

April and Stan Mercredi

NWT Archives, Northern Musicians Project, accession number pending

Calgary, AB
October 18, 2018

AM - I think there was four of us. Four bands. And then he'd send us all over, wherever we had to go. Every weekday.

MMS - And you were based out of Edmonton?

AM - No. Red Deer.

MMS - Red Deer.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Oh wow.

AM - Yeah, so Red Deer ... *Forbes McLeod*. That was his (*The agent's*) name.

MMS - *Forbes McLeod*.

AM - *Forbes McLeod*. I can't remember the other guy's name though. Ah, shoot. I can't remember. *Forbes McLeod* and then his ... Gee, maybe *Stan* can remember. I can't believe I remembered the *Forbes McLeod*. Some of the things that stay in the deep ...

MMS - Yep.

AM - In your mind, eh?

MMS - Back there, yeah.

AM - Yeah, yeah.

MMS - Or you take a look at a picture sometimes too and all of a sudden it's like, okay, now you remember, you know?

AM - Yeah, yeah.

MMS - You remember those kinds of things.

AM - Yeah. Okay, here's your tea.

MMS - Thank you very much. This is great. I'll keep them away from the pictures there.

AM - Yeah, I'm so happy. *Stan* said, "No, you don't have a picture of you and "The Canadianas". I say, I think I do. So I went searching through, oh, for Pete's sake, of course I do!

MMS - Yeah.

AM - And this is the first girl band I was with. (*This was the very first band I was with. This band gave me my start*)

SM - Well I'll be darned.

MMS - Okay.

AM - Yeah.

SM - How you been?

MMS - Good to see you, sir. You look great.

SM - Thank you.

MMS - You look great, your shirt. Cool. Very cool. Lovely to be here and to see you guys.

SM - Yeah.

AM - But anyway, so here's that ... The women's group. I couldn't believe it. There's the ... Where the heck's the boss? Oh yeah. This big blonde here. (*Her name is Ev Ray*). This big blonde (*in the photo*) here is the boss.

MMS - Okay.

AM - She played the fiddle and did all, she knows her music.

MMS - Okay.

AM - She went to school for music, so she knew her stuff. Okay, there's me. And then there's ... This is after I left "The Canadianas" and then there's sort of, puts down and this *TK Mason (Stan and I)* here, together. But that didn't last very long. *TK* had some issues that he had to deal with.

SM - He was a steel guitar player.

MMS - Okay, steel guitar player. Yeah.

AM - Yeah, yeah. He was ... But he was a heck of a good steel player when he got *(into playing)*.

MMS - TK ... What was his last name?

AM - *TK Mason.*

MMS - *Mason.*

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Okay.

AM - I hope he doesn't mind my giving him his name.

MMS - Oh, I'm sure.

AM - And this here, this is after.

MMS - Do you remember ... Did you guys have a name for this group?

AM - No, not really. Just April and Stan, that's all we called this. Or Stan and April, whatever.

MMS - Okay.

AM - You know, it didn't last that long. We tried to keep it together, but yeah.

MMS - And this one here?

AM - Yeah. So that was after these gals here. So, I stayed with them for quite a while. The tall, the guy standing up, he was the one that taught me how to play second guitar and teach me a little bit about my bass.

MMS - Do you remember their names?

AM - *Eric Christensen.* Can you remember his name?

SM - *Montgomery.*

MMS - And you were playing guitar there, you're not playing bass?

AM - Yeah, I wasn't playing bass. *(I was playing rhythm guitar)*

MMS - Oh nice. Two guitars and drums.

AM - Yeah, he was showing me how to play second guitar there. And our first booking was at "The Capri." We used to be called "The Capri", right? The biggest hotel in Red Deer. So I stayed with these guys for a while.

MMS - That was the first group? That was the second group.

