

## John Tees

February 12, 2019  
Yellowknife, NT

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MMS - Let's see. It's February 12, 2019. And I'm sitting here with *John Tees*. *John*, thanks very much for joining me.

JT - It's my pleasure, Pat. And you're the right guy to do this work for sure.

MMS - Somebody's gotta step in here.

JT - Yeah.

MMS - *John*, if you could just start out telling me about your early years of playing music here in Yellowknife. How you got the bug?

JT - Well, as any musician, as you know, it starts with listening. You hear music, right? And in the early days in Yellowknife, we had a lot of house parties at our place. And there would be a number of people that would come through and be playing guitars. But mostly it was my dad. He knew three cords and that's where he stayed. C, F and G. So, all night long he would play C, F and G in all these different songs. Songs that I can still remember today. And I was thinking of kind of doing a little catalog of some of those and passing it over to the family so we can remember. I've done some of the hymns. I used to listen to him walking around the house. He was born a Presbyterian and he would be singing these old Presbyterian songs. And I asked him one time about that and he said that their whole family was musically involved in the church. And they all sang harmonies and all this stuff and it wasn't until he came to the north and he started playing guitar. Another little anecdote there. My mom got fed up with the parties and stuff like that and she grabbed the guitar one time and smashed it. And *Alec Glowach* promptly came back in and brought another one in. And the party kept going. *Alec* senior.

MMS - *Alec (Glowach)* senior.

JT - I got my first guitar from him for a dollar. It was a "Stella." It was an old "Stella." And it was tough to play. It was an old arch top but nice old guitar, just the same. Hardly ever see those anymore. I go started in music through *Gary (Tees)*, my brother.

MMS - Hold you back there.

JT - Yeah.

MMS -What songs would your dad have been playing on the guitar? Yeah, he was singing hymns and stuff like that....

JT - No, at the parties there was no hymns. No, it was all *Jimmy Rogers* songs. *Hank Williams*. There's one called "Cabin in the Woods." I remember him singing that one. It's an old bluegrass style. I believe *Jimmy Rogers* probably did that one too. But a lot of the songs that were popular around the time. Of course, *Hank Williams* had passed away back in '52 I think it was. So his memory and his songs were pretty hot around that time, so a lot of people were doing a lot of those songs. Various other people that you'd hear on the radio. *Hank Locklin* and *George Jones* eventually and *Johnny Cash*. All these guys later on. From CFYK and the old radio station there, down on 51st is it? Yeah. 51st there, where the "(*Tree of Peace*) Friendship Center" is now. I used to clean the place. Amazing. With *Mary Leonard*. I would go help her clean the building.

MMS – So the house parties that you're talking about were, you say *Hank* recently passed. *Hank Williams* recently passed. We're talking mid to late '50s here?

JT - Yeah. That's right. I would go to sleep listening to my dad playing all these different songs. And it seemed like he'd never repeat a song unless they wanted him to play it again type of thing. But he had such a repertoire of songs. He would play all night, right through to the morning. And I mean, we've done some of that ourselves too. We would listen to this music and we heard the "Gather Round" program. *Joe Toby* was doing his program. He was one of the guys. There was several other people that came through that had programs on CFYK. It was the only radio station in Yellowknife. This is all before we had TV. Well technically. I did see TV at *Hilda and Adler Boucher's* place. And it was because they were good friends with *Harold Glick* and he put a TV in their living room and put this big, huge aerial just about the size of the house that he could pick up "Walt Disney" coming in from the states. And we would get a little bit of a picture but we wouldn't see a whole lot. I remember the first time I saw cartoons in black and white. That was before *Brian North* brought the first TV into "YKCCTV" I think it was called. I remember it. We used to sit out there. Sat outside 40 below and watch TV 'cause it was only on for a few hours before anybody had TVs we'd go over to *Glick's* and watch in the front window, black and white television. And you would see mainline entertainers and I remember seeing *Tommy Hunter* and he eventually came to Yellowknife and *Smilin' Johnny*, made it too ... I never saw him on TV but you would see some people on TV and then all of a sudden they'd show up. *Ian and Sylvia*, *Gordon Lightfoot* came. And *Valdy*, all these guys. They liked playing at the gymnasium at Sir John Franklin (High School) because the acoustics were really good. And they still are good somehow or other. That little spot on the earth in Yellowknife seems to have the best acoustics for some reason. Maybe there's a, maybe it goes to heaven or something.

