

Tony Buggins

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MMS - If I could just get you to start talking about maybe your early, earliest memories and how you got turned onto music. Where you were growing up, just the early years and stuff?

TB - My earliest memories goes back to Fort Resolution, that's where I grew up. I wasn't born there but I grew up there. When I was in my pre-teens, there was a lot of music going on in (Fort) Res in those days, live music, everybody played guitar or fiddle, mostly. A lot of different musicians, a lot of young people played and sang. So I kind of grew up around that kind of environment. So the music was always there. Watching people play live, that's what I wanted to do. I guess it's kind of stuck with me ever since I first saw it. But there was a lot of good music going on. People were playing a lot, around the '60s I think, people that were going to Akaitcho Hall came back to (Fort) Res for Christmas holidays, people like *George Mandeville* and they were picking guitars. That's the first time I've seen anybody picking guitar. Before that it was all strumming, fiddle strumming. *George Mandeville*, *Isadore Tourangeau*, *Mathew Lafferty*, people like that came back to (Fort) Res and they were all guitar pickers. That was it, that was it, Pat. I was hooked, boy! So I picked it up and then my friends and I played a lot. We played mainly instrumentals, "Ventures", "Shadows", all the instrumentals. We played a lot of early British stuff, music too but we did that in (Fort) Res with really Simpson Sears equipment, Silvertone amps and I don't know what the hell kind of name of ... But we kinda got the feeling of working as a group back then 'cause all of us played but we all played individually but then when everybody started buying guitars, we had amps and then we started bringing them together and we started to work the music out and we found out, hey, you can do something here, you know. So that was good. And then I kept doing that, then I went to boarding school in Fort Smith for 2 years, continued playing, met some other kids. A lot of music in (Fort) Smith back in those days. People like *George Kurszewski* and those guys were just getting into it, *Randy Daniels*, so there was a whole new crew of kids to play with. Then I moved to Akaitcho Hall for my grade 11 and 12, then I ran into *Tom Hudson* and *Pat Burke*, *Kevin Mackie* and *Brian Kovatch*. During High school days we played a lot of music in Yellowknife, played at the Elks for adult dances, I think we played in the (Gold) Range one week during the first "Arctic Winter Games". A lot of high school dances in Hay River and here. It was a lot of fun! I just kept playing after I left school I went back to (Fort) Res, played in Pine Point for a while then I came back to Yellowknife and worked with *Archie Loutitt* in "North Bound Freeway".

MMS - OK, I'll get you to stop there, 'cause there's already lots of stuff.....When you were playing back in (Fort) Res, if you could try and remember some of the names of the people you were playing with back then or even what years that would have when you were first starting to play in (Fort) Res?

TB - Probably '64 or '65, '66. I played with *Allan Cardinal*, his brother *Lloyd (Cardinal)*, *Angus Beaulieu*, *George Mandeville*, *Isadore Tourangeau*, *Herb Beaulieu*. There was a guy named *Billy King* who played guitar, *Ernest Beaulieu* and there was quite a few, some friends of mine who have passed on. Guys like *Ricky Mandeville*, he was there, quite a few of us.

MMS - When you first heard *George (Mandeville)* coming back from Akaitcho hall and he was picking those early guitar instrumentals and stuff like that, you weren't playing those instrumentals with *Angus (Beaulieu)*. You were probably playing more traditional stuff. So you were probably playing a few different kinds of music?

TB - No, I think it was all mainly fiddle music when I first started playing publicly, it was all fiddle music. In (Fort) Res.

MMS - At dances.

TB - Yeah, at dances. I think my first dance was when I was 13 years old. I'm pretty sure it was, I remember that.

MMS - Playing with Angus, he seemed to be a mentor for a whole generation of players in (Fort) Res.

TB - He did. He saved, he actually saved music. There was a time when there was no music at all. No music happening in (Fort) Res. *Angus* kept a few of us going like myself, *Leandre Beaulieu*, the original "Native Cousins". And he went out and bought all kinds of instruments and he kept those at his house to make sure we didn't get carried away. You know you're young you get carried away, huh? So he bought drums and he bought amps and everything and he just set it up and he put us to work. It got to a point where we started playing on weekends in Hay River and Pine Point, Fort Providence. We played in Yellowknife here for many years for "(Caribou) Carnival" place called "The Longest Bar".

TB - That was the "Native Cousins" years. We played there about 13 years or more, straight. That was another whole era of music there.

MMS - OK, so this was after, what, the "Native Cousins" thing was after?

TB - Yeah, it was way, way after.

MMS - Way after, OK, so you got your early years....

TB - Get back to the beginning there, those people that I mentioned, most of them are not playing anymore but *Allan (Cardinal)* still plays and a lot of us still..... can't give it up, you know it's kind of very important for us to keep it going, encourage young people. I've been travelling quite a bit lately, playing music up in this country and boy, it's good to see a lot of

young bands working. It makes me feel good, boy. Mission accomplished!

MMS - So, I'd just like to try and get as much of a snapshot as I can of the earlier years. *Angus* was letting you use amps and stuff like that and making sure you had guitars. You would be playing with these other guys and playing like the early rock and roll guitar instrumentals stuff like that and also playing the traditional stuff with him. Was he showing you how to back him up on the fiddle and stuff like that? Were you just playing with him and the fiddle or were you playing in a band?