AM - Second one. Second one, yeah. Stayed with these guys for a while, but they didn't have enough bookings to satisfy me. I needed every weekend just to stay alive. So they weren't doing that much, and then there was another ... We never took a picture of *Kenny Arland Manning*, eh? No?

SM - No, we didn't.

AM - No. It was the one guy, he asked me to sing and play bass with him. I said, okay I'll go.

AM - So, then that was the one where we went to Fort Providence first, eh? No, no.

SM - Yeah, no.

AM - Was it Fort Providence?

SM - No, I think you went to Hay River, possibly Fort Providence.

AM - I can't remember which one was first. Then Fort Providence and then we went for a small visit in Yellowknife and then back again to Fort Providence to finish our gig. And then we went to Grand Cache, right?

SM - Yeah.

AM - Grand Cache. And then I got on the bus and went home.

AM - And then there was ... a couple gigs, wasn't it?

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah. Then there was another gig.

MMS - So that was in between these two bands, then.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Yeah. So that was your first time up in Yellowknife, then?

AM - Yeah.

SM - Yeah.

MMS - Do you remember that year that would've been?

AM - Oh boy. At what year-

SM - I say about 19 ... '69 70.

MMS - Okay.

AM - What was that?

SM - 1969 or '70.

AM - You remember all of that, eh? Good thing you're here.

MMS - So, you just went to Yellowknife for a visit. You didn't do any playing there.

AM - Well, I bumped into him (*Stan*) in Fort Providence.

MMS - Oh, okay.

SM - Well, that's what-

AM - So, we kinda followed each other a bit. Yeah.

MMS - Oh, okay.

SM - I was working in corrections there. And I was off for the weekend. And the guy who's (*my friend*) had my number, came to me and says, "you know Stan, you gotta go Fort Providence". Why? He said, "there's a girl there, sings like a bird".

SM - So, I went there, I hopped in a bus, there she was. She was singing "Snowbird" when I walked in. And that was it.

AM - Yeah, that was it. So, we kinda followed each other, wrote letters, phone calls and then ... that was it.

MMS - And then, you moved up to Yellowknife then after that

AM - Yeah. Yeah. Well, how long did I stay in Yellowknife at that time?

SM - Well, that time-

AM - Not very long.

SM - No, I'd say it's almost a year.

AM - Yeah.

SM - I resigned my position in '71 and by December of '71 I was in ...

AM - We went to Red Deer.

SM - Red Deer yeah.

AM - Yeah we went to Red Deer. And then, and the reason why I went to Red Deer is 'cause I had ... two pieces of property there. And he wouldn't, my first husband wouldn't let me lay claim to any of it unless I came back. He said you can't have the kids and you can't have the property until you da da da da da stipulations, eh? So, I said, okay. I can handle that. So that's why we ended back in. So I stayed in Red Deer, took care of the kids, watched the property for 10 years, eh?

SM - Yeah.

AM - About 10 years. After when that was all over. By then we were ready to go back.

SM - Yeah.

AM - I sold one chunk of property. I was lucky, my first husband didn't contest anything. And that was it, everything worked out after.

MMS - So you were back in Yellowknife in the early '80s then?

AM - Yeah when would that be?

SM - '82.

MMS - Wow.

SM - Yeah.

AM - I told Stan, "let's go let's go. Let's get out". (*I've got my kid*)

SM - Yeah, she really surprised me. We had a red and white van and she drove up and backed the truck up. I said, what you up to? "We're going to Yellowknife". Out of the blue. Heck, like a whirlwind I was in the house, I was in the-

AM - I told him you better make phone calls.

SM - And I ran in there and phoned personnel (GNWT) and I knew the lady that there was first *Melody McCloud* and I asked her, I said, "how are the chances of me getting back?" I says. She says, "come on back," she says, "to us you're still a Northerner."

AM - Yes. So I'm glad, I knew he'd be happy about that. I know that, 'cause he was having a tough time around Red Deer. So when we got to Yellowknife, boy was it ever hard to find a group to, people to play with. I don't know why, it's just really tough. I think it's the environment or something, I don't know what it is, hard to explain.