MMS -Yeah, mainline up there for sure, yeah.

JT - mainline up there.

MMS -The names of some of the other people who would come over to the house parties. They players I guess.

JT - *Archie*..

MMS - *Archie Loutitt?*

JT - *Archie Loutitt*. I remember he was one of the people that had showed up there. Some other people, I didn't know their names or anything like that. But my dad was the star...

MMS - Yeah.

JT - To me anyway. That's the one that stood out to me. Yeah. And it wasn't til we were in high school ... *Gary (Tees)* came home with a copy of "Can't Buy Me Love." A 45. And that's what did it right there. He said, "*John, John*, listen to this." He put in on. (sings) "Can't buy me Love." And that was it. I said, "Oh my God, that's good!" And so he showed me a few cords and stuff like that. And I said, "Where'd you learn that?" From *Wilf Schidlowsky*," he said. "He's teaching over at St. Pat's." "Oh, man. I gotta join too." So I went and joined with him. So for two years we took lessons from *Wilf*. And in that time, as I was starting to learn some chords, one of the first places I played at was with *Linda Boucher*, who was my Godparent's daughter. She was adopted there and she's gone now, late *Linda Boucher*. We played for one of the first talent shows in Yellowknife. It was held at the public school and we played a song by "The Fendermen" called "Torture." And we called ourselves "The Demons". For some reason, your youth rebellion or whatever it is, starts you on this anti-religion thing down that road. So many of us have taken those roads and come back or evolved over time. But that was the beginnings of it. I use 1963 as my benchmark for when I learned how to play guitar, when I started playing guitar. And the reason I remember that is because it was the year (*John F.*) *Kennedy* was assassinated. You try and remember what was going on in those times when you learned or when impacting things that happened in our lives. And that was the benchmark for me, was learning to play guitar the same time that ... I remember just being flabbergasted hearing about it. I know I was playing guitar at the time. Yeah. We would play in bands around ... Well, back in those days as well, I should mention. *Frank Wouters* and *Fred Henne*, former mayor, *Fred Henne*. *Fred Henne* actually came to the house once as well. And it's hard to play the sax but they did play a little bit. At one of those deals anyway. 'Cause people went around visiting back in those days. It was a small town.

MMS - There wasn't the taverns or saloons or the bars that we had later on or even now for that matter.

JT - The first pictures of "The Gold Range" that I've seen, it was a swanky looking little place. Velvet seats everywhere. Oh, yeah, Christmas or New Years was a big thing. It was all good food and everything set out and the whole works. Oh yeah. When they first built the place, *J.I. Glick* built that place and they built it to look really nice and stuff like that so it was the place to go to. Even "The Yellowknife Inn." It had a real resemblance as well to "The Old Stope" up on the hill there in old town by the monument. It was newer looking than "The Old Stope" because "The Old Stope" was built earlier, right? But they put a little more finesse into "The Yellowknife Inn" at the time and they had a big staircase coming down and they had these long hallways in there. I sure remember that. But in the bar, we used to look inside there and then later years when we were in there. I mean, it was nicely setup in its day, eh? Yeah. I remember going in there and "The Platters" were playing there. This was back in the '70s. "The Platters." And there was one guy from Fort Smith that had joined them. Boy oh boy. (*George*) *Tuccaro* would remember his

name better than I would. But anyway, he had joined "The Platters". Of course, when the US Army was in (Fort) Smith they left a few kids behind. Some of the black American guys had left children behind. So there's, even today there's a number of people whose background is from the bi-culturing. Speaking of black guys, *Big Miller* was here. I don't know, you might remember that. Yeah. And way before him *BB King*. *BB King* came and they didn't have enough money to pay him. I'm not sure if I was playing at the time. I think I was just still learning how to play. And *BB King* shows up. Well, there wasn't a lot of blues audiences around in the north, up here. But somebody managed to get *BB King* talked into coming up here and he did. Wow, were we ever lucky. I went to the concert and it was excellent. And he played in the old Jerry Murphy arena but they couldn't pay him so they gave him a whole bunch of carvings, you know. That's all they could come up with or something like that.