TB - No, there was a lot of freedom, we do what we want. He let us do a lot of modern day stuff back in those days, like early rock and roll, classic rock, *Beatles* and so forth but he would come up and join the boys and when he did that, it was all *Angus*, really traditional. I mean, his kind of music, the kind of back up he wanted for his fiddle music back in those days was very, very strict. Timing had to be perfect. He had a really good ear for notes and if somebody was out of tune he can tell you. So it was a very strict training ground. And if you weren't on time, that's where I learned my timing I think, it's gotta be perfect for him and it was very strict and he made sure we had good timing.

MMS - Right on, so he was teaching you a lot.

TB - Oh yeah, he taught us a lot. He bought a vehicle and took us to where ever the gigs were on weekends. Back to (Fort) Resolution on Sunday. He would go back to work on Monday. Come weekend we would go to a different community to play. Back to (Fort) Res on Sunday, he'd go back to work on Monday.

MMS - Almost like a hockey team

TB - So, he kept us going and he was proud of what we did so he was like a manager, he exposed us to a lot.

MMS - He gave you that playing experience.

TB - We went to Yellowknife at Carnival time, back in those days, that was a good gathering here. Music was happening, a lot of live music was happening in Yellowknife and it was good to be a part of that. Good to see.

MMS - When you were growing up, maybe before you even started playing and stuff like that, were you listening to music, what kind of music were you listening to, how did you get it, was it on records, on the radio?

TB - Radio, mainly when I was young it was radio. But then my older sister, I was fortunate enough to have an older sister who was in school in the '50's to bring back the 45's, *Buddy Hollys and Jack Scotts* and *Elvis* of course, *Bobby V, Bobby Vinton*, all those Bobby's. That type of music. It really attracted me that music, the upbeat, the energy as opposed to classic country

that I was used to, 3 chord songs, you know. Then my sister and her generation would come home from school, bring back all this music, all those 45's and LPs. I made sure I had about 3 or 4 of them when they take off. And then that kind of got me into live music because I could feel the energy, I could feel how much fun they were having when they were doing that kind of music. It was kind of natural for us to get into instrumentals because nobody sang back in those days, we grew up with fiddle and guitars, it was just all instrumentals. All of us had picked up a guitar and ended up playing instrumentals. And then everybody went to different schools, different communities as we grew older and people took different paths.

MMS - Was there, like you were saying, there was the traditional music that *Angus* was doing, some of it the fiddle music. When I talked to him he just said it was like a lot of Country and Western. That was the popular music of the day was country music and he was doing the instrumental versions of those. Is that mostly what was coming up on the radio or were you catching any of that early Rock and Roll stuff on the radio?

TB - Not too much, CBC was the station we got in (Fort) Res. The only station a lot of us listened to was "Gather Round" which was a very popular dedication show, straight country music, eh? So that was my exposure to music, that's the only time we listened to radio. Most of the time we were in schools. And if we're not in school we were out playing or jamming.

MMS - So it gave you something to do, kept you out of trouble. The road was in by then, eh?

TB - No, I was pretty lucky. It was all isolated so we didn't have a lot of influence. We were pretty lucky, we got, some of us were fortunate enough to send away for catalogues from the States and end up with these big Fender catalogues with Stratocasters and Telecasters, holy. Kind of made us shy with the kind of guitars we were using.

MMS - Yeah, I bet. If you broke strings where would you buy new strings?

TB - Hudson Bay, that's the only place. They had some strings and they had some picks. That was good. They were pretty expensive for us back in those days but you had to have them. A lot of acoustic guitars, everybody played acoustic so a lot of our early instrumentals were all acoustic. Electric guitar didn't come in 'til probably just before I left (Fort) Res to go to school. Boarding school. Most of my early stuff was all on acoustic.

MMS - So you did get your hands on the electric when it came into town, Yellowknife?

TB - Oh yeah, I was fortunate enough. My father was a wildlife officer so I grew up pretty well. One day I came home from school and there was an electric guitar and an electric amp sitting in the middle of the living room. He encouraged me, he bought that stuff for me but he wouldn't say he did it. So that was it. And then I started buying *Ventures* albums, *Shadows*, every instrumental album we could find we buy.

MMS - And so the Bay would be bringing in these records?

TB - Some of them from the Bay but most of us young kids would order it right from down south, COD, send it off and wait for it at the post office.

MMS - Exciting!

TB - Pick it up and run home!

MMS - I bet. So right from Edmonton?

TB - I think most of it was from Edmonton, yeah.

MMS - Wow, that's amazing. Still 45's right?

TB - 45's and LPs. We knew who got the new ones, the latest.

MMS - Trade them around...

TB - Everybody would run over there and check it out

MMS - Trade them around and everybody would check it out?

TB - No, no, you go to the house, nobody would trade, they were precious boy, holy smokes! You take good care of it. Until you learn it, note for note.

MMS - Just about wear it out learning it. You had a record player or a stereo?

TB - In our home we had a big stereo, one of those big consoles they call it. So we used that. But most of my friends had their own. Turntables, stereos and guitars, I don't know how but everyone managed to buy guitars, you know. Some families were having it pretty rough, single parent families with about 5 kids. Somehow those parents would get their kids guitars, somehow.

MMS - So what years are we talking about there, Tony?

TB - Probably '60 to '65. '61 maybe, '60. Centennial year was '67, I think it was or something, that's when I left to go to boarding school. From '65 to '67 it was all electric stuff, different music altogether. *Chuck Berry* came onto the scene and that killed it!

MMS - That was it there...

TB - That was it for traditional country, boy!

MMS - I mean as far as growing up in an isolated place, there was no road, just the guitars, your entertaining each other basically is what's going on, there is no TV....

