‘90. We had guys like *Danny Bodvarson*, *Tom Hudson* myself, some really young people. Really, really young that are now musicians. And it’s...

MMS - It’s that passing the torch to the next generation.

PB - Exactly. And like I said that was the big thing. It’s not a money thing, it’s a love thing, right? And you pass it on to the next generation. Some people I think in the end thought that our generation was a bit too old and we were getting a little bit, you know tainted around the gills but...

MMS - Quickly here while we are close to the time that you recorded the CD maybe I asked you this already what year would that have been, that you recorded that.

PB - It was about ‘93, ‘92 somewhere in there.

MMS - I wanted to go back when you were talking about when you are talking about the “(South Slave Friendship Festival” and bringing, putting together that list of names of people who had, were born here, played music here going back to the time we are talking about going back through the 1960s and stuff like that. Can you just sort of ream off some of the names of the bands and the people that were around at that time? I mean, this is sort of your awakening happening in the mid-60s there at Akaitcho Hall and then sort of knowing the musical community here.

PB - Well I’m not big on the names of the bands but I remember *Robert Beaulieu* was in a band.

MMS - What did *Robert* play?

PB - He played the drums I think. *Jamie* I can't remember his last name. He went on to get his master's degree in music and now he does a trio or something in London England. *Mike Jones*. He played in the band when he was quite young. And I still remember I was teasing him because I actually got to sing with rock 'n roll history right? *George Tomsco* came up and *George Tomsco* is still the lead guitarist for "The Fireballs" who became famous as *Jimmy Gilmore and the Fireballs* with the song "Sugar Shack" right? So anyway *Mike (Jones)* had put out the set list of the band that he was with in '63 or '64 and one of them was a song by "The Fireballs". I sent him a PM and I said "Mike guess who I played with? A couple of years ago." And I said, "I sang with *George Tomsco*." And I said, "that's Canadian history man or that's rock 'n roll history, not Canadian." He played in Boca Raton, Louisiana, that's where he went to a little studio the *(Norman) Petty* studio down there and that's where they recorded and he was up here telling us stories about down there which, a whole other story right? He was telling us a story about this one time when they were recording and they were a bunch of kids so course they bought, they worked their asses off to buy their equipment and he said he came back in after lunch and here is this geeky looking bugger playing his guitar he said and hammering on it and he said nobody... I worked my ass off to get that guitar and equipment and everything, he says here's this guy with these glasses you know, looked like some geek he says, hammering away on my guitar and I was going to go and beat the shit out of him. He says until the guy told me he said, *(Norman) Petty* told me, he says, "you know that is?" He said, "I don't give a shit who that is." He says, "that's *Buddy Holly*." I didn't think too much of not letting him play my guitar after that he said. I didn't mind it too much after that he said. But those are the types of things and like *Marcella Plamondon*, what a voice. God there were just so many, some from "Breynat Hall". They had some bands there. "Grandin College". *Antoine Mountain* who used to be *Antoine Barnaby* was in a band back then. Of course there was the *Daniels* crew. And like whenever we had the festival we would always say, we would do a thing with all those who would passed right. *Herbie Lafferty* played in bands when he was younger he started as a Bass guitarist and then became a really fine guitarist. But the *Daniels* boys, *Bimbo* and his brother, their parents are the ones who put out a lot of who helped a lot of young people get into the music thing.

MMS - Really.

PB - Yeah.

MMS - Okay.

PB - Because they had their equipment they bought the equipment.

MMS - Yeah.

PB - And I remember there was *Bimbo* and his brother and his cousin *Randy (Daniels)* and they were at the "Blind Onion", right? And they started in like about '66, '67 too.

MMS - They were playing at the "Blind Onion".

PB - They were "The Blind Onion".

MMS - Okay... But that was...

PB - That was the name of the band.

MMS - Okay.

PB - But throughout those early years, they had guys like *Danny Bodvarson* who played with them and myself and a few others. We used to go over to Chip (Fort Chipewyan) to play for dances and you played for dances here and it was a real blast because we had a lot of fun right and again it wasn't much money but it was...

MMS - A lot of fun...

PB - Just for fun eh. And of course you always think girls right?

MMS - Mmmmm, of course...

PB - When you're in a band right?

MMS - That age... What else you thinkin' about?

PB - And then you go home alone.

MMS - These things happen too...

PB - Yeah.

