

Frank & Jane George

Where: At their home in Roane County

Date: April 19, 2016

Location: Roane County, WV

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 1:52:25

Frank George (October 6, 1928 – November 15, 2017), a Bluefield native, was a banjo player, fiddler, and piper, who also played piano, organ, hammer and lap dulcimer, and was a walking compendium of West Virginia traditional music history and jokes. He was the recipient of the 1994 Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honor.

Jane George (November 11, 1922 – February 19, 2018) helped launch the craft revival in the Mountain State through extensive fieldwork with traditional artists, educational programming, and by co-founding the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes. She also hosted Mountain Heritage weekends and Kanawha County Parks Mountaineer Day Camps to teach young mountaineers about their cultural heritage, founded two Scottish dance troupes, and served as a 4-H agent in multiple counties. She was the 1993 Vandalia Award recipient.

FG: Frank George

JG: Jane George

EH: Emily Hilliard

00:00

FG: (tape begins as Frank is speaking) Girl pipes up and says, “my uncle plays banjer”... what was her name?

JG: Oh, Frank. See, I haven’t done that for so long and I can’t remember all the names

FG: ...I’d know it if I could hear it.

JG: I’m 93 years old, my dear!

EH: I know! I know!

FG: We found one of the most famous, one of the fewest, not famous, fewest black banjo pickers in existence!

EH: Wow!

FG: They’re gone!

EH: Yeah.

FG: They went to the guitar and forgot about the banjo and fiddle.

EH: Yeah.

JG: Who are you talkin’ about?

FG: Uncle Homer Walker.

JG: Yeah.

FG: So we found him because of the day camp and the kids.

EH: And where was that?

FG: Hm?

EH: Where was he?

FG: He was down in Glenn Linn, just over the line in...

EH: Okay.

FG: But he was a West Virginian.

JG: They're both people....

FG: His name was Walker, but he was the son of slaves and we don't know what their name was. Their owners. The old slave owner was Walker, so he's a Walker.

EH: Okay, yeah.

JG: There was a few people that still did things that young people would learn if they were acquainted with 'em and we had to find the people that would teach 'em and things like that. In other words, it was that period of time in West Virginia when they were trying to preserve things and the culture, the songs, and the old-time music. He's famous for it!

EH: Right, yeah.

JG: Frank's music is old. The other side of the world. Tell her that story.

FG: Somebody was coming back from Australia, Joe Dobbs was coming back from Australia and stopped at the museum and somebody asked him if he knew Frank George!

EH: (laughs)

FG: But I've known Joe for 40 years, you know, something like that.

JG: It's true!

FG: I've never been to Australia.

JG: Someone recorded his music.

FG: The whole idea was what the Japanese called Shinto. You heard of that? Continuation. That's what it's all about.

EH: Yeah.

FG: Problem now, it's getting erratic. I looked at the catalog of Augusta at Elkins...

JG: You can do that a while and then you gotta quit!

FG: Their instructors in old-time and fiddle and banjo are going for the Galax and North Carolina sound.

EH: Yeah.

FG: They went by West Virginia and missed it.

EH: Yep.

FG: ... so there's a problem there.

EH: So they're playing like Round Peak style?

FG: Yeah. Galax and them. That's where they learn, that's who they learn from. Tommy Jarrell.

JG: Who you talkin about now?

FG: Young people teaching old-time music.

JG: No, who?

FG: Tommy Jarrell is who we're talking about.

JG: You said his name!

FG: Tommy Jarrell!

JG: Oh.

FG: I was on the University of Chicago stage one time with Tommy (laughs)

EH: What was he like?

FG: Hm?

EH: What was he like?

FG: Oh, he was original but it wasn't like West Virginia! You know. He was Round Peak sound!

EH: Right.

FG: That's the way he grew up! He did a lot of singing, which I never heard with the fiddling.

EH: Ah.

FG: But that's where people went to learn old-time. That's fine! At least they learned that. But they missed West Virginia on the way!

EH: Yeah. So how did you learn to play fiddle?

FG: Well mostly from my dad and granddad. I've got the instruments my dad built for me.

JG: He made the fiddle and banjo.

FG: We didn't have any money so if you wanted something you had to make it. You wanted a rifle, you had to make it. You wanted a saddle?

JG: (interjecting) There are hundreds of words written about him.