TB - Summer time in (Fort) Res I remember, there was dances anytime people felt like dancing. People would work and after work, the days were long, eh? So the young people and the elders, adults would get together, we'd all get together and play ball for about 3 or 4 hours, big ball game and people would come out and watch us and cheer. After that somebody would suggest, hey lets go have a dance and they would pick a place. They'll go there and ask the people, the people say yeah and then they'll give them something, take all the furniture, put it outside, dance all night, eh? When the dance is over, people stayed behind, washed the floors, clean it up and bring everything back in. 10 o'clock next morning, it's like nothing happened. From place to place, different houses, all the time, yeah. I used to sit in the corner right where the musicians were playing and that's where I would sit, I wouldn't move. That live music, the feeling of listening to live music was so good, I just, no matter how tired I was I wouldn't move, I'd sit there, boy.

MMS - Who would you be listening to then, playing at these dances?

TB - Elders, people that have gone now but there was really good old time fiddlers like the late *Sam Norn*, *Johnny Beaulieu*. And then people like *Robert Sayine*, they played, *Billy King*, *Joe King*, some of the names I can't even remember. Those old timers were the main guys. They played nonstop, sweat pouring on their forehead and they'd play for an hour of square dance. People were strumming guitars with combs just so they could hear, that's how loud the fiddle was, you know. They just gave 'er, man, 100%, 110%, sweat don't stop them, boy they're just sweating, pouring sweat and they just givin' 'er.

MMS - Still keep playing that way, these dances would go..

TB - All night

MMS - Say all night long but they were taking turns?

TB - Not turns, maybe they go through 3 fiddlers in one night. And they just go. And have a hell of a good time, just fun. So that's the kind of environment it was for young people, live music just full steam ahead. No TV too, the only other source we had was radio.

MMS - Sounds like paradise to me.

TB - It was. It was until they built the road. I seen that community die in 3 years.

MMS - How's that?

TB - It went from a very happy, loving community to a community that was full of alcohol and drunks. Chaos. Destruction.

MMS - That fast?

TB - Oh yeah, I seen it in my lifetime.

MMS - So all of what you just described to me just, is that when the music just sort of stopped?

TB - That was the end. No, the music didn't stop for me. For a lot of my friends it did. But that had a big impact on how the music came to an end I think. Because for many years, nobody played music, nobody was interested. That's pretty wicked, you know, I've seen that, I've experienced it. I don't talk about it too often, that was a big deal, boy. Killed a community.

MMS - So that road would have hit in '64?

TB - Around the mid '60s, I think.

MMS - '65, yeah

TB - mid '60s, I think, yeah.

MMS - So you were around for a little while of that and then you were out to school.

TB - Yeah, I left town.

MMS - You were 13 when you left and went to boarding school?

TB - I think so.

MMS - In '67 when it was, this is just a bit of an offside as far as '67 goes, but the Centennial celebrations and that whole barge thing, were you in (Fort) Smith or were you in (Fort) Res then?

TB - I was in (Fort) Res. then.

MMS - Did the barges come through there?

TB - Yeah. The barge came through there but that was the end. That was my last summer in (Fort) Res, that fall I left to go to school. So I did see the barge and *Tom (Hudson)* and the boys. That was it. I think that was great 'cause that's what I wanted to do and I seen *Tom* and those guys, a band come in and play. And I was just getting ready to go to school and I knew that's what I wanted to do when I got to school. Kind of a good little boost there.

MMS - Did you get a chance to play with them at all?

TB - No, no, oh no, I couldn't even talk to them, they were like...

MMS - Rock stars.

TB - Yeah

MMS - What kind of music were they playing when they came through?

TB - I don't remember. I remember some tunes, I remember one tune, mainly because of the organ part was "96 Tears" or something.

MMS - Do you remember who was in the band?

TB - *Tom Hudson* and *David Evalik*, *Eddie Baisie*, *Lawrence Thrasher* and I forget the organist. (*Archie Plamondin*) I forget his name but I remember those four guys. Some things you just don't forget, especially when it has a big impact. Yeah, playing the rock stars, eh? 3 years later I was playing in the same band with *Tom*, not too bad.

MMS - Did you get to spend some more time with him in (Fort) Smith?

TB -When?

MMS - When you went to school?

TB - No he wasn't there. He was in Akaitcho Hall when I went to (Fort) Smith. I never met him until I came to Akaitcho (Hall).

MMS - And your time in (Fort) Smith, were you able to keep playing in different bands?

TB - Oh yeah, the first year I got there we had a band, played some high school dances and it was good. Just like in heaven for a little teenager, eh? A lot of good musicians' cause there was kids from all over, all different communities, it was over about maybe 500 of us. So there was some kids from (Fort) Providence, (Fort) Simpson, Hay River, good musicians. We kind of hook up with each other and form little bands here and there, you know. (Fort) Smith was good, Smith had about, had about I think 6 bands going at one time.

MMS - Do you remember some of the names of the people you were playing with when you were there? Some of those people still playing?

TB - *Phillip Constant* was one, *Ernie Constant's* brother, he was our lead singer, pretty good musician then. *Ricky Mandeville* played Bass for me at that time. *Bobby Beaulieu*, *Robert Beaulieu* played drums. I think that was it, those guys I worked with for 2 years, 3 or 4 of us. It's not bad going to school during the day and practising and playing for dances on the weekends. It was good. I didn't even think about home.

MMS - But you'd go back home in the summer time?

TB - Christmas time, oh yeah, every break I go home. And I was always on the telephone, I was always on the phone. It wasn't like I was totally away from home.