MMS - There's just that time and as much as Yellowknife had its Akaitcho Hall and there was you know there was a lot of bands and a lot of visiting bands coming through what people say down here the number of bands that were happening again *John Landry* sort of talks about it. *Alan (Daniels)* as well about the battle of the bands that they used to have here.

PB - We had a battle of the bands here and it almost became a battle of the bands here. We were going to do this big thing and I think we had about four bands and we were all playing the battle of the bands and it ended up that we were there well after the dance and we were still going to the wee hours and of course I went out somewhere and passed out right. And I come back in and here's all this blood all over the place and the bands got into a fight.

MMS - It was a real battle figuratively and literally.

PB - But, and some of the places we played, right? Like we came back here in '68 or whatever it must've been about '68 or '69 and we came down from Yellowknife to play for a dance or a couple dances. We played one at the high school and then we played for an adult dance the next night. The place we played was the old church it has been de-consecrated and turned into a dance hall. And there we are playing in the old church that I went, was an altar boy at in the very early years. You know and it's now re-consecrated and planted where it should be but where it was originally it was, it was a thing...

MMS - Okay. It was a...

PB - And of course we can't talk, we can't end a conversation without mentioning "Moccasin Square Gardens"...

MMS - Yes.

PB - So many bands have gone through “Moccasin Square Gardens” and that was the place to play. The local community hall which sponsored so many dances like every Friday and Saturday there was a dance in Fort Smith up until maybe 15 years ago. Every Friday and Saturday and it was all live music. So of course we did a lot of playing back then, back when we were younger. The Legion, the Legion Hall we played the Legion Hall. In Yellowknife the same thing. We were the, we were pretty much the house band at the Legion for about a year and a half, two years and we played there every weekend.

MMS - So were still talking about late ‘60s then?

PB - We had a little following... Right.

MMS - Yeah.

PB - So it was great but going back to the ‘60s again let’s, I’m gonna bounce all over here.

MMS - Yeah you just carry on...

PB - Back in the ‘60s, back in Yellowknife, there were like three major bands right? There was a band I was in, there was the band *Tom Hudson* was in and the band *John Tees* and *Gary (Tees)* and what the hell’s the name... Young (*Alec*) *Glowach* there, *Alec* I think his name was... And *Bertrand*, *Wayne*.

MMS - *Wayne (Bertrand)* yeah.

PB - They were “Stained Glass Illusion” so we had “Stained Glass Illusion” you had “UM², (Universal Music Machine)” you had “The Mystic Monks” and we were the three sort of “the” bands in town and then all the sudden comes in *Tony Gilchrist* and there was some other guys coming in from Yellowknife, into Yellowknife at the time and all of a sudden the music scene in Yellowknife starts growing. So there’s more and more bands as we go along. And it was great, I mean because then there was a dance every night, every bar had a band in it and you’d pick your place you want to go and listen to music.

MMS - The work was spread around so everyone was working?

PB - Yeah. And everybody enjoyed it and I mean if you weren’t playing that night you go listen to somebody else. You know or you go to a dance or at Con or Giant or the Elks or the Legion, wherever. I still remember there was such a rivalry between Con and Giant right? And I still remember this was sort of after all of these bands that I was just mentioning had long departed and went their separate ways sort of thing. They just weren’t playing anymore... *Tom (Hudson)*... I wasn’t anyway. But *Tom (Hudson)* and *John (Tees)* had two different bands right, they got into the “Chromatics” and *John (Tees)* and *Gary (Tees)* had another band and John and Gary asked me to sing with them. So I went and played I think one dance with them and we played at the Giant, was it Giant?... Yeah we played at the Giant mine. We went to play there and of course the guys from Con were on one side, the guys from Giant and their girlfriends were on the other. One of the guys from Con decides to ask one of the guys from Giant’s girlfriends to dance and he was

wearing a woollen sweater with a collar, a turtleneck. And we were playing and all of a sudden this guy comes flying back from that side, he's got the collar, he's got the cuffs and the waistband but no shirt. The guy ripped his friggin' sweater off. He comes back and it was funny and the next thing you know there was a big clash right in the middle of the floor. So here we are sitting there drinking our beer behind our amps and we said yeah okay, boom stand in hand if they come up and touch the equipment that's it. We're wading in, right? It never happened but it was just wild and of course cops came and the whole schmear and of course the dance was over right? It was something else.