*Linda Boucher* and I played, that's the first time I saw *Ted Wesley* too. I think *Ted* and his wife (*Leslie Wesley*) played around that time as well. And a number of other people. Man, oh man. That's going back. I can't remember the-

MMS - Those talent shows. Would they have been a regular thing? Or was it just-

JT - It was becoming a regular thing for a while there, yeah. I believe the "Native Cousins" might've been there as well. *Angus Beaulieu*. Those guys were, in the early '60s I think those guys got going. Somewhere around that time music was really starting to pick up. After we'd done some of those things, I started playing for school dances. One of the first things that I did, we had a play at school. And (*Bob*) *Dylan* was one of my real idols at the time and one of the last things that we wanted to do was do a protest march at the end. And I was a little bit of a crap disturber I guess. I used to stir the pot. I don't know that I've even stopped that now that I think back on it. Still stirring here and there.

But, around that time "The Auroras" had been started up. And there was another band before them. Before *George Mandeville* and *Matt "The Cat" Lafferty* and *Herbie Beaulieu*. Oh, by the way, *Herbie Beaulieu* I think had some involvement with "The Chieftones" as well. They called themselves "The Arctic Ramblers", I think it was called. And that was the precursor band from Akaitcho Hall. I even watched them build Akaitcho Hall for God's sake and then I watched them tear it down. Oh my God. I came back in time to see them tear it down. It's bloody amazing. There used to be dances out at Con (*Con Rec Hall*). I mean in the later years for sure. In '60s and so forth. But '60s was really the real blossoming of music I think into probably everywhere. When you think about it. But, it really filled Yellowknife up. Every available hall was being used for something and the sports teams were using the bands to do fund raisers. So that created an opportunity for us to get out and play. When you think about it, it's a really good idea because it's good old fashion entrepreneurial know how that's putting that kind of stuff together. There's no grants and stuff like that for anything. People just put their heads together and people came out and partied and a certain amount went to the team and somebody sponsored and all the rest of that. So the team, they wanted good music and what have you. So we had to stay as versatile as possible. So we played places like out at Giant (*Mine Rec Hall*) out at Con (*Mine Rec Hall*), in town at "The Legion" and "The Elks". Those were the main, four main places to play other than school dances and stuff like that.

So “The Arctic Ramblers” and I don't know if they called themselves “Arctic Red Ramblers.” I think it was just “Arctic Ramblers.” There was a *Cockney* that was in there. *Jim Cockney* I think was one of the players there. And you'd have to talk to (*George*) *Mandeville* and some of those other guys to know who that part of it, they remember that. Then “The Auroras,” hit the airwaves and were playing different places, as before we were going. So it was *George Mandeville* and *Herbie (Beaulieu)*, and *Matt (Lafferty)* and *Hans Nendsa*. And boy, they had all this nice equipment those guys. They didn't have families that could give them the instruments so the government paid for that and I mean that set the bar. And, "Oh, God. We're gonna have to find some instruments and *Harold Glick* had all the instruments and stuff like that so he was able to order stuff in for us. So my first guitar, my first electric guitar was a yellow “Harmony Les Paul” look alike with a kitchen bumper kind of protector around it and it was yellow. Oh my God. But the price was right, eh? I couldn't wait to get the paint off it and change the color. I probably did that, I started changing it and stuff like that. We'd started ordering guitars through (Simpsons) “Sears” and I remember talking to *Eric Christensen*. And *Eric* is probably a good person to talk to too about some of this stuff. But he bought a “Teisco Del Rey” I think it was called, guitar, that was worth \$135 or whatever it is through “Sears.” Turned out to be a very valuable guitar. But, that's his ... I'll leave that story for him, eh?

MMS - Who were some of the young musicians that you were working with during that time building up to you-

