

Sandy Wilson

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MMS - Okay. I'll just start it off here. Interview with Sandy Wilson, here in Brockville, Ontario, September 20...

SW - Sixth.

MMS - Sixth. Thank you. 2018. And thanks very much for joining me, *Sandy*. If I could start off and ask you a question, what were your early years as a young musician like?

SW - I was singing when I was real small and I had a guitar when I was four or five years old. Probably a little kid guitar, cowboy on it and all that and my mother played a little bit of piano. They bought the piano when I was eight. I'd thought about taking piano lessons but I was afraid of the nuns. And I don't know why but in those days, the nuns taught piano and it was like... Well, certainly somebody else could have taught piano but I just saw the nuns and they always looked intimidating. So I didn't want to take piano lessons. But I had the guitar and my mother had a steel string Spanish guitar that she brought home from Gram's when I was about eight, about the same time they got the piano. So they gave me that guitar and I played in grade two. That teacher did me a big favor. She encouraged anybody in the class who could play an instrument to bring it to school and get up and play in front of the class.

MMS - Do you remember her?

SW - This was in a grade two class, so it was very low key.

MMS - Do you remember her name?

SW - *Mrs. McIntosh*. Anyway, she was really good and she encouraged me to get up. So at that age, you're fearless. So I wasn't worrying about being on stage or anything because I wasn't on a stage. I was just in the front of class on a chair. So I had learned how to play "Jamaica Farewell" and the "Banana Boat Song" and all that stuff because *Harry Belafonte* was on the radio. So I had learned how to pick out the melodies on this guitar, even though the guitar wasn't in tune properly. And then when I was 12, I decided I'd better get serious and learn how to tune the guitar. So I got a 35 cent chord book from "O'Hara's Music" downtown. And I tuned the guitar and then I started learning the chords. And I can remember it took me almost a year to learn that F chord because it was so hard. And then I bought an electric guitar off a guy and an amplifier and then as it turned out, it was "O'Hara's Music" amplifier and he hadn't finished paying for it. So they repossessed it, the amp that is. But I had the guitar, 20 bucks for that and whatever it was

for the amp, I lost that money. And so then I had this guitar and then the old man went down and bought me a "Paul" amplifier for 60 bucks or whatever. It was a Tremolo one, a nice little amp and so I was using my electric guitar through that and I was 13.

My good buddy was a very good dancer and a good drummer and so he played bongos and my friend *Harry Ferguson* had a trumpet and I can remember we rehearsed in the basement and it was loud as hell. And I said to him, "Gee, *Harry*. Have you got another instrument you can play?" And his sister *Debbie* played sax so the next rehearsal he brought the sax. So then the sax worked a lot better. So then *Eugene Beauchamp*. He's gone now, he passed away a few years ago. He played what they called Hawaiian guitar with the slide. And so we put that band together and no bass or nothing. Just a couple of guitars and whatever and so then we started playing tea dances. So we played a tea dance at this school and a tea dance at this school. And I can remember playing at the Catholic school, St. Mary's and we played a tea dance there. And we were playing "Johnny B. Goode," stuff like that because that was coming out then. That was the early days when *Chuck Berry* was doing his thing.

And *Bob Farmer*, who has been a friend ever since, he was a magician and a great magician. He opened up doing rope tricks and card tricks. And we were all 13 years old and *Bob* was incredible. And I inspired him apparently because he went out and bought a horn after that and a guitar. And he ended up playing instruments all the way through University and this guy is a "Rhodes" Scholar. He went to "Rhodes" and he did school of economics, "The London School Economics" or whatever. He had ended up going to University of Western and so, just before I went to Yellowknife, actually, I spent a summer, about six weeks of that summer up there and he had some great records, including the guy that did "Take Five."

MMS - *Dave Brubeck*.

SW - Yeah. He had *Dave Brubeck*. "Blues Roots" it was called, from when *Brubeck* was back in Chicago when he was younger. And it was all blues and I'd never heard *Brubeck* play blues before. It was tremendous. So that was quite an inspiration to me but nevertheless, back to my story. (*Bob*) *Farmer* heard me play at that party, at that dance, that tea dance and I remember meeting a girl there that I was taken with for a few years after that. There was another guy that I met there named *Serge Clapa* and he was Belgian and they were from Montreal but his father was Polish and his mother was Belgian. And so he was a friend for life and he just passed away a few years ago too. He lived in Sylvan Lake actually, a little tiny lake off to the side there, west of Red Deer. So whenever I would go back to Yellowknife, I always looked up *Serge* and stop and see *Serge*. He was a friend from that same event. So that was sort of a seminal thing there. I played that dance and I made it with three or four really good lifelong friends after that.

But we were playing *Chuck Berry* and let me see. What did I used to listen to? I had a little record player. We didn't have a stereo or nothing here, they didn't care about that. And so I had one of those little record players. It's still in the basement. Actually, I left hitchhiking one summer and when I'd come in the fall and went downstairs and opened up the little record player it was still going around. So it had been going around for four or five months while I was gone. And it could've burned the house up but it never did. But I still remember *Jimmy Gilmore & The Fireballs*, and the songs were like "Bulldog" and (sings)... and *Duane Eddy* had whatever that

one of his, one that was a big hit. The name escapes me now but they were simple melodies that you played on the bottom strings of the guitar and they were pretty easy to learn. And I had a pretty good ear, so I learned all that stuff and that's how I developed my technique.

And then "The Ventures" were out. This is when "The Ventures" were still playing "Fender" instruments. They didn't go to... "Mosrite" must have given them a big sponsorship and they all went to "Mosrite"s but in the days when they were playing "Fender"s, *Bob Bogle* was playing a "Fender Jazzmaster." And the other guy, *Don (Wilson)* something or other, was playing a "Stratocaster" Rhythm. And *Nokie Edwards* was playing bass, probably a "Fender" Bass. And I don't remember who the drummer was but they were great. "Walk Don't Run," "Sleepwalk," all that stuff was happening. And so when I went to buy an instrument, a good instrument later, I bought a second instrument. My father had bought me that amp and then I traded that guitar in and got one with two pickups and a vibrato bar which was twice as difficult to play because it was high action and terrible. The first one was a "Silvertone" or something, one pickup. Sounded like a million bucks. Just like a little Tele ("Fender" Telecaster) almost. So I got the better instrument but it was harder to play but it looked better, you know? Lots of chrome and razzle dazzle.

And it had few things on it called the T-Birds. So we called ourselves "The T-Birds" and we were learning all "The Venture" material. And so we'd play "Play Land Park." We'd go in there and play for, I don't know, \$20 for the band. We'd get \$5 each or something. It was gas and the place would be packed. There'd be all these kids there. And this was an amusement park down the highway. And getting back to "The Ventures," I do remember that my friend *Bruce Sherman* had a (Fender) "Telecaster" and then he had a (Fender) "Stratocaster" and then he had something else. And he allowed me to play this because he liked my playing because he was all thumbs, he wasn't really a player. And he let me play these instruments, so I got to play some quality instruments before I bought the (Fender) "Jazzmaster." And this other friend of mine had a (Fender) "Jaguar," which was \$535 or something and my "Jazzmaster" was \$495. And the "Strat" would have been \$375 and I thought, "Well, the "Jazzmaster"s got the nice sound, and the "Jaguar" had too many switches and it didn't have a great sound. It was a surf guitar. All those surf guys were playing "Jaguars."

So I bought the "Jazzmaster" for \$495 when I was 16 in grade 12. First year of grade 12. And I can remember I traded in my old guitar, the one that was hard to play and I think the guy probably gave me \$125 for that. So I got pretty much what I paid for it, plus I had to pay, I don't know, how about \$20 a month? So I paid \$20 a month, so we'd drive to Prescott and we'd go in and see *Tony* and I'd give him the \$20 and then later when we needed mics we took our old mics in and traded them in and we'd get some good mics. We actually took advantage of the poor bugger but that's the way you are when you're a kid. And I still remember taking the guitar in with my father, Dad drove me down and I said to *Tony*, "Gee, the guitar doesn't sound right. There's something wrong with the intonation here." "Have you changed the strings?" He said. "No." "You've got to change the strings." So then after that all the stuff that I learned, I learned it on that "Fender." So then we were playing for high school dances all over the place within 40 or 50 miles. We played the Rowing Club dances down here, we played their Saturday dances in the summer, we played their dances.

We were playing “Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs” and we were playing “The Beatles” and “Dave Clark Five” and all that stuff we were learning and we were playing it there at those dances. And so when we played a Saturday dance we would go down Saturday afternoon, set up and run through the material. Which reminds me. When I was not much older than that, I can remember going to a function down at the Memorial Center and it was a summertime thing. And they had a band down there and it was *Grant Mackie* and those guys, who I later met. They were seniors, they were a couple of years ahead of me in school. And I was sitting behind the bandstand looking down on the back of the band. And they had flood lights, red lights and blue lights and whatever, couple of hundred people dancing on the cement floor. And I remember remarking to myself, "Boy, those people are having fun. These guys are having fun playing. I'd like to do this." So that led me to want to do the thing with the band. That was when I was formative, say, 11 or 12. And so, geez, that was it. I was playing. When I was in grade 10, I was 14 and we were playing all those tea dances. When I was 16 we were playing “Queens University” and all the high school proms and everything.

MMS - How did you get around?

SW - Well, the keyboard player, who was an accomplished organ player, he'd taken piano lessons. He had grade 10 piano or whatever and he could play all the stuff. Played *Mozart* and *Bach* and everything. And he was also a redhead like me. And he was a senior and I was say, in grade 10 and he would have been in grade 12. So his father was CEO of “Bell Telephone” down here, so they had money. And we needed a vehicle to get around. *Jack Shepherd*, who was a local bait guy here who had a truck and he used to get bait crawfish and minnows and sell it for bait and he had a truck. And so I remember going over there and his son *John*, they'd be taking the tanks off the truck and cleaning the truck and then we were getting the truck because *Terry* had his driver's license. And *Roger Chambers* was the bass player and he was about four years older than we were, so he was *Uncle Roger*. He was the older guy. He got all the gigs, especially the ones in Kingston because he was in class with those guys that were now in Kingston going into applied chemistry and whatever and so they needed an animal band for their dances. Animal band being the guys that were playing top 40 and that was us.