MMS - Yeah quite the rivalry happened between those guys.

PB - No kidding. But some of the stories, some of the things that happened are unreal. I remember playing at a dance and there was a fight between this guy and his woman and I'm the one that got the brunt of it. She threw a beer bottle at him and I was singing some *Bee Gees* song, right? I had my eyes closed and I opened my eyes and there was this bottle right there and bang, right in the eye. Shiner, eh? What do you do?

MMS - You want to hurt somebody, really badly.

PB - That's it, that's the end of the dance. You know. Unfortunately. And I am not going to get into some of the other stuff that we've seen at these dances, under the tables...

MMS - Yeah, for sure. Again going back I am just going to hit this, as much as there was music happening in Yellowknife and Yellowknife was a lot bigger than (Fort) Smith was growing sort of exponentially in that time because at one point in time it was, okay is the capital Fort Smith or Yellowknife? And they chose Yellowknife, right? So then Yellowknife sort of exploded, right? So but still here in (Fort) Smith I think per capita as far as musicians and especially singers, you guys totally leave us in the dust.

PB - They are homegrown.

MMS - Yeah. So why is that, like...?

PB - Maybe it was because we didn't have very much else to do. Of course you have to remember back in those days it wasn't like today where everybody is on, sitting on an iPhone or an iPod or watching TV or we didn't have TV. We didn't get TV until '67 and it was canned right? Four hours a night. And again we got some of those music shows coming in from down south. I remember watching *The Poppy Family* on TV. Or *The Guess Who*, *Burton Cummings* in his ... and I was thinking holy shit. I look at it now and it's just like, funny and I think, we used to dress like that? You know, okay. Is that a paisley shirt I'm wearing? But I think it comes down to what we have and what we don't have today, right? What we don't have today is we don't have the time to actually sit down and play music or listen to music because we are so busy with other things. Or people listen to music but is it the right music? They are walking, you know you've got the kids all walking around with the earplugs and I can't go up and say to my kids what the hell are you listening to? I don't know what they are listening to. And you know but we put some time and effort into it and I remember there is a place just down the street here called "The Right Spot" and they used to have dances. And there was the fiddle music you know and the good old time Métis

fiddle music and my Mom and Dad danced, they loved to dance. And they would go to these dances and of course they would drag me along to the dances right? Or they would go to somebody's house and have a dance. We would get 30 or 40 people in some of these small houses and they would all be dancing. You know? So that's the type of thing we grow up with. There was always music around and I think that's where we sort of picked it up from. You look at a place like *Res (Fort Resolution)* which turned out a lot of musicians as well, probably again even more than Yellowknife did on a per capita basis right? It was the same sort of situation. We didn't have anything else to do. We had all this other stuff going on so...

MMS - Yeah, that as well when you talk about your parents taking you to the dance. And it's like, even for me, my kids are grown now so it's like I mean, I probably took my kids to a few different gigs and stuff like that but probably not, nowhere near as often and again there was television and there was all kinds of other stuff that would sort of take that entertainment role but it seems in talking with different people that you are talking about, *Allan Daniel's* parents and helping out lots of players in different bands and stuff like that, it just seemed like there was, your father singing show tunes and carrying that with him and exposing you and probably a few others in town...

PB - My whole, my whole family on my Dad's side, my *Uncle Gabe* thought he was a singer too and he sang for everybody right? And he would shame the crap out of us, right? I would be walking down the street I'm 10 years old or 11 years old you know and all of a sudden you would hear, "Patty wrote a letter to his Irish Molly..." and the whole damn thing. Jesus *Uncle Gabe* you know, you know what you are doing to me here?

MMS - He knew exactly what he was doing.

PB - But it just and it was all love. He wouldn't have done it if he didn't take care about me. But you sort of think back and oh my God, there I was and when you are 13 and you were sitting in a restaurant surrounded by young girls who either think you were cute or they're your friends, right? All of a sudden *Uncle Gabe* comes in half cut and he starts singing to you and your like Jesus. What you do? And my Dad loved his Irish songs. My great-grandfather was Irish, right from Ireland right. And the rest of the crew was all Métis and Indian, right, Dene. But he had that little Irish thing going. And I mean I have it too. You give me some Irish pipe music and throw "River Dance" on and I'm kinda a little crazy, eh?

MMS - It does that to you.