MMS - '82. Who knows.

AM - The music's not strong there, you know, for people to work together. Holy smokes in Red Deer, people were just like, musicians were just like glued together.

MMS - Yeah like family or something

AM - They worked, they sang together, they helped each other out. There was sharing songs and if they needed an extra singer, they'd call me if I wasn't working and then to play in the sing in this other band or vice versa. So there was always a lot of support. Strong, the music is strong in Red Deer but in Yellowknife, it's just, I can't put a finger on it. I don't know what was going on.

SM - I think it's just got to do because she got a job right away but she was an outsider.

AM - Yeah, I could feel my music kind of ... it's hard to explain but if you don't practice enough it starts to go a way out in the background and it disappears. Yeah.

MMS - Fades. Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Were the musicians that you're talking about in Red Deer, were they making a living from their playing? Or were they working day jobs as well and playing. Little bit of both?

AM - Some of them, yeah, part time. Some of them full, yeah.

MMS - Yeah.

SM - But then you had three bars within a block, "The Windsor".

AM - Yeah "The Valley" (Ranchers Valley Inn) mostly.

SM - Valley, Valley and then the ...

AM - Yeah.

SM - Where the Buffalo is, "Buffalo Hotel."

AM - So-

SM - And then you had "The Capri."

AM - Capri, yeah.

SM - Capri, then you had the Legion and you had the Black Knight. So you had a lot of places to play.

AM - Lots of places and in different parts and ... places in Alberta actually. There was lots of places.

MMS - That you could travel to.

AM - Yeah you could travel, yeah come back the next, the same night actually, you'd be back by 12, one o'clock, whatever. So that was good. I didn't do any drugs or anything like that. I kept myself clean. And,

which isn't hard to do, I mean, if you, choice, eh? But when I got to Yellowknife it was just kinda strange, I couldn't put my finger to what was going on. 'Cause I didn't, like you were saying, they were doing other things too and I didn't know what it was 'cause I'm not a party person. Never was.

MMS - Your very early years of playing, how did music come into your life?

AM - Oh, I think it was, how did it come? Well it started with these ladies, I knew two songs. And there was an ad in the paper and I asked, I made a phone call to this lady, this blonde one (*Ev Ray*). I said I only know two songs I said but I can learn. And she said oh come on over, do a little audition for us. So I did and she said, you're hired. I said but don't forget now, I only know two songs. She said you'll learn, you'll learn fast and she was right.

SM - Then she bought a guitar.

AM - Yeah. (*my first good one*)

MMS - Then you bought a guitar. So ... *May Koski* was she...

SM - *Koski*, yeah, that's the drummer.

MMS - That's the drummer. Okay.

SM - Oh she wasn't what you would call a wizard of the drum but she had one style and she'd bounce every time. And she had the beat every time, no?

MMS - Yeah. And so the boss, was that *Elsie*? Is that her name, is that the name that's there?

AM - Yeah. *Ev Ray*.

SM - *Ev Ray*.

MMS - *Ev Ray*, oh OK

AM - *Ev Ray*, she's the boss.

MMS - "*Ev Ray* and the Country Girls."

AM - Yeah, yeah. She was a pretty nice lady, nice lady.

MMS - So before that, before that or even as a kid were you just singing along with the radio and stuff?

AM - Yeah, more or less.

MMS - Church.

AM - Actually it was in desperation because my (*first*) husband was a gambler. My kids, they didn't have lots of stuff and I thought well maybe if I just play now and then I could buy them, take them out for

supper or maybe take them to ... a movie or buy some clothes or whatever. And buy myself some clothes for Pete's sake.

MMS - Yeah for sure.

AM - So it was really hard, but we-

SM - Oh, at that time too. With *Ev Ray* and them, you had to play guitar. You learned to play guitar.