FG: You want a saddle, you had the horse, you know you couldn't buy a saddle, you made one! And that was the way it was. This was taken about 1933, I think. (shows Emily a photo)

EH: Oh wow! You're probably 3? 4? 5?

FG: 5. I hadn't quite started school.

4:07

EH: Oh, that's very cute.

FG: That's Deputy, my squirrel dog.

EH: Aw.

JG: Through school in the community I was born in. At Nut Ridge. Not where I was born but where dad moved. My dad had in the day that I was born which was 1922, he had to... dad was executive type person—he had a job in Spencer and I don't know exactly which one.

FG: [] sweeper, honey.

JG: He had to walk out of the holler up the top of the hill and down the other side to the main road which was to Spencer. But he got tired of that too—he bought a lot... and this was many people then at a place called Speed—have you ever been there?

EH: Nope.

JG: At... on this road if you go from Walton to Spencer and he built a house. We moved over out of a holler which had no good road.

FG: Possum Holler!

JG: Possum Holler! That's where I was born. And then he could, you know, he had a car. He had an old Model T Ford. I remember that thing. I had a sister and she and I were crazy about those cars.

FG: And he bought a barn for a hundred dollars, tore it down, built a house out of the barn.

EH: Ah! And did...

JG: Then he didn't have to walk!

EH: Right! Did you have electricity in Possum Holler.

JG: Oh, no indeed.

FG: No water either! You had a spring.

JG: You didn't have those kind of things then.

FG: An outhouse. My grandmother and grandfather raised 12, 14 children—9 girls and 5 boys, with no water or electricity in the house.

JG: Could you believe people could do that? I don't know how they did that.

EH: That's amazing. And where was that?

FG: That was in Tennessee. My mother's family. My dad's in West Virginia.

EH: And where were you born?

FG: In Bluefield.

EH: Okay.

FG: My dad was born in the north side of East River Mountain in the place called Hillside in the... toward Virginia... a place called Jug Neck Holler. A one-room log cabin that my grandfather built almost single handed.

EH: Wow.

FG: And my grandmother—they got finished and cut the, cut stone and made mortar out of [burnt] lime and made sand and lime into cement kinda you know, and built a stone chimney. My grandmother took the lime and mortar and the fuzzy end of a rope--you know how a rope fuzzes out—that was her brush to brush all the inside the house with lime water so you could see better.

EH: Wow.

FG: (laughs) with a rope. I'm telling you...I can tell you about pioneers, this friend of mine's just passed away and he was—he was a Frontiersman! Right down in Tazewell County, Virginia.

EH: Wow.

FG: Up in the mountains by himself. He wasn't in this world!

JG: Who you talking about now?

FG: John [Hipp?] [unintelligible] Boy could he play a fiddle—learned it all by himself.

EH: Wow.

JG: They didn't have lessons! They simply picked up the instrument some could play 'em when they tried. He could. There are people like that still.

EH: Yeah.

FG: Well that's the only way you could keep it going. There wasn't any written music!

EH: Yeah.

FG: And you had the oral tradition. You know—hedaloodadootdeedalootdoodaloodadoo.

If you was tired of playing, you taught the kid with the mouth music!

FG: Do you go to the Cultural Center to where Bobby Taylor and Kim Johnson and that bunch play?

EH: Yeah—Vandalia?

JG: Yeah, well, I...I have started all of that stuff!

EH: (laughs)

JG: You're talking to the people that did the original.

EH: I know! I know!

FG: Norman Fagan was in on that, but he was an outsider. He was from Pittsburgh.

EH: Okay.

FG: I tolerated him 'cause his name was Fagan. (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

JG: Great guy, though—he's in a picture here. He's in this one.

FG: Yeah, Bill Hairston and me.

JG: The big black guy is Bill Hairston and we taught him all kinds of things. He is very talented. And that's Frank and then there's Norman Fagan beside Bill. Frank, Bill, Norman Fagan, and me.

EH: Oh yeah. Uh-huh.

FG: I have another friend... [Bob Ponderosa?]

JG: (talks over him) He was the director of the culture center.

FG: I have another friend that got started with the pipes. Now he's not only got a school in Pittsburgh, he's got three other schools.

EH: Wow.

FG: One in Pennsylvania, one in Kentucky and one in... somewhere. 4 piping schools and I got him started.