PB - But I think at an early age too, you know people knock CBC now with the crap that they put out and everything else but I look at it and had it not been for CBC, I might not have liked things like "The Mikado" or listening to different composers like *Brahms* or whatever. And I think it sort of gave us that well-rounded music but also the drums, right? From the tea dances we used to have because we used to have tea dances here. And of course there is always that Métis fiddle, man. That's the stream of life for the people around here. Of course we have to remember Fort Smith is the largest Métis contingency in the territory. So it's always been music there's always been music in my life and even when I was a kid with the radio, with my little rocket radio and later on when we had actual radios.

MMS - Yeah just the variety in the scope of what you were just talking about I mean, you know, having your Dad singing show tunes and your uncle singing Irish tunes and the Métis fiddle and of course the exploding rock 'n roll scene and then you got CBC playing classical music so the scope of music that you're listening to was just sort of like that and of course you are hungry for anything. Music.

PB - Yeah. It gives you a perspective on the music as well. I look at some of the things from the '60s from the '50s some of the styles, some of the stylings of music and because there is so much music in the world today it's hard not to find anything that hasn't been imitated. And unfortunately because it's a world of litigation a lot of people are suing somebody for putting out music. You'd think, hey man, this should be flattery, you know. But look at what's his name, *Huey Lewis and the News* and one of their songs and the "Ghostbusters" theme you know, hey you used the first two bars of my song. I'm suing you. And they get 15 million dollars or whatever. It takes away from what music should be. Right? I mean if you were going to do that, somebody's ghost can come back from 10,000 years and say hey you are playing the same drum song that I played 10,000 years ago, you know. Or why have you screwed up my song with the fiddle? You are a half breed? You know? This is a "Stradivarius" that's a fiddle. But yet you are trying to play the same tune. Only in a different manner. Right? But if you look at it, like I mean, like I said, it gives you that perspective on music and you see how the changes are made and how some of what's old is new again. Right? And I remember watching this show it was from the early, early '50s, at the start of rock 'n roll and somebody, this kid was playing the piano and he was playing one of the classical songs and the guy sat down beside him and using the same music turned it into a boogie-woogie song. It was exactly the same song, the same chords, the same pattern, just a lot faster and a little bit...

MMS - Yea, swinging and knocking it down.

PB - So you know it's like you take this old music that's hundreds of years old and boom all of a sudden you have got a rock 'n roll record.

MMS - Yeah or even just taking that two or three note phrase there is your hook like you say the first bar, the first two bars and you can hang all kinds of stuff off that. What's the saying, "good writers borrow, great writers steal". I can't remember who said it. Like you said there is just 12 notes in the scale and there are so many rhythms and grooves and that's sort of it and then it's like.... There's always a change in the context of it and it sort of moving it forward. If you just keep playing at the same way it's going to be like a religion or it's going to be like something else, it's just going to end up sort of dying, you know?

PB - And I think as I grow older I look at some of the guys I wouldn't listen to or even give a chance to. A lot of people put down *Elvis*. What a great singer. I mean like I listen to some of the stuff now, of course the satellite radio has his own station there are songs that they play on there, *Elvis'* songs that I didn't know that he recorded. Thousands, you know? You look at *Freddie Mercury*, you think oh, he's a nut bar you know? And then you listen to him and wow, you know? Just unreal. I mean today there are so many musical geniuses it is just not funny. Guys like I mentioned before *Daniel Lanois*. Man here's this little French guy from Québec you know? People

laugh at the Polish prince there. What the heck is his name? *Bobby Vinton*? The guy can play like 30 different musical instruments. You know? And like I said I can't even play guitar, the five chords, right? You know and here's this guy that can play 30? It's just like, oh yeah.

MMS - Geniuses at that time when that was, you know the *James Browns* or *Elvis* or the *Roy Orbisons* or any one of those guys that was the thing right? Boy, you worked your ass off to get as close to that as you possibly could. That's a whole element that is, I wouldn't say lost but it doesn't seem to count as much anymore. I think just because there is so much more music being recorded and put out it is insane how many albums are released and I think after a certain point in time its overload and people like you and I go back to that music.

PB - We go back to the early days.

MMS - The early days but it's the music that we grow up on and that seems to be paramount. It doesn't really matter what generation you are talking about.

PB - The soundtrack of our lives as they say.

MMS - That's exactly it. And when you were 16 or 19 and that hit song came out it takes you right back there. And that's powerful stuff. That's really powerful stuff.