AM - Oh yeah, just strum a little, yeah yeah yeah. Just had to learn, right from scratch and boy she sure, she was right, when you get started you better learn. But it was desperation more than anything else. And also love of music. Otherwise I wouldn't have been there but I took a music book home. I bought a cheap guitar and I started strumming and holy smokes, getting those two finger, both hands coordinated. I didn't know you had to get them coordinated. But anyway, so I did it that way and just sang to the kids. And that's how it started. Yeah and lucky for me the gals had mercy on my soul and took me in.

MMS - And so this was in Red Deer.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - What year would that have been late '60s-

AM - I'd be about ...

SM - 26, no not 26, April. You were more than that

AM - Yeah when I started singing and stuff, yeah.

SM - You were born in 1940.

AM - I know but I was 26 years old.

SM - Oh your age, okay.

MMS - So 1966 then?

AM - Yeah something about that. So I was 26, about that. Yeah, yeah that makes sense. Because when I was with, oh with these guys I turned 30. So I'd moved really fast from there to there to there.

MMS - I was gonna say, that's-

AM - Yeah.

MMS - But these were, this is where you cut your teeth and you learned songs-

AM - Yes.

MMS - Learned how to sing. Learned how play guitar, learned how to be on stage.

AM - That's right.

MMS - Yeah.

AM - And then there was another group, oh, yeah. She got in with her boyfriend after and then, this was her boyfriend and there was some other, oh yeah, *Gayle* and I. And then we formed a group, a different group and worked from that. But I wanted more work, I had to have more work. So, I left them and then they were drinking too much too. I can't handle that. And then I went with these guys, these guys are pretty straight here. These were very straight people. But there too, there weren't, didn't have enough bookings, so that's why I did the road thing. For a couple but the road thing is kind of ... not that healthy, either. Too far away from the family too, you know. So, I went on a few trips and then came back home. But in between all that, that's when I met him.

MMS - What kind of songs, what kind of music were you playing-

AM - Oh, country.

MMS - Just straight-

AM - Just straight country, yeah.

MMS - Straight country.

SM - And fiddle music.

MMS - Fiddle music yeah, so *Patsy Cline*-

AM - Yeah.

MMS - What else would you be?

AM - You know (sings) "Your Cheating Heart", you know? Just the old ones, the ones that were there at that time.

AM - (sings) "Send me the pillow that you dream on," You know, stuff like that. Yeah.

SM - Later on you did *Anne Murray*.

AM - Yeah, *Anne Murray*, did a few *Anne Murray*. I loved *Anne Murray*.

SM - Especially "Snow Bird."

AM - Yeah. I used to drive everybody crazy. Just practicing.

SM – *Troy*, our youngest. You tell the one how he wanted to play guitar? Because we're at home all the time and we're all just practicing her and I and playing guitar. He wanted to learn too.

AM - Rock and roll.

SM - He wanted rock and roll and stuff like that, you know?

AM - He's just a kid.

SM - So after we moved over there for the first time, he started to play guitar. But son of a gun, he couldn't play rock and roll.

AM - Rock and roll wouldn't come out.

SM - He was stuck on country.

AM - He said he didn't realize how brainwashed we got him. Country, country.

MMS - Yep.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Yeah *Kevin Mackie* says more or less the same thing, he said I think my daughter was raised on *George Jones*. And he goes, I think most kids that were raised in the North were raised on a *George Jones*.

AM - Crazy isn't it.

MMS - That's the truth yeah.

AM - It is. And then they think they can go rock and roll, well no it doesn't work.

MMS - Yeah.

AM - Maybe a little bit.

MMS - So when you were in Red Deer and you were playing in your group, do you remember bumping into other musicians, other bands and stuff that were touring. Can you remember...?

AM - Oh yeah, yeah there were tons of them. Tons of them.

MMS - Remember names of any of those....?