MMS - Close enough you got some visits as well after that?

TB - Oh yeah, like I went home anytime I wanted. Jump on the air plane, my Dad would pay the fare to go home Friday, back on Monday, back in school. I didn't do that, not too often either. I stayed in (Fort) Smith and played music, that was it. You know, time, there wasn't enough time, there was so much music to learn, you were constantly working in your free time. You gotta be one step ahead of the rest of the guys, kinda thing.

MMS - Sort of like a competition, learning new songs for the weekend?

TB - The latest song, I remember when we first learned "Hey Joe" by *Hendrix*, there, boy. Everybody else was playing it by *Johnny Rivers*. You had to know what the other guys were doing, we had to spy, it was a lot of fun! It was good competition, friendly competition, a lot of music, we were exposed to different kinds of music because different bands enjoyed different music, not everybody played the same thing. It made it nice, we'd go listen to other guys, we had a lot of fun. No jealousy or no, that kind of foolish feelings, a lot of support.

MMS - And still no television there at that time?

TB - No.

MMS - So you guys were the entertainment for yourselves and everybody else?

TB - Live music was a big thing then, especially for young people. Anything happening outside, there was an opportunity to put on a show, go for it, you know. If we didn't do it, some of the boys in town would do it. Had a fire hall that wasn't being used Friday night, well they just open it up, set up a band stand and have a whole bunch of kids come over and have a dance.

MMS - Summers you would go back to (Fort) Res, were you able to keep playing as much in Res?

TB - Not too much,

MMS - or did you go back and work?

TB - I was the kind of guy that wanted to work so during the summers I would make sure I'd work all summer and have money for school. So the last 3 years I think when Pine Point was operating I used to work at the mine in the summer time. I used to write to them in April, just when school was coming out, letting them know that I'm a student, I'm on a break and I wouldn't mind working. They write you back, you show up there June 28 or something and go to work, you know.

MMS - What kind of work were you doing for them?

TB - Just sweeping and anything that needed to be done.

MMS - Labour or whatever.

TB - Anything that needed to be done. Made good money that way then go back to school.

MMS - Any chances to play in Pine Point?

TB - Oh yeah, sometimes. *Elsie Berger* used to play in the bar there. I was under age, I remember, I used to go in the bar and play, during the break I used to go to the coffee shop, sit there drink coffee and then when it's time to play they would come and get me, back to the bar.

MMS - Were you getting paid when you were playing with those guys in the bar there?

TB - Yeah,

MMS - You must have made some pretty good money there?

TB - I guess so, I just accept whatever they gave me, for playing, I just accept what they gave me. I wasn't expecting anything actually. Good spending money.

MMS - Did you buy some new guitars?

TB - No, no. I used my one guitar for 19 years, until it finally fell apart, a Telecaster.

MMS - That wasn't your first guitar though was it?

TB - Actually, my first guitar was a Rickenbacker, Pat, when I was in Fort Smith. I had a little cheap Simpson Sears catalogue I left (Fort) Resolution with, got to Fort Smith and then one of our supervisors was going to Edmonton on a trip he said I'll take your guitar and I'll trade it in for you, he told me. Took off, came back with a Rickenbacker. I brought that here, I had that in (Fort) Smith for a year then I transferred to Akaitcho Hall for grade 11, I brought that guitar with me. I used that when I first played with UM². I don't know what ever happened to that guitar.

MMS - So, the instruments would come up from down south, you would just sort of trade, not really trade or sort of wheel and deal guitars, if you found one someone wanted to sell, there was probably no problem selling a guitar in those days.....?

TB - It wasn't like that. Back in those days when I wanted a guitar I had to go to Edmonton and get it myself. I got to know quite a few good music stores in Edmonton, I'd go around there, we were getting a good deal. That's the only way. I wouldn't trust anybody to buy a guitar for me

and I wouldn't buy a guitar off anybody. Not then, I didn't know anything. It had to be brand new. So you had to go to Edmonton for that. Most of us did.

MMS - So were there opportunities to do that when you were that young, when you were working in Pine Point?

TB - Oh yeah, we were travelling, take 3 or 4 days and about 5 of us would jump on a bus and take off to the city, come back.

MMS - In the late 60's, we're talking here?

TB - Yeah, did what we wanted to do, do what we had to do, that's what I meant to say. And when everything was done, you get out.

MMS - And head back up to (Fort) Smith?

TB - Yeah.

MMS - You have relatives that you stayed with down there or just book into a hotel?

TB - No, cheap hotel

MMS - Did you ever get to catch any shows or any other bands when you were down there?

TB - Yeah, actually I did, I saw *The Beach Boys*, I saw *The Box Tops*, *Dino*, *Desi* and *Billy*, remember those guys?

MMS - Who's that?

TB - *Dino*, *Desi* and *Billy*. *Desi Arnaz* is *Lucille Ball's* son, *Dino* is *Dean Martin's* son and *Billy (Hinsche)*, I don't know who he was but they had about 3 or 4 albums out I think. Check them out on the Web,

MMS - OK, I'll do that.

TB - *Dean Martin's* son and *Lucille Ball's* son they both played, saw them. *Barry Allen* from Edmonton, who else did I see, I think *The Beach Boys* were probably the biggest ones, *The Box Tops* were pretty good. I remember in a big arena. There was some other bands opening for *The Beach Boys* but I didn't know who they were. It was a pretty long show. Couldn't wait for them to come on.

MMS - So then back up to (Fort) Smith and to school and you were there for a couple of years?

TB - Yeah.