So then we had to get up there. So *Mr. Blair*, *Terry's* father, the keyboard player's father, he had made an arrangement with “Butchfield” Motors for us to get, I think it was about a '58 or '59 Dodge station wagon. And we didn't just get the station wagon. It was painted and it had “Count Fives” on the side doors and on the tailgate, written up in Old English. Beautiful. Yellow on a red, fire engine red car. So we had a trailer. *Roger* got this trailer somewhere. It was a camper trailer. So the thing opened up. Now we weren't using it for a tent. We were using it for gear. So *Roger* had *Sid Atkinson* down here who had a music store and he took over from “O'hara's Music” where I'd bought my first instrument and he built us tone cabinets. I had a “Wharfedale” head. I got a “Wharfedale.” It was, I can't remember now the name but he had “Wharfedale” speakers, they were like Rolls-Royce speakers. In fact, I had them in Yellowknife, that cabinet that I had that I lost up there. I left it in “The Gold Range” and then somebody beat me for it because I'm stupid enough to leave it in a cloakroom for two weeks. Anyway, he built a big set of cabinets for *Roger*. It was two huge “Fender” Bass cabinets. And they were 15s, two 15s and when he took my amp he tilted, I remember taking the cabinet back to him and saying, "Sid, can you tilt the top speaker for me?" He tilted the top speaker back about 30 degrees so that I could

hear it and so it didn't go by me, in other words. So then we had this trailer and we got the organ and the Leslie and those cabinets and all the cabinets and all that stuff went in there and then all the instruments and the mics went in the back of the station wagon. So it was warm.

So when we were driving to Kingston in the winter, we played there for three or four years. We played there from '64 to '67. We played Frosh '67. We played Science '66. We played three years of Science '66, their second and third and fourth year. And that was "Grant Hall" would be, I don't know, 1000 people dancing. Might be 500 people in the balcony, another 500 people downstairs drinking booze. And they were all getting loaded. And I remember playing little places where the stage at "Grant Hall" was about 60 feet wide and 30 feet deep and I measured it with my guitar case. It was so many guitar cases wide, 11 guitar cases wide or whatever and so many deep. And then we played this place called "The Polish Hall" which was the same size as the stage at "Grant Hall" and there'd still be 200 people in there. And I can remember playing and my guitar's going... And I looked down and some girl was dancing up next to me and she was leaning against me enough that the vibrato arm there on that guitar was... They packed right on you. There was no stage that I remember, if there was it was only a four inch riser or something. And I can remember on the break, the floor was soaked. What was it soaked with? Spilled drinks. So I'm going, "Wow." And I was a real naïve kid, I'm like 16 or 17 and I'm thinking, "Oh, "Queens University" upper crust and all that?" Well, they're upper crust all right but they're all pissed. And so I thought, "Oh, geez, well I don't know if I want to go to university or not, everybody's drunk here."

So we played a lot of those gigs and we played for instance at "Grant Hall" we'd get \$50 each but when we played the Polish Hall we could only get \$25 each. But "Grant Hall" held like 1500 people, so they didn't have a problem giving you more money. And *Lynn Tucson*, (sp?) who was a buddy of *Roger's*, he had all that stuff lined up. So we just worked all the time. We were playing there two or three times a month plus all our weekend dances for the high schools and the proms and wow, it was great. We even played on the roof of the A&W down here in the summertime one time. I had a lot of friends over the years say to me "I remember you guys on the A&W roof." And I can still remember, now this is how nuts you are, that keyboard of *Terry's* was a C-100. It was like one size down from the big A-100, which was the great big Hammond organs that you can see in all the movies and stuff. So this was the same thing but without the pedals on the floor. It had a smaller version of the pedals and not as big a cabinet. So it was the same as, this piano here'd be 600 pounds. That thing was probably 300 pounds, whereas the big A-100 and whatever, they would be 350, 400 pounds, so it took four men to move them. But me and *Roger* and the drummer could move that keyboard of *Terry's* and *Terry* sort of ran along, "Don't drop it, don't drop it," and he'd be holding onto the keyboard because that was the counterweight, he didn't want it to fall over to that way. So he'd be holding that up as we're running this thing up and down the stairs.

So Dad, Pop was really good to me in a lot of ways that I didn't realize til I was older. I knew I had it good but you realize after a while how good you had it. So I wore out a couple of carpets here in my mother's living room in the old band, the first band or two. And the drummers always kill the carpets. And so the old man's going and probably he did it as much for my mother as he did for me, "If you want to, you can put your gear in the basement of the "Moose Hall." We only use the hall once a month and sometimes we can't even get a quorum for a meeting." And he was

running the hall and he was the secretary, did the books and all that. So they had this dance hall that had been an old army thing or something and they kept it and renovated it. And I don't know, it held a couple of hundred people, maybe, tops? Maybe 100, 120?

So when I was 14 or 15 with this first band, weren't we renting the hall off of Dad for \$35 a night and we were putting little posters up around town on the light posts and people were showing up and coming into these dances and we were playing a diddley-diddley, like we did when we were playing St. Mary's that time when I met *Bob Farmer*. So we had our little tea dances there and it was an evolutionary process. When I ended up with "The Count Fives" and we had all this gear, Dad says, "Well, you can store it downstairs." I said, "Okay. Can we rehearse down there?" "Of course." Probably that was the thing in the back of his head, "Get them the hell out of the house."

So we rehearsed there and when I was in senior high, say 11 and 12, we were playing "Queens" and if we had a bad night, we'd rehearse on Sunday. And so we'd rehearse four, five days a week after supper. Go up there, rehearse from seven to eleven. We'd have a break, all the guys would be on the phone talking to their girlfriend. There was only one phone. So when *Dizzy* got finished, I'd phone my girlfriend. When I got finished, somebody else would phone his, their girlfriend. And I could still remember that and we'd be up there. So that was great.

And we had mirrors. We'd gone up to this old hotel at the narrows and the river and there's a real old hotel there. And the floors were falling apart. This place was built in the 1920s and '30s when they were running booze and everything. And there was a piano up there that had the squared off piano with the old keys. I don't know what it was. It would have been a 19th century piano I would say. So this was in the sixties and I'll bet you that piano was 80 years old or something. Anyway, didn't they have all these mirrors because when they clean out a hotel, they don't take everything. So there was old furniture and old mirrors and everything. So we'd gone in there and of course our mothers would have freaked if they had known what we were doing. We were creeping around through the floors that were falling through and all that. It's a two or three story building, right on the cliff face looking out over the river. "Hillcrest," it was called.

So we had all these mirrors over there. Half a dozen of them, anyway. Big mirrors. And so we were practicing our steps, so we had these mirrors against the wall in the bottom of the "Moose Hall" and we're doing our shoo-doo-bob shoo-bob thing where you do too many steps to the side and this side and this side and do dips and that. So the guitar player, *Roger Chambers*, was a left-handed bass player. So just like "The Beatles" would come together and do the thing on the mic, it was neat looking to see the two instruments coming in like that. We were just starting to do "The Beatles" by the time I was in grade 11, I guess. The early "Beatles" stuff, it was great. "Long Tall Sally" and "She Loves You" and all that stuff. I played that in the band before "The Count Fives."

Anyway, we were practicing doing our thing so we had lights and *Sid Atkinson* down there that had built the amps for us, built us a set of lights with pedals. So he had a pedal for running the lights. It was like a keyboard, black and white, just like a keyboard, like a half an octave of a keyboard or something. So *Blair* got to do that. He was the keyboard player. So as we're playing

the lights are changing. Blue, red, both of them together, all this jazz. And we're doing our little shoo-bop-bop thing where we had worked out all these steps.

And we'd probably got all that off of that T.A.M.I. Show and stuff where you'd see these... there'd be a show at the movie where they'd have all these bands, *James Brown* and all that stuff. And that's what these black cats did. They did all these steps. It was a show. You could see a visual thing going on. It wasn't just standing there singing. They were actually moving around and dancing and it was entertaining. So we were doing that to some point. And we had a singer with us.

MMS - Sorry to interrupt, what did you call them? You called them T.A.M.I. Shows?

SW - It was "The T.A.M.I. Show." It was the name of the movie. And that happened when I was still in high school. It was at the old Capital Theater down here. It was called "The T.A.M.I. Show" and that's the first time I'd ever seen *James Brown*.

MMS - Was that just one show or was it a series of shows that...

SW - Well, it might have been a series of shows in the States but that's the only one I ever saw. And it was actually at the theater. And so it was all these bands and it was like watching some of these videos of "The Beatles" where "The Beatles," aren't the head act. They'd have two or three guys and then they'd have the "Beatles," and the "Beatles" are incredible. And then after "The Beatles" there would be some doo-wop band from England that was real popular then. They were bigger than "The Beatles" but when "The Beatles" sang you could see there was magic there. When these other guys came down it was like, "Eh." The Beatles" were shining like diamonds right from the beginning. Just like that.

I'd never seen *James Brown* before. *James Brown* had a real act. *James* was singing... The guy comes on, stage guy, pats him on the back, takes him off, "No, no, no." Throws his cloak back off, he comes back out, "Please, please, please, please me, please me." And they throw the cape over him and they start to take him off, "No, no, no." You throw that all off, you go back to the mic and finish it up. And you ever see that guy dance when he was singing? *James Brown* was something else. And I'd never seen anything like that before and I'm going, "Wow. What an eye opener." So of course we weren't trying to do that but it was a real inspiration to see what could be done. Yeah.

So we played all those gigs and then I got, by the time I was 19 or 20 I had a serious girlfriend. And the guys are off to University. So I didn't play for a year or so. And so then I hitchhiked around for a while and then I went to college in Toronto. And I took my instrument with me but I didn't play in a band or anything. But I still remember we were on the tenth floor of Rochdale in 1969 and the guy next door to me was an American guy from New England. And the guy that lived with him was named *Vashgar*. *Vashgar* was an Indian fellow from India and he had a sitar. And he played sitar at night and *Tom* was the other guy's name. And he was a rug maker, he had a loom in there and he'd make up tapestries and stuff. That was his thing. These guys were hippies. Not *Vashgar*. *Vashgar* was an accountant or something but the Indians are very, very studious and good students. So *Vashgar*, I go over, I go, "My God, that's an incredible

instrument, *Vashgar*." He'd be playing all this stuff. I'd say, "What is that?" "Oh, just scales. You don't play scales?" I'd go, "Geez. I guess I better start playing scales." His teacher had been *Ravi Shankar*.

But he was a big inspiration because we'd go next door and sit and listen. And he would play for hours. And you were talking earlier about the Metis thing and it was an oral tradition? Indian music's an oral tradition, too. 1500 ragas, 1500 ragas in their repertoire. Oral tradition. I said, "How do you learn it?" "The teacher sings it to the student until the student can sing it with him. Then you go to the instrument and learn the piece."