JT - My brother (*Gary Tees*) and I stuck pretty close together there with what we were doing. And *Wayne Bertrand* being a schoolmate and *Larry Glowach*. We all got started playing at school. Especially if we're learning from (*Wilf*) *Schidlowsky* and next thing you know *Larry's* got a set of drums and *Wayne*, all of a sudden he's got a new guitar. So we were playing gigs at school and that and trying to earn a little bit of extra cash and stuff like that to buy our instruments. And buying them on time. Go to *Glick's (YK Radio)* and put some money down and keep paying it off, that type of thing. I think we called ourselves “We Four.” Then we added one more and called it, okay, “We Five.” And then it evolved into “Stained Glass Illusion.” And the changes and the different people that came along in that time. *Tony Gilchrist* was with us with “Stained Glass Illusion”, *Wayne* was with us and then we picked up *Sue Leon* and we picked up *Penny Ballantyne*, *Penny Aumond* at the time before she got married. Those were interesting days. The name “Stained Glass Illusion” I was asked about the name. And I didn't like the way they were running St. Pat's, the school I was going to and I let them know about it. You got all these ideas when you're young to change the world. Rebelling against having to take religious classes and stuff like that. Imagine that, going to a Catholic school and then you're fed up with taking religion. The Catechism. I told them, "You're running it like a communist gulag." I said, "This is communism" I said. And it was *Sister Isadore*. And she said, "Well, you're right." Okay. End of conversation. I'd never been told once you get that and somebody agrees with you, where to take it after that.

MMS - Important lesson from the sister there.

JT - Yeah. Various people came along after that and we evolved. I remember we just called ourselves “Friends” after a while there. *JT (John Telgen)* joined us. He was a really good drummer, as you now. And *Gary (Tees)* again and *Sue Leon*, myself. We played for the

“Commissioner's Ball” there. We were all dressed up there. *Gary's* got some pictures of us playing that time. Also back before that now, just as I remember things. *Archie Loutitt* had ... people were really impressed with his picking and stuff like that. He was a hot guitar player in town, Yellowknife's hottest guitar player, you know in those days. And they really liked the way he played and stuff like that. He was almost like a God when you go to his place and you see all this guitar stuff and wow. Just like, "Oh man, this is the star." And his family, I mean, had always been close to our family and stuff like that. They had a band going. I don't recall what the name was. In later years he played with “Northbound Freeway.” But way before that, the *Cyrenne* family. When they moved to town, the old man worked as a body man for “Frame and Perkins” and he had all these boys. And his eldest son, by that point he'd left home and was married and his name was *Frenchy* and he was a hot guitar player. He could do stuff with that guitar. And up until then, *George Mandeville*. When I watched *George*, *George* had a “Supro” guitar it's called. And “Supro” is an Italian make. *Billy Gibbons* has hundreds of them. Here *George* had ... I didn't know who *Billy Gibbons* was. I don't think “ZZ Top” was even going at the time but here *George Mandeville* has this, it looks like a “Jazz Master” “Fender” copy. But this fantastic guitar and he was playing it through a “Baldwin” amp meant for an organ and he had the darnedest, nicest sound that he could get out of that thing. They were doing “The Ventures” and they were doing “Apache” and all these songs at the time that had been on the radio. And you'd hear them and those guys were picking that stuff up and playing it for dances and stuff like that. So they were all dressed the same and man they were like Gods around here. “The Auroras.” And that was their name, “The Auroras.” Really nice. They had wine colored sport jackets with gray flannel slacks and shirts and ties, all decked out nice when they'd go out and play. Man, it was really something to see. Yeah. That's the way it was back at that time.

MMS - That time. For sure. Yeah.

JT -And then as various people came through town, as Yellowknife evolved through the '60s, we played at the “Folk on the Rocks” and I remember the first one was right there at Frame Lake there just shortly before I left. So I was here until '79. I left Yellowknife til '97. But various people that were coming to work in Yellowknife and their families, their sons, we would be playing with them. I remember a guy by the name of *Chuck Dryel* (*sp?*) right around the time that he was a drummer. Good little drummer. Man, oh man. There was another guy that was a sax player. He played a tenor sax I think it was. And he came from back east as well. I don't remember what his name was but all these various guys that we'd be jamming with and that. When the '60s came along there started to be a lot more jamming and stuff like that going on. So, it was like, anything kind of goes, eh? And somewhere in there *Randy Demmon* was teaching at the time. And *Randy* went on to join the RCMP which really totally surprised me and became part of the RCMP band. And also the, in particular, the RCMP stage band. I liked the feel that he had on the way he played the piano.

MMS - Thanks for covering all of those guys. You sort of touched on it before, and-

JT - Oh, *Sandy Wilson*.

MMS - Okay, yeah.

JT - *Sandy Wilson*. That one. *Sandy* was a hell of a guitar player. He came into Yellowknife and *Terry* ...

MMS -*Mercer*.

JT - Yeah I can't remember his last name.

MMS -*Mercer*?