PB - I remember rehearsing. I remember "To Love Somebody". We played like 30 times in one morning. And just to learn the words and so we could learn how to play it properly. 30 times and this is in Akaitcho Hall and unfortunately it was under the girl's dorm so of course the next day we got it. right? We were down there at like 9 o'clock in the morning on a Sunday. It was like "Jesus you guys couldn't shut up. The same damn song over and over again". So we got it from 300 girls, right? And we were just like yeah, okay. You'll like it when you are dancing with your boyfriend! But...

MMS - We'll see you Saturday night at the dance. You'll be out there on the dance floor.

PB - Yeah. You will. You watch.

MMS - No, that's... Probably known that over the years but I think with every year that goes by I appreciate it that much more you know. You and I or if we do "When a Man Loves a Woman" or whatever song from that era that you know and you can see it happening right in front of you. You can see that transition in that person and you give them that sort of moment of, whether it's joy or just release or recollection or nostalgia take your pick any one of those things.

PB - I have never professed to be a good singer, other people say I am not bad. But I remember playing at "The Gold Range" of course everybody played "The Gold Range" right? I remember playing at "The Gold Range" and this one young girl looking at me like I was some kind of teen Jesus, right? I was doing "Crying" by *Roy Orbison* and that's a song that is going to blow your socks off if you do it right and I did it right. Because I had practised it a lot right? And she was looking at me like, man he has to be the greatest in the world and then I got offstage and I was just another old man movin' around "The Gold Range" right?

MMS - You are a real person after that but yeah when you are up there doing it...

MMS - There was a hot stud on the stage a few minutes ago, what happened? All of a sudden there's this old man here.

MMS - No, it's a beautiful thing when that happens for sure. And you still get out and sing?

PB - As much as I can.

MMS - As much as you can.

PB - The thing is that, one of the things we never mentioned is I guess I've gone a little bit more from that '60s rock to more blues. I'm doing a lot more blues. And it's something that is always been there, the blues right? Because the blues have been around, it's the father of rock 'n roll.

MMS - Yeah, blues and country, had a baby and they called it Rock and Roll.

PB - And so I started doing a little bit more blues. Like *Stevie Ray Vaughn*, *Muddy Waters* and things like that. The thing is I look at it I look at some of it too. You go back to the Mississippi Delta blues where it started, right? And then you get into the Chicago electric blues and that's where most of our heroes came from like *Muddy Waters* you know and people like that but I look at the *Robert Johnson's* and some of the stuff that they did, the early, early stuff. On YouTube, of course, I watch a lot of a lot of different music and there is some, with that type of thing I mean I'm glad that that we have that opportunity to have things like YouTube and you can go back. I mean you can watch *Robert Johnson* play on YouTube. That was 1939. You know you're thinking holy, '29 or whatever. And there is one that I love and that's the type of music that I like doing. And you wouldn't believe the song, it's "Hound Dog" by *Big Mama Thornton*. There's *Janis Joplin* but before that there was *Big Mama Thornton*. And it just, it's just one of those kick ass songs right? That just really gets to you, you just want to get up and boogie and I was thinking about, I think about music all the time right and I think about some of these songs that I would love to do that are kick ass. And the thing is as a songwriter I do, I write some songs too right? And as a songwriter I find that because of my lack of knowledge of the guitar, my songs tend to be more folksy or country because they're slow. But yet when somebody else plays them or picks it up and says OK this is the chord progression that you're doing, here's what it sounds like a little faster, a little bit of a funk to it and it's a totally different song. It's my song but it's a totally different song. My music, totally different song. You know and sometimes it sounds better and sometimes, just leave it the way it is. You know.

MMS - I call that different lifetimes. A song, you write the song you think that's the song but then you play it in different, with different people with different variations and it has lives, it has these different lives. It's quite incredible.

PB - We take a song like I did "The Métis Song" for example. Putting it into a reggae, reggae beat. It's like, whoa.

MMS - Oh yeah, have fun with it.

PB - Reggae half breed.

MMS - Beautiful. It sounds like you've lived through some wonderful times. Sang some incredible music, made a lot of people happy.

PB - Had fun.

MMS - And had a lot of fun doing it along the way.

PB - Yeah.

MMS - That's awesome. Well that's wonderful thanks so much Pat, I really appreciate this.

PB - Thanks a lot for listening.