EH: How did you start playing pipes?

FG: That's a long story. (laughs)

EH: Well I'm ready for it! Oh wow. (Frank shows her a photo)

FG: That's me when I was in good shape.

EH: (laughs) Nice.

JG: Now Frank—the one thing I helped him with was—I knew so many people. I really did. I worked for the state before... I had 4 sons. I was married to a schoolmate and neighbor. And we had 4 sons and then I left and got a divorce and it was 3 years before I married Frank. Anyway...

FG: Ah, she says "you married me," I didn't marry you.

JG: (laughs) He loves to say things like that.

EH: (laughs)

FG: It's a fact! I was cougared! Cradled. See I'm on the edge of 80 and she's 93!

EH: You're 88?

FG: Yeah.

JG: Yep.

FG: Anyway, we've had a pretty good time together.

JG: We've done an awful lot. He's played music at an awful lot of places. And of course he doesn't just play a fiddle. He plays banjo, and a two dulcimers, and of course, we... have you ever heard of plucked dulcimer playing?

EH: Yeah.

JG: The big ones? The big box ones?

FG: No-that's a hammered dulcimer.

EH: Hammered dulcimer?

JG: Russell Fluharty was the one who...

FG: You're talking about tap dulcimer. It's a chest of drawers.

EH: I have a hammered dulcimer.

FG: Chest of drawers with strings on it!

EH: (laughs) Yeah!

JG: Did I say the wrong one?

FG: Yeah, you're talking about the lap dulcimer. Plucked dulcimer, lap dulcimer, Appalachian dulcimer. It's not...even a dulcimer, it's something else. Then here are some of the awards. Smoky Mountain Banjo Champion 1968, Smoky Mountain Dulcimer Champion '68. So that's been a while. That's when I came from the rounds, you know.

EH: So how did you start...

JG: You outgrow your ability.

EH: Yeah.

JG: You get too old to do the... what people want you too.

EH: Right! Well how did you start playing pipes?

FG: That's a long story.

JG: That's a good question. Now that's not an ordinary instrument that everybody learns like the banjo.

EH: I know!

FG: Number one—I'm descended from the MacGregors and that might have something to do with it—I'm not sure. Ah, one day my mother and father were standing on the corner in Bluefield, First National Bank corner at Federal and Princeton Avenue, talking to my great uncle. And all of a sudden I hear this sound. And I broke a run just like a scalded hound. My mother jumped. My dad, "let him on, let him on." It's on the sidewalk all the way down there. And I tore off and it was about a couple hundred yards down and crossed the street from the N&W Railway Station. There was restaurants and hotels and theatres and it was a busy place. And I later found out that the piper was with a salesman for so Arthur somebody's tea.

JG: Lipton. Tea.

FG: Was it Lipton? Anyway, the salesman from Lipton tea country was traveling on the railroad at N&W stopping at places to sell tea. You know. Arthur or Lipton, yes it was. He had a piper in tow, and another one going to draw a crowd. And that's what he was doing, standing on the street corner, he played that, get up and played 5 minutes and rest and he played about 15, probably about 30 minutes. We had a break now and then, played about 3-4 tunes. Had quite a crowd, you see and of course I was there. In fact, if he was there playing, I'd still be there!

EH: (laughs)

FG: That's the first time I ever heard the instrument but it did something to me. And I never forgot that. And later on when I was a teenager I started looking around to find me a [?] set. And I had to learn it all by myself—how to tune, the reeds, how to tune the pots and get the [?] going, treat the bag... I did that all by myself. And about a year, I was playing, making a sound off it. That's the way I started.

EH: Wow.

FG: It was just a happening.

JG: He was not taught. Like the fiddle in the... [?]

FG: Well my lord, my dad told me how to hold the thing!

JG: Did he?

FG: And "hold here, bow here." But the first thing he made is a banjo, you see and that's the first thing I learned.

EH: So what were some of the first tunes you learned?

FG: First tune I ever played on the banjo was "Sourwood Mountain" and the rest of 'em would be what I call fiddle A tunes—"Cripple Creek," and "Sally Goodin..."

JG: He played these on pipes too!

FG: Cross tune. See I learned in cross tuning.

EH: Yeah.

FG: EAEA, DGDG.

EH: Right.

JG: I think she asked you what was the first tune you played on the pipes.