And he played this 52 minute raga. So he played this beautiful thing, 52 minutes and he played this thing and it'd start out, this sitar's got that beautiful sound. It's got 14 strings, maybe 21. 7 playing strings and 14 resonant strings like a harp that are, oh, maybe diagonal to the instrument. They go across the gourd. And so whatever note you play, it's just like me on this piano. If I held the loud pedal down there and hit one of those notes on the piano, you'd hear all the other notes that have those harmonics in their makeup, start to resonate. Used to be great with the trumpet. I used to open the front up, blow a horn in there, you'd hear all this stuff, it was beautiful. And the piano tuner showed me one time, too. She said, "You should be able to hit this note here and you should hear all those other notes start to chime, and if they're not chiming, it ain't in tune."

And so here's this sitar and he's playing this thing. And well, what can I say about Indian music except that it was a huge, huge, rhapsody and orgasmic. They'd start off all calm and quiet and it would build and it would build and by the end it was frenzic. And this big, huge climax and then the denouement which is the tail end of it all, where he would go... And he'd play some beautiful chord and all those resonant strings would ring and then they'd just let that ring out.

And so there was a whole story of life and death and love and everything else just in that one piece. You could hear the passion in it. I was mind blown. And after that, I started playing scales and arpeggios and then that summer I went to Vancouver with some friends and we drove out and I was in a hostel there and there was a Chinese cat playing guitar and he was playing a Spanish ballad which I've got a chart here for... (sings) You know that thing? And he's playing this really beautiful and I'm watching him and he's finger picking. And I said "Geez, that's beautiful. How long you been playing?" "Two years," he said. I'd been playing 14 years or whatever. And I'm going, "Jesus Christ."

So then when I come back to Ontario it was like, I was 20. No pick, that's it because when I went to Yellowknife I wasn't using a pick. So I didn't use a pick after I was 20. So what happened was having that year off and then going back to the instrument it was like, it was wonderful. The guitar was my queen and I could play it but I didn't have any of the garbage in my head from all the tunes that I'd learned and all the little licks because the problem is you go to play something and then you can't play what you're thinking, I mean I'll actually start playing some other shit that you already played before and you go, "Damn, I can't get that stuff out of my head." When you take a year off, you flush all that away.

So then when I come back to the instrument, I was just playing whatever I was learning at the time or playing scales and stuff. So that was that instrument there and I started playing with my

fingers. And then when I went to Yellowknife I took the guitar with me that summer and I'm getting ahead of myself here but when I got books up there I thought, "Okay, that's it." Got *Randy Demmon* there playing like a monster and he's fucking university graduate and he played like hell and I was playing on his level for sound and understanding but I didn't have the theory and all the rest of it that he did. And I'd taken it all through high school but I never applied it to my instrument. How stupid can you be? It doesn't matter. As you get older you realize you can always be stupid by not taking the things that are offered to you, not even seeing that they're valuable. So...

MMS - So I'll just hold you back there. So you went out on the road trip out west to Vancouver? Yeah?

SW - Yeah, I went with some friends. They were going out west, so we went to Vancouver. So then I come back here to Brockville and I decided that it was time to start learning how to read. And so I don't recall that I did that much here because I wasn't back here long and then next summer come up and *Pounder* was going to Yellowknife, going back to Yellowknife because he's been up there working for "Carlson Construction." They built the Carlson Building across from the Old "Legion."

MMS - So you were here for roughly a year?

SW - A winter.

MMS - Another winter. To the next question, why did you come north?

SW - Let me see, I'm trying to remember. I quit grade 12 second year in May and I hitchhiked down east. And I spent the summer in New Brunswick and Grand Falls and on PEI and then when I come back, the next year I went to Vancouver. And so then when I come back from Vancouver, then *Pounder* was going north and I'd already been east and west at that point. I'd go north and I'm ready for it now. And I used to go back for the winter and the old man would say, "This isn't a hotel, you know?" Because I was in my early twenties, like *Carmen's* age. And so it was like, "What the hell are you doing? This ain't a hotel." Because I'd come home and make myself at home for the winter and then I'd leave again. So when I went up north it was with *Pounder. Michael Pounder.*

The vehicle broke down in Saskatchewan, so we spent a week in Saskatchewan hanging out with, this guy's name was *Randy Kudowitz*. So he came along when we were broke down on the side of the road and they're very generous people out there. So he took us home. There was about four or five of us in the vehicle. So he took us home to the farm and they put us up in the old farmhouse, let us stay there. And then I remember being over at the big farmhouse and *Mrs. Kudowitz* cooking a big Sunday dinner, looking after us and all that. And her brother taking a calf into the vet that wouldn't suck or whatever and we went with him and drank beer the entire time and were hammered. Holy mackerel.

But those people were so generous. And so then *Pounder's* going, "Well, I've got to be back in Yellowknife for the, whatever and I've got to be back for my job." So we hitchhiked to

Edmonton which, I don't know, was four or five hundred miles away but we got there in a day. And he paid my flight into Yellowknife and I landed on June 21st, the longest day, in Yellowknife, in 1972. So I landed on the longest day, the first time I'd ever been on an airplane and I landed in Yellowknife.

MMS - What was your initial impression of Yellowknife?

SW - Well, I was disappointed. I was thinking there was going to be wooden sidewalks and all that stuff and there wasn't. We were uptown, it was all modern and this and that. But of course the old town was sort of like that. So I did get that bit of history that I wanted to see in the bush pilots. When I was a kid I was reading bush pilot stories and had all those, my father was a Scot so all those books from Scotland had come over, Boys, "Collins Boys' Annual," and they'd be full of stories. And so I can remember having quite an interest in bush pilots because you sure as hell weren't going to see that here. And so when I went up there and actually saw bush pilots and stuff and all that stuff in the old town it was very, very romantic.

And so the first year I was there when I stayed at the Grey House, I did quite a few photographs of the planes in the old town in the winter up on blocks and stuff and then I did watercolors from that because I'd taken fine arts in that year I went to college, right? That was my thing. And so I took those photographs and made watercolors. And do you remember the bookstore that was in the bottom of the Laing Building?

MMS - Oh my God.

SW - There's a real nice guy who ran that place and I took those watercolors in there and he put them up on the wall and I sold them for like \$60 each and I sold a half a dozen of them or more there. And I'd done them at my desk in the Grey House from the photos that I had that I'd taken that winter. Because it was too damn cold to stand out on the street and do stuff. And the only thing I remember is that those photographs were slightly blue. Now things are blue up there and a lot of people don't believe how blue they are until they see it but they were a dark blue but it was something to do with the film, too. That film, Kodak maybe, or whatever it was, when it developed it had a shade to go towards French ultramarine. It was just a little purple-y blue. And so a lot of them were evening shots, stuff where the colors would be beautiful. So I sold those paintings. I remember doing that. I had my instrument and so when I played I would play with whoever was hanging around at the Youth Center, like I told you in the café there. And those guys would be playing.

MMS - I guess, hold you back there. You said, so you landed on June 21. Who did you meet when you first, just in those first few days, weeks, months?

SW - Okay, for starters there was Brockvillians there.

MMS - Okay.

SW - See, *Sinbad* had been there. And I don't remember if *Sinbad* was there then but he told me about it when he was in Brockville here and I was enthusiastic to go up and check it out because

he was telling about how groovy it was and everything. And so you'll get off on this. First night we were there we stayed in that old boat that was on Jolliffe Island. Remember the barge that was pulled up on Jolliffe Island? There's people live in that thing in the summer. The mosquitoes were horrible. Terrible. And I lost a wallet that night and it had dozens of phone numbers and names from all over the prairies and down east and everything. Because you carry all that stuff with you and when you lose it, it's gone. So you never get a chance to connect with those people again. But you had the memory of connecting the first time. But I still remember we stayed on Jolliffe Island on that thing and the... *Paul* and his girlfriend were living in it and they were, Brockvillians, his father, had a cleaners here. And I knew him from here in town...

MMS - *Paul's* last name?

SW - In hippie-dippie days. Yeah. *Paul Durant* was his name. And so we stayed there the first night. Then after that somebody said, "Oh, there's a house up town, the Grey House, where you can go and stay." So there's four or five of us including *Pounder* staying in the Grey House and paying *Wayne Bertrand's* father, across the road, \$20 a month for the house. And so I stayed there right up until the winter. I'm trying to remember his name. That's terrible. Can you remember the father's name? Anyway, I remember he had an ulcer, so we drank rum with milk. So I used to go over there on the last Friday of the month or whatever and I'd give him the rent and I'd drink with him. So I'd have this rum and milk, white rum and milk.

MMS - The Grey House, would that have the one that was in behind the Gallery?

SW - No, that was *JT's (John Telgen's)* old place later. No, the Grey House was where they built City Hall. *Wayne's* father was living across the road in the Red House. And that's where he lived. *Stan. Stan Bertrand.* So *Stan* was there and so *Stan's* going, "Jesus murphy, see, you guys pay me \$20 a month. The taxes are \$60 a month." Now me, the old Scotsman here goes, "Okay, *Stan.* How about we double the rent and I'll pay your taxes." Sounds like a good deal, don't it? It was only \$100 a month. So double the rent was \$40 and the taxes were \$60 a month, so I said, "Okay, I'll give you \$100 a month." "Oh yeah, okay." So then I go over there every month, I give him this \$100 and get drunk with him. Jesus Christ. So that's when I ran into (*Terry*) *Mercer*, and (*Kelly*) *Tippet.* *Tippet* and *Mercer* were playing with somebody at "The Gallery."

MMS - That would *Terry Mercer.*

SW - And then the band broke up.

MMS - *Terry Mercer and Kelly Tippet.*

SW - Yeah. *Tippet* was one of those guys from Victoria. He was an odd guy and sweet guy and red hair like me and glasses and freckles. And he wore a little ascot there. Which you might see down here for the new rich, the nouveau riche down here, the boys at school might be wearing, sporting a little ascot and a sports jacket. The rest of us were in like (*Simpson*) *Sears* pants and a sweater and whatever but these guys were trying to look good for the girls.