JT - *Terry Mercer*. Heck of a keyboard player. Man oh man. There was some nice music. And then *JT (John Telgen)* got together. Those three guys, holy man. There's some good music going on there when those guys hit town. So the evolution of the music, it was getting better and better as time ... It was very basic back in the '50s and Yellowknife being so isolated in a lot of ways. And every now and again there'd be a splash and somebody'd come to town and "Wow. Look at that." People like *Valdy*. This job, I guess that the government has to do those things for cultural kind of things and spread the knowledge of people's abilities and that. *Valdy* and all those other guys. *Ian and Silvia*.

MMS - Those guys, when they come up too, I'm sure it's the same today for me as it was for you back then. They come in and they sort of kick your ass around the block and kind of go, "Okay. There. That's how it's done. Or that's how that cat does it." And you learn so much just by going and watching them play. You don't even need a lesson. That's the lesson.

JT - Yeah. That's right. Absolutely.

MMS - And then you run back home and just practice and practice and keep working at that. Yeah.

JT - Oh, yes. I was gonna say *Frank Wouters*, back in the '50s, the little "Legion" was down on 50th there, beside the coke plant. I can't remember the name of the place now. Oh, I helped to build that building too.

MMS - Get out of here.

JT - Yeah.

MMS - You built this town.

JT - What is it called?

MMS - "The Twist and Shout." Yeah.

JT - Yeah, "The Twist." Yeah. I helped to put the bricks up there. That was a hell of a job. And it was "Pyramid Construction" was the name of that company. We used to go and play for those in those places. Before they built that building it was a little ramshackle, one story, tar paper shack that was the original "Vincent Massey Legion" in Yellowknife. And there was a lot of stories

around there, 'cause a lot of the ... It was all members only, right? That same kind of thing. There was a lot of vets around that time as well. And you had to be signed in and all the rest of that stuff. But *Frank Wouter's* played drums. *Fred Henne* played sax, *Archie (Loutitt)* played guitar and... Oh. *Betty Stevens*.

MMS - Oh, get out of here.

JT - *Betty Stevens* played piano.

MMS - Wow. I can hear it now.

JT - Yeah. So on Remembrance Day, all these people would get together and they'd be playing music there. And the beer would flow, and ... There was a lot of drinking in those days or more noticeable I guess because everybody's closer together. And that's the way it was back in the day, right? Before the road came in. All of that.

MMS - Waiting for that beer barge to pull up and all the rest of that stuff too. And yeah, it was a pretty hard drinking town. Two, three gold mines. Probably more. So it was definitely a mining town.

JT - Oh yeah, absolutely.

MMS - Work hard, play hard.

JT - I remember hearing about various people who were pretty good musicians that were miners, then they'd be gone. They'd come in and they'd be gone.

MMS - Yeah.

JT - You might not even hear their name.

MMS - Oh for sure. In the research and reflection for the thing I did with "Con Kids." I mean I hung out there as a kid. But I mean, those people were coming over. It was, I mean they were still digging out from under World War II probably even into the mid '50s and beyond. And coming over here and landing in this place you must've just thought you'd just been dropped into paradise. You and your family and there's your job and there's your boat, drag some fish out of the lake or whatever. They're bringing their cultures, and the customs, and their musics, right, to this little two, three, four thousand population town. So even in that time, how cosmopolitan it probably was and how lucky we were able to grow up in that with all of those different cultures coming through here. And then the indigenous population as well

JT - And believe it or not, there was a lot of Ukrainian and accordion playing. Wow. And every now and again you'd have somebody that could really play that thing. And fiddle music, you didn't hear a lot of it in the early days. I didn't anyway. Until, I have to say early days, I mean it was there, it just didn't get to Yellowknife soon enough. Every now and again you heard it but more so as time went on you started to hear a lot more fiddle. And it was good, oh, yeah.

MMS - A lot of it in the communities just with the nature and how the fiddle sort of dropped into this land that way. That it existed out there before it existed in a lot of different places. I mean, even predating the guitar in some places.

JT - Yeah. The fiddle music that I remember earliest was *Angus Beaulieu* and *Richard Lafferty*. They were the two main fiddlers that I can remember. And the people who were associated with the music and what have you. And, I mean, what a legacy. Both of those gentlemen have for playing in the time. I've played with them both and traveled with them both and they've eclipsed us in a lot of ways in terms of their legacy and the time that they've been playing, those guys. And "The Native Cousins" band. *Cecil Lafferty* and *Allan Cardinal* and *Tony Buggins*. They've got their own legacy there too. And *Leandre Beaulieu*.