15:05

FG: Oh, I don't know.

JG: What did you play—the old fashioned music on the pipes?

FG: Well, I... I played... It was known at that time—they don't play 'em any more, hardly.

JG: Well, that's right.

FG: Yep! I don't read music and I had to learn.

JG: Frank was very... he... was really influential in preserving the old tunes because they were not going to be! People didn't care where they... I think they did care. They didn't... but if Frank told you one thing he did that nobody else did, he helped preserve the old-time tunes. He got it started and a lot of people joined in.

FG: Anyway. The first tune I ever played was probably "Scotland the Brave." Anyway, my dad made the banjo and showed me how to hold it and tune it and we were sitting around one evening. Grandpa came to live—my grandmother died in 1936 at 78 grandpa came to live with us. And he was an excellent banjo player and a pretty good fiddler. So, he was playing the fiddle. I had the little banjo, fooling with it. And I already learned how he used his thumb and forefinger. It was the old rappin style—they call it clawhammer, I don't know what that'd be. Rappin style. And my dad had a harmonica and all of a sudden, grandpa was playing "Sourwood Mountain" and all of a sudden I was playing "Sourwood Mountain." And that's the way it started!

EH: Wow!

FG: You can hear it, then you can play it.

JG: He learned it at home like a lot of people do.

FG: Well, and then later on it was other people—friends and neighbors who played I learned different tunes and saw different styles and met some of the musicians who were really good and long gone, nobody knew about it except local people, you know?

EH: Yeah, who were they?

JG: [unintelligible] You couldn't go 30 miles and go back home that night.

EH: Right.

FG: That's what the old Irishmen did. They had a crossroads music... in Ireland they have crossroads music. Why it's crossroads, I don't know. And it was a long walk—he didn't have a mile stick—he walked something like 15 miles one way, you know, and it was... [unintelligible] he said oh yes, and... I think it was in England. Anyway, when my mother was working as a nurse and what little work my dad could find, they would be gone and she was working the night shift, you know, or we would have starved to death probably and so we're going and grandpa was a good cook, you know, so we'd eat breakfast and dad would work and mom would go to bed, [unintelligible]. So we'd play music from 9-11, he'd tell me stories, and we'd play music and then we'd eat some kind of lunch and then if the weather was fit, we'd go hiking, we'd go squirrel hunting, just walk through the woods, you know? And I started getting interested in birds and groundhogs and squirrels and all that stuff, so I got a degree in Biology from Concord.

EH: Okay.

FG: 'Cause I liked botany and... this was a complicated mess.

EH: So then how did you start, you know, meeting other people who played music and being part of that world

19:04

FG: Well, I met old man Gillett Williams and his son and I met Emmet Horton, a banjo player and Far... Kip [Pip?] Arnold... and not Cliff ... Alf Arnold the guitar player. And these were all homegrown musicians and we'd have a square dance over the hill. I can remember my dad putting me up on his shoulders and we'd walk over the hill to Aunt...let's see, Casey Joneses mother...what was her...Aunt somebody Jones and she'd have a square dance, or the Crawfords would have a square dance, so there'd be some musicians that'd show up—mostly fiddle, banjo, and guitar! And I didn't see many mandolins then. That was always on Saturday night and sometimes it got midnight and these church people put the instruments in their cases and left. They did not play on Sunday.

EH: Was that just at people's homes, the dances?

FG: It was always at somebody's home, yeah. Or in the barn. I've been to dances—honest to god barn dances!

EH: Yeah.

FG: [?] all over the place

JG: Community events, really, but there was no place— a community building or anything.

FG: Then in the fall it was a corn husking or bean stringing—that was always a big gathering, you see, 'cause everybody brought stuff. Tubs of stuff, you know.

JG: Now when they built the schools in the community, these kind of things could be scheduled for the school and they didn't have a good organized system of things, they just happened! Until people learned where to publicize 'em, how to get to call the square dances and things like that. That's the way—they were happenings more than anything else.

FG: All the square dances I knew, they didn't need a caller, they just knew what to do.

JG: That's right a lot of them didn't have callers.

FG: These were, these were primitive times. People now a days don't understand this kind of stuff. This was primitive stuff. You have to deal with the age of [orient?]. You're dealt this hand and you play it. That's all you can do. But the family was always musical. Some of 'em couldn't cut a tune in a jug with a stopper in it. But some of 'em was good. And it was just all handed down, you know? One of the best fiddlers I ever heard was Jim Farthing [?] He was no relation. I learned tunes from him that were unbelievable! His repertoire was you know, like the... absolutely no end to it as far as I know.