Anyway *Tippet* comes in and he had a proposal for him. I remember he had the scarf and everything. I don't know if we had a smoke or not. We probably did. And the proposal was why don't we put together this band? Well, I'm getting ahead of myself here because we ended up playing at "The Elks" and that wasn't with *Tippet* initially, that was with *Jack Carney*. He was a trumpet player and he wanted to have a band. And I said, "Well, man, I've got no gear" but he had a friend in Red Deer that had a music store. He fronted us a PA and my GBX which is in the basement now. And so now I had an amp to play through and we had a PA to sing through and I'm thinking it was *Pat Moore* played bass and you know I can't remember the drummer? But that band lasted a little while and then when *Mercer* and *Tippet* showed up in the middle of the winter, then we put that together for a new band and then we went back into "The Elks" and played. And I remember *Tippet*. He had those long underwear that you'd see somebody wearing with the trap in the back and all that. And so he had long underwear that were blue or red or whatever they were.

And so all he did to play that gig at "The Elks" was pull on his big, big coat with the fur in front of you like that and the boots, Skidoo boots. And we'd go up the alleyway and in the back door of "The Elks" and up on the stage and *Tippet* would take that shit off and he'd be sitting there on his drum kit in his underwear. Same thing he was wearing, long underwear. So it looked like a jumpsuit or something. So he was wearing the same stuff on the gig as he was back at the house. And the house was like from here to the corner away. Not far, as you know because it's just down the street, right? Literally like 200 feet. So we were going up there and playing and then we'd rehearse the band.

And then *Mercer*. I met *Mercer* at a party. And *Mercer* was striking looking because of all his scars on his face and everything but a sweet guy. And the vibes come up right away, you knew he was good. And I remember him saying, "Oh, well yeah, we were staying here. We were up in the band and we're come up in the band, the band broke up and *Kelly (Tippet)* and I are staying. And we're looking for a place to stay. I got a stereo," he says. I said, "Well, I got a house but I don't have a stereo." So we laughed and that was it. He moved in with his stereo and *Tippet* took the other room and *Mercer* was sleeping in the rehearsal room.

And so then we rehearsed the band there. And then we started playing "The Elks." And then I'm sure I was still playing with *Pat Moore*. *Sinbad* had gotten busted. *Sinbad* got busted at the high rise. They had a birthday party for *Sinbad*. And there's 100 people there and they were going in and out and in and out and I can remember they had a bowl on the middle of the table, the coffee table just full of joints that were rolled up. So when the RCs came in the night because there'd been a complaint or whatever, they'd sort of literally put an X on the door and so they could remember where they were coming back to. And they left it alone, they didn't want to fuck with that. But they come back in the morning and they busted *Sinbad*. They went, "Oh, yeah, ashtrays full of roaches and there's some in your drawer here" and blah blah, so they busted him. So they were going to, I don't know, they fined him. It was pretty light stuff. They fined him \$100 and some bucks. Enough money that he didn't have it.

So *Sinbad* being the way he is, he threw a bust party. So he had a bust party at the "Latham Island Community Center" and we played down there and we played the blues and all that stuff that we were playing And *Sinbad* was at the door with his hand out and a hat and the people

coming in were giving him money and he had about \$200 more than the fucking fine. And so I don't know if we got paid or not. We didn't care and we were playing there to have fun and *Sinbad* got his fine money plus some money.

Black Charles, Charles Kirkpatrick was a musician who'd come to town with a really good organ player (*Burkely Kendrix*) and a band who... This organ player had played for *Howard Roberts*. And he's on *Howard Roberts'* album because he told me, "Oh, I was on that album." Because I knew what *Howard Roberts* was about. I'd played some of his stuff in the high school band. I got two good tunes off that. "Florence of Arabia" and some other thing. They were very jazzy and made you work and they were instrumentals. And so we played those. When we were playing at "Queens" we were playing that because the keyboard player loved that stuff.

So I can remember *Charles* saying to me, "I heard you guys playing. You guys are really good." He'd been at that bust party at *Sinbad's* and he was a bartender in the "Hoist Room." "Maybe we could play," he says. And around this time I think *Pat Moore* must have been off going somewhere. So I'm going, "Oh, okay." And he'd come over to the Grey House and we'd play and it was great because I'm used to playing everything in sharps and he was used to playing with horns. So he got me playing blues in E Flat and A Flat and B Flat, all the flats that you ordinarily wouldn't play in. But as you know, for us it's just position. You just move it this way or that way and you're in that key.

So then he'd give me, "Okay, this is *Kelly's* song..." (sings) We learned that, it was a great song. "This is *Sandy's* song..." (sings) or whatever. So he had these three or four little hooks that we learned. He was teaching us the hook and we'd use that hook for a break song. But in essence, those hooks were the bottom of a lot of blues songs. And so then we joined up with *Tom Hudson* and *Randy (Demmon)*, *Mercer* was out for that year and we played at "The Yellowknife Inn" with *Randy* and *Tom*. *Hudson* was singing all that stuff that nobody else could sing and we got to play all that beautiful music.

MMS - So you were singing, you were dipping into the R&B book that *Charles* was bringing in?

SW - Well, I was doing the R&B when I was down here with "The Count Fives." But at the same time *Charles* put that touch on it because he had the touch and he didn't play a lot of complicated shit but what he had was the feel. So when he played that... (sings) When we played *BB King*, it was *BB King*. It sounded wonderful. So it was really easy to play on top of that stuff and he thought it was great that I was playing *BB King*. And he was, "Oh, Bakersfield, Country capitol of country music and I'm saying, "Fuck, I hate country music. Sorry, *Charles*." I didn't like country music. But *Charles* liked it.

But anyway, it didn't matter. What he did like was the blues. And he was also a jazz player in his own way and I couldn't play any jazz yet. But I remember when he'd get loaded he'd get on that Rhodes and go... And he'd be humming and singing and he'd sound just like my friend *Bruce Kerr* here who just passed away at '89 who was a great jazz piano player. And they'd play a lot of block chords like (*Bill*) *Evans*.

MMS - clusters, yeah.

SW - So you'd hear all these blocks chords going and I see a thing on YouTube there. What they do, Pat, is they play, every chord's a sixth chord. So they have the sixth of each chord in the chord. So when they play the first, it's a major with a sixth. When they play the second chord which is a minor, there's a sixth in it. When they play the third which is minor, there's a sixth in it. When they play the fourth, there's a sixth in it, of the chord. So you hear all this line of sixths marching all the way through but what it does is it sort of blends them all together that when you play, there's a lot of overlap there and then it starts to sound like *Bill Evans*. So I'm going, "Wow. Interesting."

So I mentioned this to *Randy*: "Oh yeah..." *Randy* rips it right off. Guitar players can't do that. You have to be on a piano to be able to play two notes beside each other. Unless you can do a real big stretch where you're playing the lower note on the lower string and the upper note on the next string and it's a five note, five fret stretch. So it's real hard to play that chord. So the piano player's got it easy that way. They're just playing one note beside the other. I won't bother demonstrating.

So anyway, when *Charlie* would get hammered then he'd want to play some of this stuff and he'd play that and I'd go, "Oh, wow, that sounds really like my friend *Bruce Kerr*." Now *Bruce Kerr* had a men's clothing store here. Him and his brother had inherited their father's business and so when we were in the band, remember "The Beatle" jackets and all that stuff? We'd go into *Kerr's* and we'd order two changes. We'd have the cream colored ones and the dark blue ones. Or the next year we'd have the red ones and they're be the nero collars with no collar on the jacket.

And I don't know what they were worth but they were a musician's thing. So they were union guys in those days so when I was 14 I joined the union down here. And I can remember *Bruce Kerr* was... He was 18 or 19 years older than I was because when I was a teenager I thought he was an old man and he was 34. And he was like a mentor for me because he encouraged me and he always liked the fact that when I come back from Yellowknife and we'd play, I'd hear him saying, "I like *Sandy* because he can swing." He liked the fact that I could swing the music and a lot of cats are stiff and couldn't play that.

And so *Bruce* was selling us band jackets and all that stuff. We had an account there and we'd go in, we'd hang out, all that shit. And I can remember going to the musician's union meetings and they'd have them in a hotel room at the Revere Hotel, which is about a 140 year old hotel. Burned down while I was in Yellowknife, actually and we'd go to the meeting once a month. And they'd have all these old guys there and they'd be doing their thing, they're all horn players from the fifties and forties right? And so then what did they have? Well, they had a case of beer and a big hunk of cheese and a box of crackers. So all of us young guys could have a beer and eat some crackers and cheese and listen to these old guys talk about all this stuff.

And what happened with *Bruce*, I remember *Bruce* telling me, "We were playing lots of stuff, then when "The Beatles" come in the younger kids would say, "Can you play any "Beatles"?" And they couldn't. And so that's when he began to slide. And geez, that was early for them to be sliding. They weren't very old when they were losing their genre already. Just like we have in some ways. We're not playing rap or any of that stuff and some people want to hear that but I don't want to hear it.

Anyway, back to this story about *Bruce*. Typical. I go to a meeting. His drummer was the, he was a wheel down at "The Recorder and Times" the newspaper. So these guys were all executives, more or less but they're all older cats. Anyway, I'm thinking, just like my impression about "Queens University" being all serious and it turned out they're all hammered.

So then I go to this meeting and we're like 14 or 15 and then they had the "Well, we're going to read the minutes from the last meeting." And so then the drummer stands up and he pulls out a water gun and he shoots fucking *Bruce* in the head with a water gun, couple times in a row and everybody laughs and I'm going, "Holy fuck." And I never saw that guy again on the street that he didn't tell me two, three jokes. And pretty corny too but I listened because I love them. But they were big kids. Of course they were. They were only in their thirties. So he was shooting his friend with a water gun and he didn't care and he brought that water gun to the meeting expressly to do that, so he could raise a little hell.

So it was just nuts. And *Bruce Kerr* was a big influence on me because he had all his theory and everything, so when I come back from Yellowknife and I'd been to Europe and I had some experience and I can remember coming back and I brought him some *Dave Brubeck* and maybe that *Andrew Davis* or something, that Texas pianist who was playing classical music, it was incredible music.

And I also brought some of those same albums in the classical music for my grade nine and grade ten high school music teacher, *Bill Tufford*, who was a big influence on me. Because when I went into music class it was something I liked and he liked me because he knew I was musical and as I said when I got inducted in the Hall of Fame there about *Bill*, he got inducted posthumously the same night. And his daughter *Cathy*, who I knew was there to accept the award. He made me feel good about being a musician. Because a lot of people would say to you in those days, "Oh, you want to be a musician? Geez, you'll never make any money doing that. You're going to have to do something serious at some point." And literally, I thought, "Oh yeah, well I'll ride this thing until it's dead by the time I'm 20 I'll have to get serious and get some kind of job that makes me a living."