MMS - So by that time, like you say *Tommy Hudson* was already here in Akaitcho was *Pat Burke* there or *George (Kurszewski)* or any of those guys?

TB - *George Kurszewski* was there.

MMS - And *Joe (Kurszewski)*, was Joe there?

TB - Joe was there, yeah.

MMS - Were they going at that time?

TB - They were both going to school in (Fort) Smith, *Randy Daniels*, what's his name *Bimbo*, (*Allan Daniels*) what the hell you call him, he was there. Most of the boys that were playing out of (Fort) Smith were there and then there's *Leonard Desjarlais*, and *Ricky Mandeville*. Most of them are still strumming away, they're still having a good time.

MMS - So from there, that was sort of like grade school and then it was High school and coming up to Akaitcho Hall, were you looking forward to that?

TB - Actually I wasn't. That's a different story that one. When I got into grade 11....., from grade 9, I met this girl in (Fort) Smith. We got pretty close for 2 years, 9, 10 and then she got transferred to Akaitcho Hall. I didn't know that, I went back to (Fort) Smith and found out she wasn't there. I had to get to Akaitcho Hall, man. So I phoned home and complained to my father and he got on the phone and I ended up at Akaitcho Hall. I was following her, I didn't care about anything else. That's how I ended up at Akaitcho Hall. Then there was a band there before that, the previous year it was *Pat Burke* had a band and *Tom Hudson* had a band, "Centenaires" I think they were called. And *Pat Burke* had a band called "Shandells" or something. *Brian Kovatch* from Hay River was..., I met him a year before in Fort Smith, he played with a band called "Shadows of Night". He was a Bass player, he was at Akaitcho Hall and myself and then we listened to these other guys play. Didn't care too much for their music, so we started talking, we wanted to get a band going. All the good players were already taken so we went through a lot of other different boys. None of them, we wanted to actually work with because they didn't do what we wanted to do. It was high school, you gotta play some really kick ass stuff. And then *Tom's* band kind of dissolved and then *Pat Burke's* band kind of dissolved, so right away we picked out all of those guys we wanted to work with and we threw a good band together. That was the first year at Akaitcho Hall.

MMS - What kind of music did you want to play, what kind of music did you put together with them?

TB - Those were the *Steppenwolf*, *Rolling Stones* music. A lot of bubble gum music, anything that was danceable back in those days. *Eric Burdon and the Animals*, a lot of British Invasion stuff, *Cream*, that kind of stuff. A few country songs here and there, anything that was popular,

we did things by *Tony Dawn and Orlando*, “Knock Three Times”, stuff like that, from there we played *Steppenwolf*, some really loud stuff. High energy, it was good. It was really different music, completely different from traditional country.

MMS - Very different from probably a few years before sitting there and listening to the traditional fiddlers all the way up to *Steppenwolf* and *Cream*, that’s a lot of transition in a really short time.

TB - It happened so fast Pat, that’s what I said, so much, all of a sudden you were exposed to all this stuff, holy smokes! Just like a sea of wonderfulness, you know? Jazz, I started listening to Blues and different types of music. It was really, really great, I really enjoyed that. Anything new I would listen to, see what they were doing. Then into that kind of music for a while.

MMS - I was going to ask you, from being in (Fort) Res to Fort Smith, there was probably people had different albums, the different music was spinning, just as far as people having bigger record collections and stuff like that. But at the same time, even in the mid to late ‘60s, you say that whole British invasion thing was happening and all of the old Blues guys were coming back up, that was a whole sort of resurgence in blues music and they were starting to go around to the university campuses, that was starting to be a real cool thing as well. Was it like stages where you have your music in (Fort) Res and then when you went to (Fort) Smith, your eyes were opened a little bit more and then when you came into Yellowknife was it more and more different styles of music to listen to and get under your hands?

TB - Oh yeah, there is, there was, like a stepping stone. Now that you mention it, there was a big, notice differences in each community, different stages. As I got older, music got more, it wasn’t just for the art of playing music it was for making music, the attitude changed. You wanted to create something good now, you just don’t want to stand there and make noise. So, the attitude and the thinking went from, for me anyways, went from a kid having a good time on stage to a kid who was listening to everything else so that you wanted to make noise, you don’t overdo it, you had to be there when you need to, when you don’t need to, kind of thing. So, looking at music kind of changed for me.

MMS - Just being more serious or more a perfectionist?

TB - Probably both, I wouldn’t say perfectionist, I would probably say more serious.

MMS - Craftsmanship?

TB - Yeah, there was more to it than just learning a riff, or note to note and then playing it on stage. There’s more to that, you know. I started to get into that area as I got older and I started reading and asking questions and really looking at all this stuff. It just carried on, eh? And music has always been a part of my life, even to this day, I hate to say it, always, it’s gotta be. Some part of my life during the day has to be music.

MMS - Has to be music, for sure, hey...

MMS - Did *Tommy (Hudson)* and *Pat Burke* and those guys hang around, what was your time in Akaitcho Hall, where were you playing? Did you play in town, out of town?

TB - We played all over the place. When we first started we had *Tom* and *Pat* singing for us, we had two singers, there was 6 of us in the band. But then *Pat* finally left and *Tom*, that was it. We went through a whole process of going through people letting them go, stayed in, finally when *Pat* left, it was down to *Tom*, there was 5 of us, that was it, that was the core, that was the band. And then we started off playing Akaitcho Hall, dances quite a bit, Sir John (Franklin High School). Then we started doing the Elks, adult dances on weekends, Friday and Saturdays. We were the only band allowed to do that so Friday and Saturday night we played for wet dances. We did most of the schools in the city, the (Gold) Range.