EH: Wow.

FG: He had a big family and drank too much, but he was good—the best I ever heard!

EH: So did you do a lot of recordings too of other fiddlers?

FG: All the good stuff was never recorded. Old Man Jim Farthing, Jim's dad was a good banjo picker, and one time he and my granddad and Old Man John Hopkins got together and we had a session. My dad and my granddad played, but he didn't want to dance and John Hopkins was a dancer and old Jim Farthing—three of 'em. My granddad and he—dancers and they got up and the dancing if you had film of it now would be worth a fortune! But nobody had a camera... to record it.

JG: And some things were-- rarely you find something that you really... a picture or an instrument associated with that time. And actually, America changed! These kind of people like Frank that play the music and did, when it was appreciated like that, uh, I think it changed America. It preserved the culture.

23:14

FG: You don't learn things at home anymore from your mother. They go to Augusta...

JG: They don't do it at home, you've got plenty of buildings. You don't have to.

FG: Second hand. There was no recordings. Once in a while we'd turn on the radio but we didn't hear any old-time music—we heard what we call, what I call modern—I don't even know what it was. "Lamplight in the Valley?" Things like that.

JG: Frank doesn't like that music.

FG: That's one thing that ruined family music was the radio.

JG: He thinks bluegrass spoiled the old sound!

EH: (laughs)

JG: And it probably did!

EH: Yeah.

FG: Well things change, it'll change no matter what happens. Nothing you can do about that.

EH: Yeah.

FG: We used to listen to the radio. We'd listen to the news and then one another and turn it off. And play our own music. And company was always dropping by you know? But we'd go to Bill Williamses one Saturday night, people come to our house Saturday night, next Saturday night we'd go to Crawfords and next Saturday night, we'd go to Aunt Becky Jones. Next Saturday night we'd go over to Ora Celis [?] and next week we'd go to Pete Honaker's and it was always welcome, you know—"Come on in! We're gonna have some fun," you know.

EH: And how did you hear about it? Just being around town you would hear someone was having something?

FG: Neighbors would talk about it. Once you find out about it, you know, it's you learn it all pretty quick. And a lot of people didn't go—they wasn't interested in this stuff.

JG: I don't know that what... what they did was publicized. It certainly wasn't organized the way it is now. It just happened. More than anything. Isn't that right?

FG: Well people went to church a lot and that was where you communicated.

JG: That's right, that's true.

FG: If the church didn't allow music, well that was fine! The musicians went there and so what? You know (laughs) They didn't want to play in church. Some of the greatest dancers we ever had was at the Episcopal Church! (laughs)

25:28

Even the priest played the guitar—Paul Biggers!

EH: Really! Wow.

FG: He was something else. It was all [clawing?] on him—the Medicines, the Eagles, the Elks, the IOF and the WOF, University Club and the Country Club and every Saturday night there was something to do! There was no TV!

JG: There's too much... how long do you plan to stay? Let's let her ask questions.

EH: Well, I don't want to wear you out. So...

JG: No, you won't wear us out.

EH: Okay.

FG: No, you can stay all night if you want to!

EH: (laughs)

FG: You'll have to sleep on the floor!

JG: That's not so.

FG: With the cat! We got plenty of time.

JG: [unintelligible] I had 4 sons. And they were neighbors that I went to school with—I mean their family was. My, well...there were communities everywhere. Things were based on the community, most things were.

FG: Your number 2 son died a month ago!

JG: That's true.

FG: Johnny would have been 72 on the 7th of June he died of lung cancer! She's only got 3!

JG: He smoked too much.

EH: Yeah.

FG: She's got a lot of grandchildren and greats, you know.

JG: There's 20, about 30 I expect—I haven't counted 'em up for a while—grands and great-grands. And some of them can play!

EH: Really?

JG: That's my grandson there.

EH: That's what I figured.

FG: #1 flute player. He can play the hammered dulcimer...

JG: Oh, you oughta hear him. He's our Frank—he can play anything!

FG: And he's pretty good—I got him started.

JG: [unintelligible] He got a good education, of course he got a good job and, and he's up in Boston, we don't see enough of him!