AM - Well I remember *Vince* somebody, but we were young, we were living busy, extremely busy going from one place to another and playing and doing the afternoon jams. We never did really get to know each other, just *Vic Nichols*, eh?

SM - Yeah.

AM - *Vic Nichols* was the one, he was kinda hung around but he never, he had his own thing. But, you known when we were young, we were fast, we were music, that's all you think about. You just think about music, you don't think about names or dates or anything like that.

MMS - In those and again in those early years through the '60s and '70s, I know that the rock and roll things was really big but I mean it's still, we're talking Alberta here, so-

AM - Yeah.

SM - Yeah.

MMS - It was still very much country and-

AM - Yeah, yeah.

MMS - Sort of the last stronghold that way.

AM - Yeah. And everybody was open to music and country and yeah. And it was just fast and wild until the strippers came in. When the strippers came in that was it. Everything went down.

MMS - So that was like a line that-

AM - Yeah yeah. That was what killed us.

MMS - When did that happen?

AM - Oh, when did that happen? That was...

SM - Mid 70s.

AM - So the only way we could survive was to get to not be where the strippers were. But everywhere we went, that's where the strippers went. And they just ruined the music.

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

SM - Used to have a jam every Saturday.

AM - Yeah.

SM - During the day. And the group got out there, we used to get the group from "The Buffalo", "The Windsor".....

AM - Everywhere, everywhere-

SM - And they used to come there and all they all take turns on April was MCing there. They had a big jam, oh geez, fantastic.

AM - Yeah. We had lots and lots of fun. A lot of the ... musicians and people came from the United States and they played in the upper hotel. And we used to invite them to sing and teach us a thing or two that we didn't know, so that was super. And I mean they were just wonderful people, oh boy did we ever have fun. Mixing in the US and us rookies. I almost thought of myself as a rookie compared to the US, you know. It just seems to be so advanced. They were really good. I would host our jams in the afternoon. And ... it was lots and lots of fun. And then we'd get anybody, people that, I'd go check who were the musicians, some people I didn't know. And I'd check the crowd and get them up there, make sure they do at least three and didn't leave anybody out so that they didn't feel abandoned or anything, you know? But my best group was a bunch of, there were four guys, eh?

SM - Yeah four guys.

AM - Old timers. What were they called, can you remember? But anyway, they played the banjo, the guitar, bass, rhythm and the fiddle. And they ... they were seniors. They were senior.

MMS - Back then.

AM - Yes they were seniors, we were the young pups, you know? And we got them up there, oh gee they were so happy, you know and they were well dressed, every Saturday they would always be there and they would just get themselves really dressed up. You know in the old country garb, you know the cowboy outfits. Really yeah, so when they showed up, I would get them up there for sure. So it was kind of ... I enjoyed doing that. Didn't want to leave anybody out.

SM - That was nice.

AM - Yeah.

SM - And then when the strippers came, like April said, it died down.

MMS - Oh that's the first I've heard of that

AM - Oh really?

MMS - It sort of had that much of an impact on the live music, so it was probably a change in the legislation because I would think if we're talking about the mid '70s here?

AM - Yeah.

SM - Yeah.

MMS - That before that it would be like no strippers at all. And then all of the sudden the doors open.

AM - And there were some places where there were no strippers, so we would go to different places in Alberta.

MMS - Probably the smaller towns right, where they didn't go for that kind of thing.

AM - Yes.

MMS - Yeah. So you were probably playing like country fairs and stuff like that too?

AM - I don't know about the fairs but we did lounges, we did dances, we did bars, we did ... anything, pretty well what you could put a finger onto. But not fairs, no.

MMS - Okay. You get into the cities at all, into Calgary or Edmonton to do those gigs or? Was it mostly the smaller towns?

AM - We were gonna go further but I had to hold myself back because of the kids.

MMS - OK.

SM - OK, just once. We came down here, we played at-

AM - Oh yeah, "The Beacon".

SM - "The Beacon".

AM - "The Beacon Hotel" during stampede.