MMS - Any travelling?

TB - Hay River, we did a lot of Hay River trips played for their grad dance and teen activities. You know they have teen clubs, they would fly us in on weekends on airplanes, they would pay for our tickets, we'd go there, play Friday and Saturday and come back Sunday, back to school Monday. They would do that, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, I think the boys made a trip to Inuvik one time but I wasn't there. This was in the '60s, late '60s, '68 or '69, eh?

MMS - That's amazing they would fly you. I would think that you would have had to jump in a van or something like that and go down the highway in the shape that it was back then or but no, to fly you, that's incredible!

TB - That's good, yeah. We had a manager, one of the students was our manager so he took care of all the travel so we worked it pretty good. All we had to do was to make sure we had good school marks and then we were allowed to play out of Akaitcho Hall on weekends. We had privileges. But if one of us screwed up on school marks then the whole band was on their back.

MMS - Pull those marks up somehow, eh?

TB - So we did that for about 2 years and then I graduated and that was the end of that.

MMS - So everybody was able to hang around for those 2 years, you were able to keep that 5 piece group together for 2 years that everybody was in. Was *Tommy (Hudson)* done school by then or was he still in Akaitcho Hall?

TB - I think he was done, most of us were done, we were all graduated then. And that last year we played in Akaitcho Hall, the whole band bought all our own equipment, we bought thousands of dollars. We went over to *Harold Glick*, remember him? (*Harold Glick*, owner, YK Radio)

MMS - Oh yeah, I remember *Harold*.

TB - And we got him to order amplifiers, guitars, drums, PA system for us, charge it up. We told him, we'll pay you off by next June.

MMS - And he did it?

TB - He did!

MMS - Amazing!

TB - He did it. Brought all that stuff to Akaitcho Hall, brand new amps, big Garnet amps, holy smokes it was about as tall as I was, powerful stuff!

MMS - What kind of PA systems?

TB - We had a big Garnet PA everything Garnet and we had Marshall amps that Akaitcho Hall had, you know the hostel itself. They had equipment and they had Marshall amps. So we did it, in May or June I think, in May we made our last payments to *Harold*, paid off all the stuff. And everybody kept whatever they played. Everybody went home and it was good.

MMS - That's amazing!

TB - We did that. That was pretty amazing, a bunch of school kids.

MMS - Yeah, that sounds like Paradise to me, man, that's great. You probably spent as much as you spent on your instruments you probably spent that much on records, buying records as well from him too, right?

TB - Probably. I would be always there.

MMS - Waiting for the next shipment to come in.

TB - Boy there as a lot of records back then, stacks of LPs.

MMS - You hang onto that stuff?

TB - I got lots at home right now, I kept a lot of it, a lot if it still in good shape. A lot of instrumentals, early stuff I still keep, yeah.

MMS - So by that time, is that when you bought your Telecaster?

TB - During the Akaitcho Hall days I bought a Vox, I used a Vox guitar, one pick up, nice little guitar, boy, nothing fancy, just a volume, one little pick up and that was it. People thought I was crazy, all those kinds of toys but it was a working machine, really nice.

MMS - The sound is in your hands.

TB - Really nice set up, really light guitar. Small kinda. Played that for 2 years. Then I traded that in and got my Tele' I played that for almost 20 years. I love the sound of the Tele' I fell in love with the sound of the Tele' after I played with *Angus* and those guys. Country again.

MMS - Did you hear somebody else playing a Tele'? Is that what turned you on to it?

TB - No I don't think so, it was just the sound of it was just, just the look, the sound, the twangyness, the way it reacts when you hit it. It's a Tele', I mean it's something about it, it's not a fancy looking guitar but boy it's, I love that guitar. You can do lots with a machine like that.

MMS - When you were playing here in town, the bands were at Akaitcho Hall and you had your own band together for a couple of years and stuff like that but there was other bands that were playing in town. I know they were playing the bars, and you guys probably couldn't get out to the bars but do you remember any of the other travelling bands that came through or the local bands, the other players from that time? Who would have been playing up here locally at that time?

TB - It was just *John Tees* and his brother *Gary (Tees)*, *Wayne Bertrand* and *Tony Gilchrest*. I think his name is. "Stained Glass (Illusion)". They were the only ones then that were working, I remember. It was them, they were the town band and we were the Akaitcho Hall band.

MMS - So the years you would have been here would have been between '69 and '71?

TB - Yeah, around there. '68 '70, I left in '71, so fall of '68 I probably got here.

MMS - Those guys were still around then, the "Stained Glass Illusion".

TB - That's how I met *Gary (Tees)*, Gary and I were friends ever since, even to this day. We used to hang out together back in those days. Then during the Centennial year there was a band that they brought in from Whitehorse, "Canucks" I think they were called, they did a few shows at Akaitcho Hall, I saw them. Other than that not too much I don't think from outside bands. There was a band called "Water Webb Blues Band" once that came here from Edmonton. They played one of the schools in town here. I went and checked them out, blues band from Edmonton.

MMS - And local players, any of the old timers now, any of the other local payers that you got a chance to meet or to see or...

TB - Back in those days to work with?

MMS - to work with. Yeah, like I'm t thinking of the scene, what was going on, on the scene?

At that time, the Gallery probably wasn't even built.

TB - No.

MMS - There would have been the Elks and the Legion?

TB - We didn't get to see too many people other than *John (Tees)* and those guys, back in Akaitcho Hall days. I'm pretty sure there was some local music happening but we weren't exposed to that.