FG: Yeah, he up and moved up Yankee land.

EH: So Scottish or Irish flute?

FG: He plays in a ceili band.

EH: Okay.

FG: Irish.

EH: And there's a lot up there in Boston.

FG: Oh lord!

JG: Oh yeah!

FG: Full of Irish music. And the surrounding area—not Boston, but you know, up there. We had Sean Connor here. Sean Connor here and stayed here, came by and we played all night! He was born in Boston but he got dual citizenship. As a baby they took him back to Ireland.

JG: Where did you grow up?

EH: I grew up in Indiana.

FG: She's a Hoosier!

FG: From Indiana.

EH: Mmhm.

FG: Flat land and cornfields.

EH: (laughs) It's true.

FG: (laughs) Did you know John Summers—about him?

EH: No, I know about him though.

FG: Great fiddler.

EH: Yeah.

FG: He lived in the northeast of Indiana.

JG: Frank, Frank's first recording was with John Summers.

EH: Oh it was?

FG: No.

JG: That's not true?

FG: Huh-uh.

JG: Well who was the first one with then?

FG: Just me!

EH: So who did you record for? Did you record for a record...

FG: Well wait a second I think...uh, there's some guitar accompaniment. I don't really know I'll have to look at it, it's been so long. It was '67 when the first one came out.

EH: Do you know what label that was on? Was it a record?

FG: Kanawha.

EH: Kanawha, okay.

FG: 307, it's now just Franklin George. The band sold their rights to Dave Freeman down in Virginia—you know, the... you know about it. Used to be...

EH: Rebel?

FG: Rebel, yeah. Rebel Records. He's got all the rights to that.

EH: Okay.

FG: I get a royalty check once in a while.

EH: Good.

FG: 17 dollars.

EH: (laughs)

JG: And the first job I had. I had 4 sons. [unintelligible]

FG: Johnny died last month!

JG: Yeah, we buried the 2nd son. Only one like my family, the rest of them looked like the Coxes. I was a Taylor.

EH: Okay.

JG: There's more of them than anybody in the world, I expect, because...

FG: Except the [unintelligible]

JG: It's true, there's an awful lot of Taylors.

FG: This was the second one—the double album that John Hilt... we lived in... I was descended from a Swoopes. The first settler and that's where we lived crossed over from Staunton, Virginia to Roan [?] County in 17 and 51, now if you don't think I have early ancestors (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

JG: Frank's done several recordings, but that's... is that the last one or not?

FG: No, there's Cedar Point and there's Reflections and...

JG: After he and I got married I sold... you wouldn't believe how people, what they think... he was...

EH: Well that's John Summers. He's on here—John Summers.

FG: Yeah, but that's not the old Kanawha one. That's the...

EH: Yeah.

FG: I don't think he's on there. This is the old Kanawha label—he just changed the name, Dave Freeman changed it.

EH: Oh, okay.

FG: This is a shit house, by the way, we're standing by.

EH: (laughs)

FG: I did that on purpose! (laughs)

EH: That's funny.

JG: I run into him because...

FG: See, this is supposed to be a [unintelligible?] as well as

EH: That's what I thought, maybe.

JG: The purpose of all this work I did was to uh, to find the people that wanted to sell what they did. If there were still people making baskets or weaving or whatever they were doing that was ancient. And help them and ask them to teach young people that were interested. And that's the kind of thing I was doing, I was organizing it.

EH: Uh-huh. Is that how you found Frank?

JG: I first heard him at the Art and Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes—do you ever go to that?

EH: Uh-huh.

JG: Well he was there one time. He came, it began in '63—it's a centennial thing. And then in '66 he came up—I don't know who asked him or who—I don't know who was recruiting the people that year but he was there and I heard him play that year, the night before the fair opened. And I've known him ever since.

EH: And how did you meet him?

JG: How did I meet him? I helped, I helped organize the first fair, my dear! I was working for the state.

EH: Uh-huh.

JG: And I worked on a lot of stuff with other people who were, knew where people were. We were trying to find people and keep what they did alive, if people wanted to learn it and things like that. Well, the first

think you do is let them know there is somebody still doing this and then, tell them, now they're gonna be at Cedar Lakes at the fair, you better come over there and talk to 'em. And things happened! And America did change! We preserved an awful lot of the old...