SM - Stampede week.

AM - Yeah.

SM - Just her and I.

AM - But I didn't enjoy it. Yeah I didn't enjoy it because the kids were over there and I wanted to get back.

SM - And we had stay there, the weekend over there.

AM - Yeah. I was always worried about that. So.

SM - It was good.

AM - It was okay. But I really didn't enjoy going far away because of leaving the kids too long or with a babysitter.

MMS - Okay so '71 ... you're in Red Deer and so this is around '72 this one here. This is '72 to '74 is what it says on the back right?

AM - Yeah yeah.

MMS - And so-

AM - This is where I'm 30 years old, I turned 30 here right in the middle of this.

MMS - And so this is still in Red Deer?

AM - Yes.

MMS - And you're still playing straight up country music with these guys? ("*The Canadianas*")

AM - Yes.

SM - Yes.

MMS - Oh okay.

AM - Except these guys once in a while they'd do the odd-

MMS - Pop song.

AM - Rock.

MMS - Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

SM - This guy here-

AM - Not very many, but, 'cause I was the lead singer so they had to do what I wanted.

SM - Yeah and, well we used to make fun of them. We used to meet every Saturday, Saturday morning or Sunday morning and go to a restaurant and we used to tease because. I'm amazed that he never gained weight. He ate breakfast in stereo.

AM - He did everything in stereo. And this was a terrific drummer. And this guy, when I had him, he was only 16, he wasn't even allowed to be in the bar. So the only way he could play bass was just go there and during the break he had to leave. And then when 15 minutes come back. Yeah. So but he was so shy, he hid behind the amp.

SM - Yeah.

AM - It was these amp on tripods.

SM - We had a great big Peavey, that's where he was.

AM - We had to call him out, *Richard*! You can't stand behind the amp, come out here. He'd shake, he'd come out but he got to be the actually Red Deer's best band (*Bass*) player.

SM - Yeah. This fellow here, *Darryl*, is that Darryl yeah? *Darryl Pollack*.

AM - Yeah Darryl was a pretty good drummer.

SM - Oh was he fantastic.

AM - He was terrific and he did his stuff, lead player.

SM - And vocals.

AM - *Dave Goshay* did real good stuff on his guitar, he was pretty good. And he always tried to do his best.

SM - I'll never forget the first time, she played, I'll always tag along there because I set up the amps. As a matter of fact I never did get paid for all that work I did.

AM - What's that?

SM - I never got paid for all that work I did.

AM - No, why should you get paid, you're lucky.

SM - My gas and-

AM - You're lucky you're there. Just put him to work, eh?

SM - So they would play there then one time they took, all of the sudden they used to play a certain time for a break but maybe for the next five minutes before that happens then, these three here just walked out, left him sitting there. (*playing drums all by himself. He was a good solo act.*)

AM - Yeah we left him.

SM - Yeah I know but what's, then all of a sudden he ripped into it. Holy, could he ever play?

AM - Yeah. Give the people an introduction on who he was and then we'd just walk right off, he'd do his thing for about, I don't know how many minutes. And then we'd go up on the stage again and finish the show. About 15 minutes later. It was fun.

MMS - Were you, not saying that you were looking like *Buffy St. Marie* but were you aware of *Buffy* at that time?

AM - I don't think so, I mean I knew she was there, but I don't know. Actually, things were happening so fast. We were having so much fun. And there was so much music. We didn't want, the only thing we thought about was rehearsal, songs, how many songs to do, how to do it. And just concentrated on our music, on our agent, on our..., where we were supposed to go. Sometimes our trips were in the winter time, we just about died sometimes. And then get back home. So it was just focusing on our own survival, is what it was.

MMS - You didn't have to be looking to Toronto or what was going on in Toronto or California or New York.

AM - That's right. No we didn't, no.

MMS - Okay.

AM - And I had to be careful where I was going because of my family.

MMS - Okay so after these guys then you went with *Arland*?