MMS - Yeah, for sure. Yeah.

JT - Yeah. I always liked *Leandre's* playing. When I first heard *Leandre* was back in the '60s when you heard those guys playing at the Dog Derby. We used to call it-

MMS - The Dog Derby, yeah.

JT - "Caribou Carnival." And "Holy man. Who's that hot guitar player from Fort Res? Yeah. *Leandre*. And he had some good licks there. And *Tony (Buggins)* as well. All those guys. They all liked to play "Fenders". I always liked ... I never owned a "Fender". Honest to God. I never owned a "Fender" guitar. I guess I will eventually but I was always a little partial to the "Gibson." I don't know why it is because the "Fender"s seem to be a thinner neck. And I've got larger hands and I like to feel a little more wood in my hand, eh? I liked the feel of the "Gibson," the "Gibson" neck. A guy showed up in Yellowknife with a "Mosrite" guitar. And a "Mosrite" guitar was one of the guitars that "The Ventures" were playing for a short time. And they had a thin, thin, like an ultra thin neck. And it was a green colored guitar. I think *Frenchy Cyrenne* might have bought that guitar eventually or brought it here I don't know the whole story about that guitar but a famous guitar like that shows up in Yellowknife one day. And a guy's playing it in "The Gold Range." Actually, *Harry Pysmenny's* son (*Dale*) eventually bought that guitar.

MMS - Okay.

JT - 'Cause whoever owned it, owed rent at "The Gold Range" and gave up his guitar.

MMS - Probably a few instruments stayed here because of that.

JT - Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's amazing. But you know what? We used to have gigs every weekend. We could play at "The Legion" or "The Elks" or out at Giant or Con. And we had extra money coming steady. Just as young musicians.

MMS - Still going to school.

JT - Yeah. Still going to school and stuff like that. And afterwards too when we were working and that.

MMS - Yeah.

JT - And then traveling ... My first sojourn out of Yellowknife was to travel to (Fort) Smith. That was a big deal. Oh, my God. We got to go and play in (Fort) Smith. And it was for a grad dance and they just loved us going down there. I think we were all of 16 years old or something at the time. That was really something to be able to do that. They paid for us to go down to (Fort) Smith to play. And then, later in the '60s "UM<sup>2</sup>", *Tommy Hudson's* band and I haven't seen any of those guys for ages. I don't know where they are or what they're doing. It's hard to remember all the names but "UM<sup>2</sup>" got going. Then there was a "Blind Onion" *Pat Burke's* band, "Blind Onion" I think out of (Fort) Smith, right? There was a whole other music scene in the Northwest Territories that happened south of the lake over in Deh Cho. Another one up around Norman Wells and yet another one up in the Delta. There's fantastic amount of history and music that's been going on since back in the '50s and even prior to that. Some of that, more of it going on before Yellowknife. Just incredible.

MMS -It happened in that space and time. And then it's almost like it was moving so fast. Everything was just moving forward, fast forward up here. And I sort of sound like a broken record but politically and economically and culturally, I mean all of that stuff was on fast forward. And so, it wasn't as if there was a lot of time to sort of dwell on what happened 10 years earlier or why it happened that way or who the players were and all the rest of that stuff 'cause it was all just really moving forward. And even the music. And I mean, I asked you what kind of music was happening at your house parties? And it was the straight up country. And that was what everybody says, straight up country or old time fiddle music. And that was it. And then it all started to change. But then it started to change really fast.

JT - That's right.

MMS - For you guys, coming in and learning your basic G-C-D chord to a *Hank Williams* song, and then all of a sudden you got hit with "The Ventures" and then you get hit with *Jimmy Hendrix*. It's just like, talk about fast forward.

JT - The technology was moving ahead fast too, eh? So a 30 year span after the close of the war, the Second World War from 1950 on to 1980. That was the kind of the golden age of that music. Although, the '80s was an evolutionary time too. I was south by that point but a lot of good music that evolved through the '80s and '90s too, eh? But all these different bands like when we were growing up through our teens and what have you around here was ... I mean "The Eagles" came out around that time and that set another benchmark for a lot of people. It sure did for me. I still haven't seen them yet and they're just about done. Yeah. I may get a chance this year. I hope, but...