But *Bill Tufford* made it okay that I was musical. And so I was inspired by that. And so he helped me. And we played, the first "Beatle" tunes we played, me and *Noel Leduc* were onstage at the assembly in the morning in front of 900 kids singing "She Loves You." That had just come out... And I was playing the electric and *Noel* was banging the hell out of his acoustic and he was singing and I was singing. And then the other song I did that day was the song by *Los Indios Tabajaras*, those two Indian guys from South America who had been taught by the Jesuits how to play classical guitar and their song was "Maria Elena." (sings) C Major, the minors... I learned that note for note and I played it on that second guitar, the "Harmony" that I had that the old man bought. And I played that onstage.

And I can remember seeing a friend here, oh, 10 or 15 years ago, down at the "Pippins," and we were playing a dinner gig there. We'd go in and play on Friday nights. And so I remember *Herdie Defreis* saying to somebody and somebody saying, "Oh, this guy's a good musician." And I hear *Herdie* saying, "*Sandy* was a good musician when he was 14." Made me feel real good to hear that. And *Herdie* was a friend of *Roger Chambers*, the bass player. So I'd known him ever

since high school, too and he was a senior when I was a junior and I had a lot of people over the years saying to me, "Oh, I remember you playing onstage, playing that song." Then after that we got the bigger bands and we were playing "The Beatles."

But all these people in Brockville that were musical, like *Bruce* and stuff. That was a big influence on me because they were enjoying themselves. And so I really liked those people and when I come back to Brockville I went to his Christmas parties two or three years in a row. And he'd have a wide open house on Christmas and there'd be everybody there that you knew and their dog and they were real social people.

MMS - Musicians.

SW - Yeah. He was a musician.

MMS - Well, the people that were..

SW - Well, the people at the party would be his musician friends too. But *Bruce* was really connected. Just like a lot of musicians through history, *Bach* and all those people, what had he done? He had become the choirmaster at the church. He played the keyboards for the church during their services and whatever. Well, I know a few guys that still do that. And that was what he did and that helped his income along with the business that he had with his father when he was running the men's clothing store. So he did that.

Well, then he had a choir. So I could still remember him coming into the bistro and I was singing some song that I was singing, I had to sing a high F in it that I didn't always make. And he said to me, "*Sandy*, don't try and sing that F if you can't make it, it's not worth it. Either fix it or don't use it." I'm going, "Yeah, I agree." Because you can't experiment in front of the public because like I said to you earlier, they always remember the mistake. You can make 25 things that are great and one mistake and that's what they recall. And that was good advice. He was a friend, told me, "Hey, you got dirt on your nose. Don't try and sing that F, *Sandy*. It's not worth it." I'm going, "Yeah, I know. It's a hard note for me."

MMS - Take you back to Yellowknife here. When you talk about playing "The Elks"...

SW - Upstairs in their dance hall.

MMS - And "The Legion," yeah. So you were playing dances?

SW - No, I never played "The Legion." *Randy (Demmon)* had his gig in "The Legion." Him and *Hudson* had "The Legion" tied up that year. And I had "The Elks" tied up.

MMS - Okay.

SW - So then the next spring we went into "The Yellowknife Inn" and then that was it because once we were in "The Yellowknife Inn" I was in there for eight years with a house band. And

when *Randy (Demmon)* left in the fall I had the gig and I got (*Terry*) *Mercer* back to play keyboards and then it was me and *Mercer* and *Charles Kirkpatrick*. And-

MMS - That was in "The Rec Hall"? Was that the name of the...

SW - That was "The Rec Hall", yeah.

MMS - That was "The Rec Hall".

SW - So we were playing "The Rec Hall". That's where that photograph is from upstairs with *Tippet* playing. And *Tippet* was a hell of a drummer. He'd been a pipe band drummer so he knew all 21 rudiments, and he could play the rudiments any which way you wanted to hear them. And so I remember he could play a great shuffle. He'd play shuffle on the cymbal or shuffle on his foot or on the snare or whatever. Real good.

MMS - So you were playing a mixture of the blues stuff...

SW - Where? At "The Elks"?

MMS - No, move it up to "The Trapline" here, and...

SW - Well, I was just thinking. I took my book from "The Elks," which would be like "Hey Joe" and a bunch of (*Jimi*) *Hendrix* stuff that I could play and some *Neil Young* that I could play. He did "Down By the River," didn't he? Okay, I did that song. And trying to remember when I hooked into the *JJ Cale*. I don't know if I did the *JJ Cale* at "The Elks" or not but I sure did a lot of *JJ Cale* after that album come out. That "Naturally," *JJ Cale*, I think I had that in the Grey House. Where he had the raccoon sleeping on the log and every tune was a hit. Oh, they were great. And he had that horn section was, the "Memphis Horns." Holy fuck. And *JJ Cale* himself was good and his sound was beautiful. And didn't *Eric Clapton* copy his sound and some of his tunes including "Cocaine" and whatever and made a lot of money on that. And *JJ Cale* just died a little while ago here. And I don't think *Cale* was any older than I am. Not much. But a hard life. He was a hillbilly.

MMS - ...some of other people that you remember from those early day?

SW - Well, the guys playing downstairs in "The Elks." Is it *George Tuccaro* who became the commissioner? Okay, *George* was down there playing and the keyboard player from the "Yellowknife Radio," *Marc*...

MMS - (*Marc*) *Whitford*.

SW - *Whitford*. So he was there playing music. And of course our friend that we mentioned, the teacher what was his name? That did the bicycles?

MMS - *Wilf Schidlowsky*.

SW - Yeah, *Wilf Schidlowsky*. So the first year I was there were those guys. And I'm just thinking of the musicians since you asked. And of course *Randy (Demmon)*. When I was at the Grey House I hardly knew *Randy* but he was a nice guy and I could appreciate his talent. And then once we struck up a friendship he was right on you. I can remember coming over Saturday morning at like 10:00 which was not happenin'. He comes at 10:00 to my place, knocks on the door, gets me up. He's got the flute and he wants somebody to accompany him while he practices. Jesus Christ.

So I remember getting up and having coffee and getting my guitar out and in those days I had a classical like that one there. Now that one there I got off of (*Terry Mercer*). *Mercer* had some girl at the apartment and when she left, she left that guitar in lieu of her share of the rent, so *Mercer* sold me that, I don't know, five or six hundred dollar "Fender" classical guitar for \$300 because that's what she owed him and I got the instrument. But before that I had one that I brought up from down here that I don't remember where I bought it. But I do remember that *Pounder* had eaten peanut butter and jam sandwiches while he was playing it, so here and there there'd be a sticky spot on the neck and I'd go "Fuck this, *Pounder* and his jam sandwich."

So this is probably what I was playing when *Randy* would come over to play flute. And *Randy* would... And... "What do you think?" I'd say, "Well, you're coming back to the tonic at the end of all your phrases. Don't do that. You don't have to come back to the tonic. Leave it up in the air, it'll sound better." And so then after that when he'd be playing, no tonic. He'd just play the phrase. But it was solely because he was used to playing by himself. But what a great musician.

MMS - So when you were doing the house gig in "The Trapline," was it all just local bands at that point in time?

SW - No, I don't think so. I think they brought in an out of town band probably two or three times a year. So we had the house gig and then every six or eight weeks they'd bring somebody else in for two or three weeks. And *Klaus (Schoenne)* would say to me, "Go and see *Sam (Yurkiw)* and go see *Gladys* and get some time." They hadn't built "The Explorer" yet.

So I can remember I'd go down and I'd see *Gladys* and of course I was with *Charles (Kirkpatrick)*, her boyfriend, he was living with her. We'd go down there and we'd book a few weeks there and we'd book a few weeks somewhere else. And we didn't play "The Gold Range" very much because they didn't have bands. They didn't need a band. They had a full house. They had like 300 people, 400 people in there and it was only supposed to have 250 so it was 100 people standing up. Didn't even sit down. And I don't know what happened with the liquor inspector but they didn't worry about that. And *Sam* was at the end of the thing counting his money.

MMS - So there was "The Legion" and "The Elks"...

SW - Yup, those dances kept us going for the first year, for sure.

MMS - Yeah, for sure. The dances upstairs. Were the club rooms going at that point?

SW - Yup, yup.

MMS - The club rooms downstairs...

SW - Because that's where I heard *George*, what's *George*...

MMS - *Mandeville*, no, sorry, *George Tuccaro*

SW - *Tuccaro*. That's where I heard those guys playing and they were playing downstairs along with *Marc (Whitford)* and a few other people maybe that I remember over the years. But those guys had a nice little lounge gig, really, playing for the older folks that were dancing in that private club. The upstairs was for the riff raff from the bars because you go to play the dance and nobody'd show up until after 12 because the bars closed at 12 and then boom, it would fill up. So what happened was everybody went over to the dance at 10:00 and got their tickets and went back to the bar. So then when the bar closed, boom, you had the 100 people come from the bar to fill the dance hall right to the top. So literally it wasn't a bad thing. You got to play your first set all over again.

MMS - Perfect. And so "The Gallery" and "The Gold Range" were going then. So that was, was that sort of the limit of what was going on in the town at that time, again...

SW - Yeah, I'm just trying to remember.

MMS - Early seventies.

SW - I sort of get the feeling we're the first band to play in "The Gold Range." I've got that feeling we were.

MMS - Okay.

SW - *Sam (Yurkiw)* was pretty good, you know? He'd come in and he'd say, it was Saturday and we'd play the matinee and it'd be real busy. And he'd say, "Can you guys play through another couple of hours?" So the matinee, say, went from three to five or something. He'd want you to play til seven and then come back and play the 8:30 to 12:30 or whatever. And he wasn't asking, he was saying, "\$50 each. I'll buy you dinner next door. Go in there and get a steak." So he'd give us \$50 each more, on top of the money, good money that we were already making. But that's the way *Sam* was. *Sam* would go, "Oh, it's really busy. Can you guys play a couple of extra hours?" And we'd say, "Sure." Because we would have anyway. But not only that, he'd give us each a crisp new \$50 bill and he'd give us dinner, go in next door and get that little steak and garlic toast and whatever. Remember we had a few of them at "The Hoist Room," you and I. That was pretty good, actually. We went in there and they split the meal with us. We paid \$3.50 each for a \$7 meal. It was tremendous.

MMS - Can you tell that story of the night that *B.B. King* came to town?

SW - Actually, I had CBC phone me here a few years ago when *King* died and I did an interview about that. And I said, (*Terry*) *Mercer* and the guy that used to work in the bartender at the Hoist Room.