AM - *Kenny Arland Manning*.

MMS - *Arland Manning*.

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - To Fort Providence that first time.

AM - Yeah.

SM - Yep.

MMS - And so, now we're talking ... '74?

AM - Yeah about that.

SM - That would be pretty close to '70.

AM - '70? Okay.

SM - Yeah because we were there twice.

AM - Yeah. So what was your question?

MMS - Okay.

SM - '69, '68 '69.

MMS - That was when you were first out with *Kenny Arland Manning*.

SM - Yeah.

MMS - These guys were after.

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Okay.

SM - That's when we moved to Red Deer.

MMS - Okay now I get it. What did you think about the North when you were up there? I mean, it's a long drive from there-

AM - Yeah.

MMS - I can't imagine the roads were that good.

AM - I found it isolated 'cause we went to Fort Providence and I found it inspiring. I also found it ... it was very new to me. And things happened unexpectedly. Like the going over the ice, the Mackenzie (River). And just how they, we was one of the first vehicles going across the ice there. I've never seen that done. And the guy that got us over was the boss at Fort Providence and he checked the ice. I was trying to remember, I think it with his skidoo and here we were with a car loaded and I said, oh my goodness. All he was checking the ice with his little skidoo and here we were, great big car you know and two people and all that equipment and there we were a load and a half.

SM - Because-

AM - But we made it.

SM - There was hardly snow.

AM - Yeah.

SM - And when you go too fast, you form a wave.

AM - Yeah.

SM - You know that.

AM - Yeah. So anyway we finally made it through without dying on the way. So what I noticed was there was just lots of Aboriginal people there in Fort Providence, I remember that. And it was just a very new experience for me. Hay River was young people. Lots of Aboriginal people. And they were active, they were very.... Hay River was, that time, was very inspiring for me 'cause they were ... they wanted to hear me sing. They didn't want to hear *Kenny (Arland Manning)* singing all night, 'cause he wanted to do everything himself. They said let's hear her sing, let's hear. So anyway, they got me singing and then they really appreciated it and of course I'm still learning my bass too so I'm floundering with my bass and trying to ... keep up with it and keep learning as I was going along. So, I didn't mind not singing because I'm learning my bass, so I'm following him. And he was a good singer, a good lead player, excellent stuff. He was really good.

SM - That's when *Merle Haggard* came out.

AM - Yeah.

SM - He did a lot of those

AM - Yeah he did lots of those. And *Merle Haggard* stuff is pretty complicated. Yeah. I told him, I said don't do anything too complicated here, I'm learning.

MMS - Were you playing...

AM - But his voice was terrific. As a matter of fact you sound a little bit like *Merle Haggard*, doesn't he?

SM - Yeah yeah.

AM - Yeah.

SM - He did real good back then.

AM - He was a fantastic singer, guitar player. Yeah he was pretty good.

MMS - Were you playing in "The Zoo"? Is that where you played in Hay River?

AM - Where?

MMS - In "The Zoo", in the bar.

AM - In the bar, yeah.

SM - No the Caribou (Room).

AM - I don't know I can't remember the names.

MMS - The Caribou. Yeah.

SM - Yes.

AM - There's one Caribou, eh?

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah yeah. Seemed to be a bigger one, seemed to be a bigger, but there again we were moving so fast doing things, just ... playing and yeah. Things happened fast for me.

MMS - Yeah how about in Fort Providence, do you remember where you played there?

AM - Yeah that was right in the lounge there.

MMS - In "The Snowshoe" lounge.

AM - I think it was a lounge, bar type of thing.

MMS - Yes.

SM - Yeah it is a lounge, yeah.

MMS - It's still there.

AM - And the reason too-

SM - It's a fairly big one too, a big lounge.