MMS -All of those changes like we were talking about. And you were talking earlier about radio and another question I have is sort of how did you get your music in some of the places that you

got to? And when you were learning songs, how did you get those songs or how did you hear those songs?

JT - There was a couple of guys. *Rick Fader* and another guy that worked for Transport Canada. I think he was a guitar player and *Rick* was into recording. So we would go out to Transport Canada and use one of their rooms to do some recording and stuff like that. And then, the next thing you know ... Well, the guy's nickname was *Stretch*, he was a tall guy. Right? We would be playing music, just learning a little bit about recording at that time because those guys knew, they came from the south, they had some of the technical background. And then *Roy Galloway* recorded us. So somewhere in the CBC archives, recorded at the old CBC where the "Subway" is right now, there's some recordings of us from way back in the '60s. *Roy* recorded the, well I guess essentially, was the "Stained Glass Illusion," our band. And it was right in the CBC studio. So we were learning about and it was all done on tape and stuff like that. Harder to do back in those days. The technological glitches that can happen and just getting the sound that you want and it's up to the guy that's doing the recording to, he's really steering everything. And then at the end he plays it back for you. "Hey, wow. That's cool." You know and...

MMS - What year would have been? Roughly.

JT - That would've been '65 maybe. '64.

MMS - Wow.

JT - Yeah. So like, within two years, two, three years after I'd learned how to play guitar, we were starting to record already.

MMS - Sitting there in the recording studio.

JT - Yeah.

MMS - Amazing. Yeah. Like I say, it started to happen just really, really fast.

JT - Yes.

MMS - So, *Glicks* and "YK Radio?" were happening. You were freezing watching your first television show outside the window there. That's a beautiful picture that one.

JT - Yeah. Right beside "The Gold Range." And all the drunks would be coming out of "The Gold Range" and we're trying to watch "Bonanza."

MMS - Obviously he started carrying LP's and stuff like that. That's where you'd be spending your hard earned cash?

JT - Yeah. We'd be buying records and stuff like that.

MMS - Guitars.

JT - Yeah. And then guitars. And to try and learn the songs, you'd put the needle on there and it was God awful hard so it was a real blessing when they came out with the eight track but it had difficulties. Every time you tried to back it up and stuff like that, the wheel would wear a hole in the tape. The sounds, eventually back and forth you'd try and learn a piece, it would wear the sound off.

MMS - You'd have to buy more than one copy just to make sure you learned the song.

JT - Yeah. But you'd try and turn the turn table down so it's going slow to try and pick up the parts and stuff like that. It was God awful hard to learn stuff, eh? So you had to try to capture in your soul exactly how it sounds. So you could transfer it back to your fingers and get it done, kind of thing. Play it back over and over again. Try to get the song right.

MMS - Yeah. For that time that was the way you learned.

JT - And learning the words. Just putting the needle down and then writing the words ... It helped you to learn the song just by writing it out and putting the needle down and writing the thing out, you learned the song well that way. Now a days, it's a different ... You've gotta do a lot more listening I think to get it. And you're using different faculties within the inner faculties of what you have for memory and how you put things together. You have to kind of put it together a little differently to remember it.

MMS - But that would also spawn an innovation of some kind. I mean, you could be trying to figure out the *Jimmy Hendrix* lick and all of a sudden you'd come up with something else. And-

JT - My memory is pretty good in a lot of ways and I attribute that to learning songs and playing them back from memory just by playing in front of people. And we don't do a lot of that anymore because there isn't the demand like there used to be. I think I've been able to preserve my faculties by having gone through that. Also, when you sing, I've noticed that singing has had a healthy benefit for me. If, I don't sing I get sick and I think it has to do with the way you breathe when you sing. You take air in and you breathe it out slowly to use the words and stuff like that. And actually, *David Suzuki* did a story on that, fairly recently, on studies that have been done on the physiological aspects of people who sing and who play music. And the healthy aspects that come out as a result of that. I think they're on to something on some of that stuff because I just feel better when I'm singing, I don't know. I think it has to do with that breathing aspect. You let the air out in a more measured way.

MMS - When you're learning a song or performing a song or whatever it is. I mean there's your body and your mind. You're memorizing, and the words are there and you're controlling your breathing and everything sort of has to work in tandem. And then you're playing guitar at the same time.