MMS - *Paul Haynes*.

SW - Yeah, *Paul Haynes*. Him and *Paul* were going to bring in *B.B. King*. I went, "Holy fuck. Really?"

SW - "Yeah. We're going to bring him in." So then they were going through the bars trying to sell the tickets and a lot of people didn't know who the hell *B.B. King* was. Now, I knew because I'm a Southerner and I had listened to *B.B. King* on the jukebox in Toronto when I was in school in '69, '70. But a lot of people up there and out west didn't have a clue about him. And he's blues from the South. Georgia or wherever, Louisiana.

I wasn't playing with *Mercer* that year. But I remember I had *Rocky* (last name?) too, that French Canadian cat, playing bass for me that year. And what had happened was, I still had the house gig at "The Yellowknife Inn," but I didn't have a bass player. Because *Charles* (*Kirkpatrick*) had left, him and *Gladys* had moved down to Edmonton. I can remember, I had a friend driving taxi for *Enrico Cagnoni* then, in the day time.

And this other guy that was driving was a French guy from Montreal. Nice guy. And he says, "Oh, I've got a friend who plays bass from Montreal. His mother's a waitress, his father's a drummer, blah, blah, blah." I said, "Geez. I tell you what, we'll fly him up here, I've got a gig for him." So *Rocky* come up and we rehearsed. And he was good. He was a Sagittarian like me, real aggressive. When he got drunk, he'd play real loud. I'd go, "Not so loud, Rocky." And he'd just laugh it off, he didn't care.

But he was a very good player. And so we played up a storm there and when he left in the early summer the next year, he left with his girlfriend and a van and everything. So he'd come up there and made some money, bought a van and away they went. So I felt like... It was good. He'd helped me and I'd given him a leg up, too. That was one of those things where one hand washes the other.

My friend, the cab driver, who I can't remember, he probably was a friend of *Yves Bonet's* or something though because they were from Montreal. He connected me with that guy, I gave him the money and he bought the ticket and got his friend up there and the friend played all winter with me. And saved my ass so I still had my job. That's when I was living down by the laundromat in (*Albert*) *Eggenberger's* house. That would have been in '74. Saved my ass.

And then I remember, there was a band come in from Edmonton and the two girlfriends of the guitar player and whoever in the band. The one girl went on to be a back-up singer for *Ian Tyson* in Calgary. And that girl ended up being in Toronto here, being a big star on stage doing "Cats" and all that stuff. And her last name was *Gilmour, Susan Gilmour*.

George Hauser was the bass player that come in with that band. "Pickins" or something they were called. And we're playing in the Yellowknife Inn and these two pretty girls show up and they're sitting up front and when we took our break they're going, "My friend, the guitar player that are playing down at "The Gallery," he broke his nail. Do you have any false nails?" And I said, "No, I don't use them. When I break my nail, I never thought of that." So then I ended up hooking up with them. I went down to "The Gallery" and sure enough, these guys are really good. And the guitar player, what he had done was, when he breaks his nails, he used false nails. So after that I bought some false nails and if I broke a nail, I'd glue that false nail on and then I wouldn't be losing my touch and I could play like hell. Because when you're picking real hard sometimes your nail breaks, then there you go. You lose your attack. So, the false nail thing's really good.

But that was Pipmans, or "Pickins" rather. And *George (Hauser)* was playing bass in the band. So I can remember that's when they had the band house, across from *JT's (John Telgen)* old place, right? Behind "The Gallery." So I can remember being at a party there after the gig and sitting on the couch with *George*, talking about half diminisheds. (half diminished chords) So he was the only other player I'd run into in years who had a clue about what I was talking about.

Well that's because he went to university or whatever. NAIT, maybe it was. And he gave me all these sheet music and stuff. All these scales and Gypsy minor and all that jazz that you took probably. He had all that stuff. So I can remember talking with him about half diminisheds and stuff. And so that was a real nice connection because all of a sudden I met somebody that had a little more music theory going on. So then when I had a chance, next time I needed a bass player, I got a hold of *George*. And *George* come up and his wife had been a secretary at a music studio. So I don't know how that worked but he'd come up and play with me two weeks at a time, then he was down there for a week. Then he was back up for three weeks and then he was down there for a week.

And I can still remember at my house and the guy would be eating a raw cucumber. Fucking strange. And he was a string bean. Big, tall, he's a grown guy with hair right down to there. A very good player. But he's on some of those CDs and on some of those tapes that are on my Facebook site from when we were doing "Chicago." We were singing some "Chicago" tunes. Some of the nicest playing that I've got. Now *George* wasn't a great bass player because he'd swing around a little bit too much. He'd want to skate around a little bit but he was playing a fretless I believe.

But it was so solid with (*Terry Mercer*) and *JT (John Telgen)* and myself that the one was always there and the big sound and all that. So he didn't have to play as much foundation as he might have otherwise. Because I can remember when he first come up we tried playing some blues at the house and it didn't quite work a few times. And I remember thinking, "Geez, I hope this is going to work." But then of course it did after a while.

But that "Chicago" stuff, that's some of the best stuff I've got on tape and it sounds great. And where we're singing that horn song that they all scatted. They did that as a scat song. And then I had all those great guitar licks that I copied off the album. Even now when I listen to it I go, "Jesus, I can't believe that sounds so good." It's on here if you want to listen. And I go, "Fuck, I

can't believe that sounds so good." So that made me feel real good. Well, I was feeling lonesome. And *Gordy Piro* had tapes and *Dale Olafson* had tapes and they gave them to *Norman (Glowach)*. *Norman* put them onto CD's and sent them down to Brockville. So that's where I got that CD. So, that was "The Gallery." And that was (*Terry*) *Mercer* and man he could play. We were going... (sings) and *Mercer* got that growly sound out that keyboard, it was great.

MMS - When did *JT (John Telgen)* come into the picture?

SW - Okay, *JT* and I were friends in Brockville. And he was the drummer here. And I don't recall playing with him but we were all heads together. And all the hippies from Prescott used to come down to Brockville and either bring something with them or get something or whatever. So, we all used to collect together in different places. We were all friends and we'd go to somebody's apartment. There'd be 10 of us there getting blasted and telling stories and whatever. So *JT*, I knew *JT* since we were like 20, 22, 23. I didn't go to Yellowknife until I was 24 or something.

So then *Alex Skakum* was in Yellowknife. I see *Alex Skakum* in "The Gold Range" on Saturday afternoon matinee and *Skakum's* going, he's from Prescott, friend of *JT's*. "I'm going down to Prescott, I'll see *JT*, have you got a message." I said, "Yeah, tell him there's lots of work here." So about a month later, I'm walking down from the grey house to the post office and pulling up in front of "The Yellowknife Inn" is this old car and *JT* gets out and hitches up his pants. And I go, "Wow!" It's fucking *Telgen*. So he had the drum kit in the backseat and a dog and *Debbie*.

His father had given him the car in Ontario and he'd driven that car all the way up North. And I didn't have any work for him because I already had a drummer. *Tippett* probably. So I got him playing with *Pat Moore* and those guys. So he's playing with *Pat* and *Robbie Moore*. So he played with them the first winter he got there. So then, *JT* was ready to play the next year. Because he played with my friends and then my people were gone and then we were open to play again. *John's* the best drummer I ever worked with. The guy was instinctive and an animal when it come to hearing. His ears were huge and he could hear everything that was happening and embellish it. Like he only made you sound better. He was real good.

So I remember being at a party at *Dale Olafson's* and *Terry* goes, "Let me come back into the band, man. I want to play in the band." I go, "Aw geez, *Terry*, I'd regret not having you. Okay," I said, "No problem. We'll put it all together again." And then that's good, "Oh yeah, you sure?" I said, "Yeah, don't worry about it. We'll do it." And we did. And that was good. And then we played for the rest of the time that *Terry* was alive, we were playing together. *Mercer* had a big sound. He had lots of bottom end and he had lots of aggression. And his playing was big and those big chords and everything. He wasn't afraid to belt it. Whereas when I was doing it by myself, I was wailin' away, like just trying to fill up the void. It didn't have the half the emphasis that it did when *Mercer* and I played together because he and I had some chemistry and when he was gone, there was no chemistry. It was just me and it's not the same at all.

MMS - So tell me about the night that *B.B. King* came to town. The day, you know....

SW - I can remember they had-

MMS - ...where it happened.

SW - They did it in the arena. The old arena there. (Jerry Murphy Arena) And they had to keep the ice in for another 10 days because the ice was going to go out on the whatever. And they kept the ice in because they didn't want to have it out on the pipes on the sand. So they kept the ice in and then the day of the concert, they killed the ice machine in the morning and they covered the floor with plywood and they put all the chairs up.

So all these cats are in there. *B.B. King's* band, they're all these Southern cats and they're all going, "Geez, it's cold in here! Cold in here!" And it was cold because there was fucking ice underneath the plywood floor. And so the arena was, say, 45 or 50 degrees. It was like a warm fridge. And we're all Yellowknifer's, we didn't care. We didn't even notice it probably. But they sure did because they just come from 80 degree temperatures and they were in Northern Canada now. And not only that, they're playing in a hockey arena that just had the ice covered up with plywood.

It's too bad that they couldn't have got *King* to do two shows. A second day in other words because they did a matinee and there was oh, 300 or 400 people. And they needed a full house for both shows. Then they did the show that night and by then the word had got around town, there was like 600 people. So if they had been able to do a second day, they would have had another 600 or 700 people because everybody would have went back for a second go-around here. It's just like going to the bar and hearing a good band. You go back the next night too. So I remember we played and we had *Tommy Hudson's* PA, we had my PA which is the one that *Mercer* and I bought.

So then they did their first set and they were complaining, "Oh, well the PA's not loud enough." And I remember saying to *King* when he come on stage, he's a big guy. He had that guitar looked like a bow tie, he was a big guy. Huge. And so I said to him, I've got *Alex Skakum*, the guy who was a friend of *JT's*, he had a big "Fender Super Reverb" with the forked ends and a beautiful amp. And so *Mercer's* going, "We got to get some gear for this gig."

And so the rider they had was like, you couldn't keep half that stuff, wasn't gonna happen in a wee town like that but I knew that we could get some gear together, nevertheless. Because we'd been playing those concerts more or less, so we knew if we got the gear together, it'd suffice. So I went to *Alex*, I remember going to his apartment and saying, "*Mercer's* bringing in *B.B. King*. How would you like to have *B.B. King* play through that amp?" "Really?" I said, "Yeah." "No problem."