AM - It was quite a big one yeah. And the reason too why I wasn't really connected with lots of stuff because I didn't drink. So I didn't go and sit with people because I know if I did then they'd want to buy this, want to buy that, you know. But ... I know it sounds kind of dense but I know people that drink associate with other drinkers. That's what I noticed. So I think with me not drinking, it seemed like there was a chunk there missing somehow. A non-drinker just doesn't fit where there's drinkers.

MMS - And you're playing in a bar.

AM - So as soon as we had breaks I would take off. There's nothing for me to do. I didn't want to talk to someone who was inebriated. I just couldn't connect that way. But in Red Deer it was a little different 'cause the guys were, these guys were with me and these two they were non-

SM - These two here.

AM - Doing drugs, no booze or anything. This one, he was kinda new and I don't know. I didn't really get to know him. But, these two. So the three of us including *Stan*, we would just go out, walk around or take some fresh air or go see the other bar, just kinda to kill time. 15 minutes, eh? So, that's what usually happened there. But in Fort Providence it was, I felt a little bit lost because of my lifestyle. Which was okay, it ended up okay, me doing it that way. I had my choices. And I'm glad I never did get into heavy stuff. I'm glad.

MMS - On that trip did you bump into any of the other local players? I'm thinking of like a *Richard Lafferty* or in Fort Providence or in Hay River, any of those local players? Did you, do you remember meeting any of those guys?

AM - Not really-

SM - Not... I don't think so.

AM - No not in Hay River and not, like I said I lost connection with lots of musicians, lot of people. Yeah. I never did, because of my lifestyle.

MMS - You being an Aboriginal woman though up there and singing with a band and stuff, they would have really enjoyed that.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Because I don't think that was, I mean if you were going back to that time, women were still 10 paces behind the man walking down Franklin Avenue.

SM - Yeah.

AM - Yeah.

AM - Something like that anyway.

MMS - And even some of the younger ones and stuff that way, so.

AM - Sometimes you miss a lot when you're, I'm assuming, I don't know what drinking people what they, how they connect but I'm assuming that me being a non-drinker I missed a lot, I don't know what that means. Of what other people had to say. And I don't know if that's a negative or a positive or what. But, I just had to follow my own lifestyle and do what I thought was best for my body, I didn't want to hurt myself.

MMS - Nope.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - Understandable, for sure. And those were-

AM - I know it sounds square but.

MMS - No, no not at all, in those days though yes, probably more so than these days but there were some pretty hard drinking days-

AM - Yeah.

MMS - In those years. A lot of really hard drinking.

AM - And a lot of them got sick, the people that I knew like kinda. You'd see them show up and pretty soon they were sick and pretty soon, holy smokes. Toward the end of it some of them were dying off. So I knew that they would have pretty rough life. But that's their choice again.

MMS - Choices for sure.

AM - That's why my ... personal story in this music thing is ... narrow. I see it as narrow, you know.

MMS - Yeah this is, but still you're-

AM - Because of that.

MMS - Your time in playing through the '60s and here...

AM - Yeah.

MMS - And making your way north, it's all of these different perspectives, I interviewed *Archie Loutitt*. And *Archie* has a story that he was driving cab or somebody else was driving cab. And they picked you up either at the airport or the bus station and dropped you off at the Gold Range and-

AM - Yeah.

MMS - The word was out that there was a singer in town.

AM - Oh.

MMS - Would that have been on that trip when you came up for a visit?

AM - It could have been.

MMS - Probably, yeah.

AM - Yeah it could have been.

MMS - But otherwise as far as you playing full-time in the bars like you say, that just never came to be because you were -

SM - No, never had a chance.

AM - No.

MMS - Still the work that you did in Red Deer in the time that you did it, is pretty neat, pretty amazing and for me really interesting.

AM - Well I made it through without falling apart or-

MMS - And as a woman and as an Aboriginal women, at the time, doing that, that's man oh man oh man, tough world.

AM - Yeah.

MMS - For sure. For sure. No that's great, I just love the pictures and your stories that way.

AM - OK.