JT - Yeah. And all these people from way back in the '50s, most of them played by ear. My dad always played by ear. I learned by ear. Most of the people around me were learning by ear. It was a fantastic way to learn music. Here's all these people learning music without having gone to

school. I went to University and took a year and realized, "Oh, my God. I don't think I wanna be this serious about music. It's gonna ruin it." And plus, I don't think I had the discipline or I needed to have a different kind of discipline to be able to go there and I didn't see myself going in the direction that it was going to take me. So I took from it what I could use and perfected my ability to finger pick and I'm really grateful that I spent the time doing that. Yeah. We're still learning. We're always still learning. Never-

MMS - It never ends. It never ends that way.

JT - People who get into music as a career whether it's through University or not or if it's outside of that. We all dabble in parts of it. Especially for us, the ones who haven't formally gone to school. We dabble in a lot of the parts of that whole thing and every now and again I get asked to help out with teaching. I try to help people to harness their desire and their passion for music by telling me what song it is that they really like. "What's your favorite song?" And that's where it kind of comes from, I think, is, "Man. I wanna be able to play that. I like the way those guys do that. How did they do that?" It starts that way. And I don't know what it is but it leaves some kind of an imprint on an individual and they kind of recognize that, "I wanna be able to do that. If I wanna do it bad enough, I will do it. I'll do it well too. Under the right conditions." So being a facilitator of that for people 'cause we all learn in different ways, eh? We shouldn't leave the topic of music in Yellowknife without talking about your Mom. Yeah, oh yeah. Played with your Mom a number of times.

MMS - Oh, wow.

JT - Yeah.

MMS - Nice.

JT - And both at some senior things that we were at and earlier on, on Remembrance Day and some other public functions and stuff like that. Always good to play with your Mom.

MMS - Yeah.

JT - Yeah. Your Mom set the bar too, eh? With music. Yeah.

MMS - Her and *Betty Stevens* are pillars in that whole thing.

JT - Oh absolutely. Yeah.

MMS - Wish I could've spent more time with *Betty*. 'Cause man. I can't imagine the stories that she would have to tell. But, yeah. The matriarchs, they kind of held the whole town together in those very early days. Your mum, my mum, lots of other mums.

JT - Oh yeah. Sure.

MMS -Just looking out for all the other people in town that way. This has just been awesome John. Thank you so much for-

JT - And thank you for doing what you do. Yeah, that's-

MMS -Yeah. And likewise.

JT - It's a good project. Very worthwhile project.

MMS - Back at you.

JT - And I'm sure it can probably open up into ... It's a huge project for the Northwest Territories. 'Cause there's so much music here that needs to be told. Holy smokes.

MMS -Like I was saying about the Yukon. It's sort of, you had scribes going through there. The *Pierre Burtons* and everybody else. And inevitably the music would land in there but that never quite happened here. And in war years, gold mining, all of that other stuff. But, again. That's the hope anyways, is that-

JT - People were too damned busy trying to survive.

MMS -Some things never change that way for sure.

JT - Yeah. That's what it was.

MMS -Busy working, raising families.

JT - Absolutely. Absolutely.

MMS -But, again. Different time. One, without the television. Two, without the internet and so the social scene was the bars, the taverns, the clubs and the community events that happened with live music. And so thank God, I just caught the tail end of it and you grew up in the middle of it and *Wayne Bertrand* and everybody. That demand was there and so like you say, we had to learn two or three new songs for the next dance coming up.

JT - *Rocky Racette* was another guy that came through.

MMS -That's a new name. I haven't heard that yet. Okay.

JT - Yeah. *Rocky Racette* came through Yellowknife. And I think he bought *George's (George Mandeville)* old guitar. But he was a, when he hit town man, he was the star.

MMS -Is that right, eh?

JT - Yeah. *Rocky Racette* came in and he had some good licks and boy, people liked dancing to his music.

MMS - What kind of music would he have been playing?

JT - Rock and roll.

MMS - Rock and roll. The early stuff?

JT - Rock and roll, yeah. And country. Yeah.

MMS - Yeah. There was a time there where probably you could do that crossover thing and there was enough country in rock and roll and rock and roll in country so to speak.

JT - Yeah. Absolutely.

MMS - All those songs would still really work. Magical time, and ... No. I really appreciate your perspective here, *John*. Thanks so much.

JT - Thank you.