So we had his amp which was a (Fender) "Super." So I can remember we had it mic'ed and everything, and I was playing a regular volume like I would mine, you know and it was loud enough. It was okay. And so, when *King* come on stage, he's huge. And I remember shaking hands with him. Huge hand. And I said, "*Mr. King*, we have everything mic'ed." And he said, "Well, mic it as you may, I'll play it as I'm used to." And he went over to the amp, Pat and he turned everything on 10. All the way across. And I thought, "Whoa!"

So then we'd switched the PA's since, so *Hudson's* PA which we had been using for the PA and my PA which we're using to mic the horns. We switched it around so he was singing through my PA and *Hudson's* PA we were just using for the horns. And after all they didn't even care because you could hear the horns anyway. So we thought, "Well, we'll mic the horns" but we didn't really have to. But I still remember, that when he played... He hit that note and he'd just pull the volume up on the instrument And the amp was like wide open on its back going... It was incredible. And I thought, "Boy, has he got a lot of guts to play that "Fender" wide open. But he had everything wide open. I remember telling that to a few people who go, "Oh, ugh." I said, "Well, no, he never opened the guitar up wide open at all."

Apparently *Jeff Beck* played his... I never did. I always locked my volume control right at the top, because you could back it off a bit to eight, you lose all your highs. But *Jeff Beck* liked that. So *Jeff Beck* played "Marshall"s and whatever and he had all the power in the amp and he'd always roll his volume control back so you got a better sound, as he called it. A sweeter sound. He didn't want that big bite sound where you're ripping your face off. So I did. I didn't want to rip your face off, I just turned the amp down and just had the guitar on full volume. So I got a big bright center out of the guitar but I adjusted on the amp. Whereas *King* just had the amp wide open. And then he just turned his guitar way back, probably. To half volume, probably. And then when he wanted it to sustain, he'd hit that note and it was like a field holler. He'd go... Just like those guys who are... Just like a field holler in the South, picking cotton which he did. And so that was the kind of attack he had and I remember thinking, "Man that guy plays one note..." He was nailing that note and he was vibrating it and they just pull a little volume up and it'd just sound like a trumpet.

So he never played a chord. Once in while he'd play the fifth chord. He'd throw in the fifth at the very end of the phrase. But his hands were too big. His fingers were bigger than our thumbs. He was a big guy. And so, no wonder he had 16 kids and four wives. I'm sure there's other things about him. So I can remember him playing that stuff and you'd see him grab the chord at the very end of the phrase and it would be like the E and then he'd go back to the A minor or whatever it was. And he'd be playing all that stuff and he couldn't... he didn't play any chords. So when he was playing that stuff, he had an older cat there with a suit and the vest, sittin' back with a nice Gibson, hollow body, like mine, on a chair. You know, "The Thrill Is Gone"? All those nice complicated lines that were going on behind it... Because *B.B. King* didn't play no lines, he just played the solo, like a trumpet player. And he sang which made your hair stand up. So he sang and then when he'd solo it, it was like, "Oh my god." And then he's singing and it'd be, "Oh my god." It was incredible. What an experience. Like going to church. I'm not religious but you can tell when they feel it. And it gets to you. You can feel the vibes, eh? So this other cat is playing all this very nice melodic lines and stuff behind him and comping all those pretty chords. And so if you listened to "The Thrill Is Gone" with the symphony playing the violins and everything behind. You'll hear that second guitar doing some very, very sophisticated orchestral guitar parts. And that was the dude that was behind him. And that cat behind him, had 20 years on him, so he's 60s probably.

Now, to *B.B. King's* credit, we knew if they'd had an extra show, they would have made money or broke even. So as it was they lost seven grand. Seven grand was quite a bit of money in those days. *B.B. King*, to his credit, they paid for their own hotel rooms. They paid for their own meals.

And I believe they paid for their flight from Edmonton. So they took the money that they got but they paid for their own expenses. So (*Terry*) *Mercer* still lost seven grand. So let's imagine they would have lost 12 grand. So *B.B. King* and this band made up for that. Good hearted guy, obviously and what was he going to do as a musician? He knows how it is. And he probably loved the fact that the Canadians loved him so much. And he had a real ripe audience there. They were roaring and hollering and just loved it, you know? And so they covered their own expenses. And I can remember *Mercer*... They owed seven grand. It took them a couple of years to pay it off. And when *Mercer* died, he died, as they say, standing pat. He didn't owe any money.

MMS - Did he ever talk about his time playing in Edmonton?

SW - Yeah, he played with a band called "Martha Strange." The one year, some of his cronies from that band came in in a band at "The Gallery" And so, he introduced me to one of the guys in the band who he'd played with in "Martha Strange." The guitar player, I think. So I sat in and I was playing with them. He was just playing and I was playing open, first position, so but playing. And I remember his friend saying to Terry, "Yeah, this guy can play." And I was, didn't have any trouble keeping up with him, I knew what he was doing. We're having fun. So he complimented Terry, "Yeah, this guy can play," he says. That was one of his friends from "Martha Strange." And you know, they're a well-known band. They were a well-known band in the city. So, not that it'd matter now but at that time, if you mentioned "Martha Strange," there was lots of people there who knew them.

MMS - Okay, I'll just ask this flat out and see where it leads. How much were you able to make a living, playing music in Yellowknife?

SW - Well the first winter, I can remember in the fall I was working with *David Baron* and we were hauling drywall and stuff down from the 5th floor of the Carlson building and we went to the top floor and we brought everything down off the different floors. And so that made me a bit of money. And *Dave Baron* was staying at the house, he was a friend of *Roy Sanders*, actually. And *David* was staying at the Grey house there that fall. And then it was that fall that *Jack Carney* approached us about playing and we got the gear. And so that by the winter time, we were playing at "The Elks." So I was making \$125 a week. And my rent was \$20 a month.

MMS - Did that carry through?

SW - What the gigs?

MMS - The ability to pay the rent and put food on the table? Even with the favors and everything like that?

SW - Yeah, because by the time *Stan* was saying that he wanted more money for the rent and he wasn't complaining about it. He was just going, "Geez, you know, I'm paying \$60 a month for the house taxes." And that was when I said to him, you know, better give him a good deal. "Okay, I'll double the rent and I'll pay your taxes." So that was still only a hundred bucks. And that was one weekend's pay. I had 25% of my income went for my rent and the rest was all for dope and fucking groceries. And so it was a good life, boy.

MMS - So '72 you landed there and...

SW - Yeah, June of '72 I began.

MMS - And sort of played through and were sort of carrying this through until the mid 70's but we can carry it up, I guess, until the mid to late 70s-

SW - So I was in the Grey house until I went to Italy. Must have been, '74 I went by myself. So I was in that Grey house for two winters. And as it turned out, when I talked to *Wayne Grant* on the internet here, last few years. He lived in the Grey house. A lot of people lived in the Grey house. Lots of them. Anyway, the Grey house was good to me. Where'd I live after that? After that, it was down across from Fire Hall, behind the laundry there. *Kim Ferry's* wife was, her father had the laundry. He was a sweet guy. And when we played his daughter's wedding, I remember the other, the twin sister got married and we played the wedding. Oh man, the party they had out at McNiven beach, was a piss up. And that's the first time I met *Pete Hardy*. What a hammerhead that was. Everybody was passing out and puking on their shoes or the guy next to them and all that. It was a real party. We played that dance for the wedding in the Yellowknife Inn banquet hall.

There was a sax player, a black guy, playing in "The Yellowknife Inn" in the band next door. And I said to him, "We're playing a wedding next door can you come by after your gig and liven things up for me, man?" And so, he did. He come over and he played the shit out of the blues and everything and they loved it. And then the father of the bride come up and gave us all \$50 bills. He was like *Sam* in "The Gold Range" where he'd give us money to play more. So he gave us all \$50 bills and we played another hour or so. And it was real sweet and I thought, "Man, this Yellowknife's great."

You know what else, I loved about Yellowknife? Was those theater nights that they used to have with *Merlyn Williams*. Fucking *Merlyn Williams* could stand up there and recite a whole fucking one act play. They did short plays. Russian comedies and stuff. They'd have on those wild outfits with the top hats and the big coats and they were like spies in the 20s or something you know? It was very 1890s maybe. It's almost like "Sherlock Homes" kind of stuff. And *Merlyn Williams* is a hell of an actor. And what a memory that guy had. And so we'd go over there, dinner theater. We'd go in there and you'd have the meal from the kitchen and then we'd sit back for an hour and half and be entertained by these locals. He was a real artist. A real artist. *Merlyn Williams*. Welshman. Real Welshman. Man was he good. And I thought, "Jesus Christ, Brockville don't have that."

I never seen that like that down here. And that's one of the things that was happening there. And so I just found that in the North, there was a lot more arts maybe happening than you might think. You know because when you get there, you don't know what to expect then all of a sudden there's all this stuff going on. You know? Wow! And the fact that everybody was so friendly, Pat. Oh geez, that was remarkable, I liked that.

MMS - Okay. Cool.

SW - But that was really neat, to have dinner theater. And they kept that going. That was a regular winter thing that I remember. And what better thing to have happening in February when it's terrible out, than to have something entertaining like that.

MMS - How did the Yellowknife music scene change in your time in there in the mid-70s. Say up to about '77 or so.

SW - Well, I don't know, all that changed was that for me was, I could see all the other cats like *Herbie (Lafferty)* and those other guys were always playing those Elks dances and stuff. And in '73, when I joined with *Randy (Demmon)* and we played the house gig at "The Yellowknife Inn" then I was there for the next 8 years. Seven or eight years. So I had that gig. I just saw it as an ongoing process. We were playing "The Yellowknife Inn," we never played "The Gold Range" til the last couple years I was there. We played "The Yellowknife Inn," like for four or five years and "The Gallery." And then when they had "The Explorer," we ended up playing "The Explorer" too so we had three places to play there. And when "The Gold Range" cashed in, we had four places to play. So my god, we were doing a lot of playing. And for me, it was a case of trying to change the book and keep things going. And what I loved about it was, there was, let's say there was a thousand people came to town every summer. And I'd say 300, 400 or 500 of them stayed. And they'd stay until the next summer. So we had a built in crowd every year there was a whole bunch of the new people and a whole bunch of the old people who were still there from the year before.