MMS - Just because it would have mostly been in the bars and you guys were too young?

TB - Could have been the Legion or they might have had events happening when we weren't allowed to leave the residence.

MMS - Yeah for sure. Or you were already out playing somewhere. You ever play the Legion or just the Elks that you played?

TB - Just the Elks upstairs at the dance, Friday and Saturday night they had dances, adult dances, that's where we would work. I don't think we played the Legion. Not too many clubs. Oh yeah, we played at Con and Giant Rec Hall, we played there too. Local schools.

MMS - So you felt pretty comfortable here in town.

TB - Oh I enjoyed it, I enjoyed it. That was probably the most enjoyable part of my education.

MMS - OK Tony, I'll just get you to name off the guys that were in your band there for the couple of years you were at Akaitcho.

TB - In the band called UM², *Tom Hudson* was doing the lead vocals, *Marc Whitford* playing the keyboards, *Brian Kovatch*, the bass, *Kevin Mackie* the drums and I was doing lead.

MMS - So the question how did you come up with the name UM²?

TB - I was taking chemistry in high school and they wanted to call the band "Universal Music Machine", "UM²" just popped out there.

MMS - Very nice, that's great, that's beautiful!

TB - I got something out of Chemistry class.

MMS - Did you pass the class?

TB - Oh yeah!

MMS - So, graduation time and everybody went their own direction?

TB - Graduation dance, I played for my own graduation dance, all of us did actually. Yeah, that was summer break, I think that's when I left. That was the end of that, for me. I think the band kept going for a little while, throughout the summer and into the following year I think for a while with a different guitar player and then everybody went their separate ways. That was the end of that era. It was good. It was a pretty fast 2 years, holy smokes. A lot of action, a lot of music. No DJs.

MMS - Did you go off to other school right away or did you go to work right away. Did you have things that you had to do?

TB - When I left here I went back to (Fort) Res for a while and then I joined a big oil company, they had training programs where you would go south for training. So I moved to Moose Jaw with that organization for about a year, southern Saskatchewan. There too, I hooked up with some people, played some music locally, listened to bands that were going through. Played a lot of their Christmas parties, just little kind of parties that these companies had, it was good.

MMS - Same kind of music?

TB - Different kind, it depends. A lot of instrumentals because a lot of people like to two step and to waltz so there was a lot of material that I learned from *Angus Beaulieu's* days that I used, came back into play. It was good. I didn't forget them all. Back to country music again for a while.

MMS - In that neck of the woods for sure, Saskatchewan.

TB - I stayed there for about a year, came back to (Fort) Res for about 6 months I think. Then I moved back to Yellowknife. Been here ever since just about except for some years that I've been gone.

MMS - You came back to (Fort) Res and kept playing?

TB - I think so, yeah, I got back and grooved with the boys. And just carried on what we did. We had quite a few players that went through the band when I was in (Fort) Res, people came and went. So anytime somebody didn't show up we just grabbed somebody, pull them in, took them on the road. Everybody played the same music so, we all, we weren't too worried about that.

MMS - Were those the very early days, was this pre "Native Cousins" or was that.....

TB - I think it was the beginning, I think so yeah. There was no "Native Cousins", there was just, just to play music and then finally the gigs were happening, there was work out there and

you knew you could make money. Besides we liked to travel, you know, nothing like travelling, jump into a vehicle and away you go for the weekend. Play music for a bunch of strangers, go home Sunday.

MMS - So, you were playing (Fort) Providence, places you could drive to or they would fly you?

TB - No, no, no, places we could drive to, not too far.

MMS - Northern Alberta?

TB - No, no, no. This was from (Fort) Res so we would drive to Pine Point. Pine Point was happening then so you got to, we played for a lot of dances there, a lot of bar work, Hay River, we played a lot of bars in Hay River, Fort Smith, Fort Providence. And Yellowknife.

MMS - That was sort of your circuit then?

TB - Yeah that was it, that's as far as we could handle for a couple of days. You had to get home, eh?

MMS - Some of the guys had jobs there too?

TB - *Angus (Beaulieu)* had to get home, he had to go to work.

MMS - So were you working a day job there then too?

TB - Yeah, most of us were, we had to get home, back to work Monday. Couldn't wait for Friday to come.

MMS - I bet, eh? Just keep practising through the week?

TB - Sometimes we'd all camp at *Angus'* house and practice 'til late into the night, work songs, make sure everything was the way they were supposed to be. Because we knew we had to go do that in front a crowd either for a dance or in the bar. We wanted them to be, we wanted to wake them up! Some of the songs we had to change, re-arrange a little bit so that they were, make it kind of more up tempo.

MMS - Dance music.

TB -Yeah. So we would do those kinds of things. Something that felt good, that felt exciting! I remember some nights you just didn't want to stop. 4, 5 6 in the morning we'd still be working. We were pretty lucky because everything was provided. We didn't have to spend too much money out of our pockets to buy equipment and stuff, gas, didn't have to pay for gas. *Angus* payed for everything, he carried us for all those years.

MMS - Took care of you guys.

TB - Oh yeah. Strings, anything we needed he bought. He bought all kinds of instruments, mandolin, banjo, fiddles, they were all over the house, everybody would pick them, *Cecil (Lafferty)* played banjo, fiddle, I'd known a few tunes on mandolin. They were sitting around, eh? *Angus* would buy stuff like that and just lay it around, some of the young guys would just come pick them up, work on them, learn them.

MMS - You're back in Fort Res and you're playing with *Angus (Beaulieu)* in the earlier versions, in the early days of the "Native Cousins", playing the circuit between Yellowknife, Hay River and Pine Point and those different places, still playing, how, has the music changed any in that time since you've come back?

TB - A little, it changed, I'll tell you how it changed. *Angus* kind of loosened up a little bit, he let the boys do what they wanted to do in terms of volume for one thing and the tempo of music, we were allowed to emphasize certain parts of the songs now, we can make certain songs more louder than other parts, we were allowed to do that.. So it did change and it was more fun and we were allowed to do more dancing music, not too much traditional country. If we were hired to do a square dance, they were fiddle dances then, *Angus* would do the majority of the work but if it was a dance, like, for example, Hay River carnival or something like that, then depending on the crowd, the majority of the time we would end doing most of the show and *Angus* would come in and do what he had to do and that was OK with him.

MMS - So you would just read the crowd, the age of the crowd, what they wanted to dance to and stuff?

TB - By then we had a lot of material too, we weren't scared, we knew.

MMS - You guys were playing probably pretty damn good too?

TB - We were pretty tight yeah.

MMS - I bet. So who would have been in the band at that time?

TB - There would be me, *Leandre Beaulieu*, the other guitar player so we had two leads, we would do double leads. *Allan Cardinal* playing Bass, his brother *Lloyd (Cardinal)* playing drums and *Angus (Beaulieu)* played fiddle. Sometimes we'd have his wife *Dorothy (Beaulieu)* come in and do some tunes. And other members that would come in once in a while would be *Cecil Lafferty*, he'd sing. *Donald Beaulieu* played Bass, *Karen Lafferty* would come in and sing and *Gladys Beaulieu*, Don Morin's wife would come in do keyboards. But the core of the group was myself and *Lloyd, Allan, Angus* and *Leandre*. Those particular people ended up being "Native Cousins". The original.

MMS - Do you remember the first, when it became the "Native Cousins"?

TB - I think it happened in '78, '77 or '78, I left Yellowknife and moved back to (Fort) Res and that's when the boys that had day jobs, quit their jobs and we got strictly into music and we did nothing but music. Because *Angus* worked he'd loan us the equipment that we used on the road. So while he stayed at home, we travelled and we did all the shows and that became a full time job for us. It turned into a tour of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, we worked 6 nights a week. It took about 4 months to do one tour, go home to (Fort) Res for about 2 weeks and then back on the road again. We did that for quite a while, we lined up all the hotels, right from High Level all the way to Lloyd Minster.

MMS - So how long were you doing that, a couple of years or 3 years?

TB - It was a little over a year steady. But then, people change, people get tired of doing that. The band kept going but everybody kind of went their way. I left, just after, probably '80's, early '80's I left. The music was always there. No matter where I went, I always managed to run across some boys I can play music with and sooner or later end up doing a gig somewhere. Always. I enjoy that, I learned lots. I just finished doing a show with *Angus* there, last New Years, still playing, 70 years old.

MMS - Amazing!

TB - He still drives to all these gigs, holy smokes!

MMS - So you get back and play with the (Native) "Cousins" the odd time and you can just sort of fall right in?

MMS - Oh yeah, it was great! I haven't played with them for many, many years until I got together with them about a month ago, a few weeks ago. It was just like nothing happened, the feeling was there, the excitement, "Native Cousins", I've known them all my life. It was great, just went there, plugged in, the music was always there. Even *Angus*, his music ability has changed, he's really more versatile and more at ease. He enjoys himself more. The audience has changed, I think that's what they like to see. When he was playing the audience was pretty strict, when you have a square dance, the music has to be right on, man, kinda thing, now it's not like that.

MMS - People are just glad to hear him play the fiddle, whatever he wants to play that way, that's...

TB - That kind of frees him up, gives him more freedom to do what he wants I think. I don't know if it's our age or maybe it's just the years of learning but now you can tell who's enjoying it and who's not. And it's great to work with people who are enjoying music. Just don't want it to stop. It's nice to see because the music in the territories just about died here one time. It was kind of a scary feeling. But like I say, now I see a lot of young kids, my son is into a band, they just did a show at the NACC before Christmas. He's into music. I see a lot of young kids now,

like that. Ten years from now there is going to be a lot of music here, Pat. There's gonna be a comeback. A lot of it I think has to do with young people seeing other people do it. People our age are still plugging away and they see how much fun we're having. And I think that's what they're after. It's a good thing we kept going. One of the things I feel good about, is some of the young people that are playing like, *Shane Daniels*, mention me as their influence. And there's some other people in Hay River, some young kids have also said that. At least I did something right. That's a good compliment and Shane has turned out to be a pretty good picker, a good musician. I never used to look at it in that angle but now I'm beginning to realize, I've always been there, even to this day, I never gave up. I'm still playing publicly if I can and they see that, eh? It encourages them I think, gives them something to, doesn't discourage them, certainly not.

MMS - So, your musical goals or aspirations for the future, what would you like to do?

TB - There are two things I would like to do. One is to make a recording, a serious recording. The other stuff is I would like to work with somebody to work with young upcoming musicians. Small communities, fly in or whatever. But I like to encourage and I'd like to see it keep happening. I don't care what people say but when aboriginal people get together and play music, they play it the way aboriginal people play music. They don't play it like anybody else, it's, they're unique, you know. It's them, it's theirs. They're the only ones that can play it in that certain way. That's what I see most of all, and that's most important for me, it's more than just another cover band. It's their own unique way of creating music, it's different!

MMS - Thank you for sharing as much as you did and as deep.

TB - OK