And so every two years the crowd was turning over. So we had a whole bunch of new people every year and a bunch of them were staying. And so we had lots of people in the bar that loved the music and they're all there dancing and partying. And I was surprised how many people were like "Queens University" types and Kingston, Ontario and all these kids from all over the country really. And that for me, that's what was changing, the audience was always there and we had steady work and I couldn't believe it. And like I said to a lot of people, all the live wires in Southern Canada went north and a lot of them were in Yellowknife. Because it was full of "A" personalities and alpha males and women that were all real gung-ho and ready to go. And they're the kind of people that actually will leave their small town and go and seek adventure. And I was one of them because I'd hitchhiked all over the country before I went up there.

I'd gone down east, I'd gone out west and then finally I went up north. And then when I went up north, it was so good I stayed. And I went up there initially goin' "Oh well, you know, I'll work up here for a little while and then I'm not going to spend any more damn winters in Canada. I'm going to go somewhere warm." And then of course, boom, you get hooked up there, everything's so good. The fact that it was a 24 hour party was great too. And I was cool because I knew if I got into that, I'd be in trouble. But when you finish work it was, what party do you want to go to tonight?

And then on Sunday, in February, when it was terrible out, there was two or three house parties you could go to. You could go and take a bottle of wine and have some dinner with 10 friends in a place in an apartment somewhere. And if you were feeling blue and were depressed in February because of the shitty weather and the darkness, all those house parties and stuff just lifted you right up out of that. And the other thing and I tell people at the grocery store all the

time about the tropical plants. I said, "Man, when I lived up north, everybody and their dog had tropical plants in their house and their apartment."

So when you walked in it was like, you could smell the earth and the plants and you see all this greenery, and it's 40 below outside and dark and you look at all this green stuff. And they all had incredible record collections. Some of the bands come into the, not "The Gold Range," but "The Gallery" and these guys were like from California, figured they're cool. And they were cool, some of those guys. But they loved the north when they got there and got... *(Terry) Mercer* used to go to these guys and say, "Well, there's no music union here. There's no musician's union but we're the union and we're a local band and we're inviting you to a barbecue at our house on Sunday afternoon."

So I'd go to the grocery store and I'd buy \$20 worth of steaks at like \$2 a steak. So we'd have like 10 steaks and a big mess of corn and stuff, all the discount table and all this veg. And so I'd throw a house party down behind the laundry there when I lived in that place in '74. And so that was real common to have a big party there and barbecue steaks and we'd all be there and then we'd have these band guys from Vancouver or from California or wherever. We were treatin' them good. And they were going "Man, these people are great. They're friendly."

That's what I liked about it. Everybody was so friendly. And the other thing was and I told those guys, "Don't underestimate this crowd, buddy. These people are from all over the country and they all got huge record collections. So don't think you're one up on them with your music and all that smarmy shit because you're not." I said, "These people are as advanced as they'd be in Toronto or Montreal." I said, "Everybody here that's hip is from somewhere else and they're listening to a lot of good music." And they all had huge record collections because that's the way it is in the winter time, you had to hunker down and get into the tunes and have a smoke or a drink and just sort of veg. And so, like I just remember some of those guys coming into "The Gallery" and they're from California and they were just mind blown by it. The friendliness of everybody.

I still remember this guitar player getting out of a cab at my place in the morning and he still had his bathrobe on. They'd picked him up at the band house and sent him down to my place and we were partying there for a couple hours and then he'd get back in another cab and he went back up. And he's going, "I can't believe it." And he still had his bathrobe on, he hadn't even got dressed yet. He had a bathrobe on and slippers and he was partying. And it wasn't his choice, somebody picked him up and brought him, took him out and brought him to a party. So they were, it was a real eye opener for those guys. I'm sure they had a good life in California too, you could be sure. But they certainly didn't expect to go north of 60 and have that kind of life up here. They were quite surprised. It was good, it was real good, like everything, there was like the golden touch on a lot of stuff up there. Where everything you touched just turned into gold. It was just incredible. And the number one thing was, that I always used to say, "Take care of the product, product will take care of you." So as long as you take care of the music, the music's going to take care of you. And it's true because when you make good music, you're in demand and you're working. And you're not really working for a lot of money, you're working so you can keep playing because the real thing in life is to play music, not to make money. And that's true as hell, isn't it?

MMS - True, yeah. So true.

SW - The playing is very gratifying. I never had a bad night's sleep when I was working up there. When you go home and you've had a full day and you played for a big house and they're all happy and you go home and you hit the sack, you feel good. It's a real good feeling to have satisfaction in your work. And I had a lot of that, I was lucky.

MMS - Any and you've already told me a few, your most memorable gigs? I guess, in those times?

SW - We played at McNiven Beach on a flatbed that *Garth (Eggenberger)* took out there and we were playing a concert, and *(Terry) Mercer* lined this thing up. And this was pre-"Folk on the Rocks." So that's more or less what was happening there. And I could still remember, we were playing some "Chicago" or whatever and I had real long hair then. And there's a picture of me with the long hair and the "Jazzmaster," and there's *Thor (John Sigvaldason)* with his hat on or whatever. And *JT (John Telgen)* behind the drums and with the sunglasses on. And *(Terry) Mercer*. And we were on that flat bed and there was, I don't know, a couple of hundred people there dancing in the sand, you know? Sunday afternoon or whatever it was. In the summer, it was beautiful. And I remember that was a really great gig because it was a freebie. We weren't getting paid for that, we were just playing because it was fun.

So we played that concert and then they ended up turning that, we did that, started turning into a regular thing and then it turned into "Folk on the Rocks." Because *Rod Russell* and those guys built that permanent stage up there and we played there a few times. And then after that it was people coming in from all over the territories that were playing and then people from Vancouver. And that was part of "Folk on the Rocks," once they started bringing in people from down south. It was really good. And that was basically me and *(Terry) Mercer* and the boys playing out on a flatbed at the beach. *Garth Eggenberger*, make anything happen, that guy.

MMS - Yeah, that's for sure. Yeah, winding it down here, I've...

SW - Oh, "The Gallery," all the gigs at "The Gallery" for *Gladys*, they were great. "The Gallery" was a great crowd. My problem was we had the same book for too long, there it took us... You know, we'd play there five or six weeks, I'd be playing the same tunes at the same time of the night and I'd see *Doug Maybroda* and his woman coming in at 9:30 and, you know and then somebody else would come in at 10:00. Yes, were playing the same thing.

And I thought, "Gee, we were playing the same tune when they come in last time." The only thing that bothered me was, when you're that busy and you can't turn your book over fast enough and you got the same people coming in and really giving you lots of support. You always felt like, oh wow, you know, like I said, here comes the same people, same time and we're playing the same song. So that was sort of, a little ironic, I thought. But that's part of being, what, I don't know. Successful in a small town. You can only do so much.

MMS - The truth. I'm bumping into different musicians who were locals. Like the *Wilf Schidlowksys*...

SW - Oh yeah.

MMS - or the *Norm Glowachs* or “Akaitcho Hall” as well. And “Akaitcho Hall” was-

SW - That's where (*Tom*) *Hudson* came from.

MMS - ...was just like a...

SW - A real melting pot because all those out of town students were there and they had their own little band scene going on or the music scene and that's where *Hudson* came from. So all those guys are doing their thing out of Akaitcho Hall.

MMS - Yeah. So the interaction between you guys playing in the clubs, maybe not so much the guys from Akaitcho Hall because they were...

SW - They were younger-

MMS - ...younger. And they couldn't get into the clubs until they were of age. Probably got in there anyways, who knows and with the local players as well. So the local guys, I'm thinking of *Wayne Bertrand* and “Stained Glass Illusion” and *Wilf Schidlowsky* and “Easy Street.” What was the interaction like with those guys or was there any?

SW - Well, I knew those guys personally, I knew *Wayne* personally but I mean I didn't play with *Wayne*, it wasn't a musical thing. I liked what *Wayne* was doing, he was doing his thing. He was younger than I was and he certainly didn't have all the experience that I had. I mean, all that grounding that I had down here playing in that high school band gave me a pretty good footing. So when I went up there I was doing the same old stuff, only a new book. And I'd been playing for years, so that made a huge difference. Playing all the way through my teen years and all the way through high school and then when I was up there, I was at my prime really. And *Tommy Hudson* was one of the best things that I ran into up there when I first got there because *Hudson* had a great voice and he was a sweet guy and he was Akaitcho Hall, he was originally from what, (Fort) Smith?

MMS - Yeah.

SW - But he was such a sweet guy and could sing like a canary, that guy. He could sing anything. Who else can you ever run into that could sing “Foreigner” and “Journey” and all that stuff and just nails it like *Steve Perry*? I tell people here, I said, “This buddy of mine can sing all that “Journey” stuff. You know, the guy could sing anything.” And even one of the last times I was there and he was in “The Elks” singing with some band and I was painting the outside of “The Elks” and I can still remember painting that and then going back in the evening and hearing the band coming out of the door, you could hear them come out of the side door and there's *Hudson* in there singing, beautiful. And he's singing some song by “Journey” or “Foreigner” or whatever it was, it was contemporary. I go, “That's my buddy.” What a talent. Never left. Could have gone to Edmonton or Vancouver, anywhere and had a big career, I'm sure. But he didn't

pursue that. What was the name of that guy from Hay River that he played with? That guy that always wore the black cowboy hat?

MMS - *Randy...*

SW - *Randy Daniels?*

MMS - *Randy Daniels.*

SW - A very good songwriter and beautiful stuff. But I thought he was a good songwriter and he played some good songs and he played on *Hudson's* albums or he had written for *Hudson* or *Hudson* has recorded his material. And they were good tunes. Real nice tunes. So I thought he was a real talented guy.

MMS - I don't know, last questions like that, but what memories of your time stay with you? We've been talking about that for the last three hours, but...

SW - Well, I'd say that the high of playing good music and having a full house was great and gratifying. And the generosity, the population in general and how you'd meet total strangers and everybody's so friendly. That was a great thing. And then the severity of the climate brought people together like, big time. Like I said, in February, the fact that you could go to any dinner party on a Sunday at so-and-so's place or over at somebody else's place. And then when the bars closed on Saturday night, you can... There was people in the bars yelling out addresses for parties. So it was like... Trails End, Northland Trailer Park, number whatever. Fraser East Apartment. You'd hear all these parties being called out and if you went to one of those parties there was 60 people there. There was 60 people standing around in somebody's two bedroom apartment. And that's what it was like. And I loved that, I thought, "Holy Christ!" Brockville was pretty good for partying but Yellowknife was better. And that was great, so there was a lot of comradery going on, man. And that was, for me, that was a real lift. I loved that. That's why I stayed there. Why do you want to leave some place where you're having the time of your life?