EH: So you got young people interested.

JG: Oh, they were already interested.

FG: If I had known, I probably wouldn't have gone to that fair. (laughs)

EH: What?

FG: If I knew what was coming, I probably wouldn't have gone to the fair! And found her!

JG: Yeah, we worked him to death.

EH: (laughs) Was it love at first sight?

JG: Hm?

EH: Was it love at first sight?

JG: Oh, not exactly. I did an awful lot of running around over the state and to other places too where people wanted to see someone weave or... weaving's not uncommon anywhere you go though, but some of these things weren't and well...even the baskets they made were different. They weren't alike. We...

FG: I got the governor's award.

JG: Frank, go in there and get that... go in that room and get that basket that has the big orange bow on it.

FG: Why?

JG: I want to show it to her!

FG: I got the governor's award you know last month?

EH: Oh you did?

FG: At the culture center. And somebody asked and said, "what are you going to do with the award?" I haven't seen that and I've got several of them on display. I said, "well I can take this and \$2 and this to Green Lantern and get me another beer!"

EH: (laughs)

FG: [that's all] It's good for! (laughs) That's what my friend, one of my friends won a congressional medal of honor and distinguished service cross in North Korea. And that's what he said about his medal of honor. But he was joking.

EH: (laughs)

JG: You see it? It's got that big paper bow, that orange thing is on it.

34:44

FG: This house is a disaster!

JG: And I was pretty good at organizing that.

EH: Uh-huh.

JG: And people wanted a craft fair or craft show, I helped 'em do it!

EH: Wow.

JG: And if they... they had some of the crafts they needed to put on display, but we needed to invite some people...

FG: This is the Claude [Danville] basket.

EH: Oh, that's beautiful!

35:09

FG: Claude [Danville] is probably the best basket maker in West Virginia, but I don't know that.

EH: Could I take a picture of it?

JG: Well sure!

EH: Let me get my camera out.

FG: That bow kinda ruins it. I wish that wasn't on it.

JG: There's another basket inside it, I think.

FG: No.

EH: No, cards.

FG: There's nothing in there but cards. It looks like Christmas cards or something.

JG: Oh, just cards?

FG: Yeah.

JG: Well, you won't be...

FG: Should be recycled.

JG: If they're in your way, I'll take 'em out.

EH: So did you... you saw a lot of young people get into fiddling? Sort of hippie/young folk revival?

FG: Ooh yes, I didn't make a list but man I tell you, when I went to the University of Chicago, I've got a whole bunch of young'uns got started on the fiddle.

EH: And when was that?

FG: Ug, '68 I believe.

JG: He played at Yale, University of Chicago, and when he got to inviting... of course, they invited him.

FG: I went to...

JG: Out west, now he's found some people that wanted to learn.

FG: Now I've been to Smithsonian twice.

EH: Oh nice, the Folklife Festival? Maybe I'll just put it right there (the basket).

FG: I don't know what the thing was at the... at the...Smithsonian... some kind of a gathering.

EH: (takes pictures) That's beautiful.

JG: Who else works down there with Kim and...?

FG: Different prop or different angle? Alright. (regarding basket photos)

EH: You know John Lilly was at Goldenseal.

JG: Yeah, and John resigned.

EH: Yeah and now it's Stan...

FG: He retired or something. I was surprised that he put on a cowboy suit and went to Nashville. I guess his aims a little bit different from what I would do.

EH: (laughs) Yeah.

FG: Well, he grew up in a different age I think.

EH: And he's from Chicago.

FG: Oh yeah. He used to go on to the Chicago Barn Dance with Mark Gunther on fiddle, and a boy named Ritchie—he was on guitar, but they have long split. Mark's a doctor in Chicago.

EH: Okay.

FG: Way up in northern Michigan or something—I don't know where he is.

JG: The best musicians didn't, well they were born and able to play when they picked up an instrument. He could play that fiddle when he picked it up, but of course couldn't play all these tunes all the ways and all the variety or anything. But people are born with abilities. Some... I have my old son who can fix almost anything. And so you do what you are interested in doing. It works or it doesn't.

FG: That's what the Chinese proverb says or some old Hindu, says you... Hindu... you find out what you want to do and then you will do what you like to do.

EH: Yeah.

JG: (laughs)

FG: And that picture up there with the flute reminds me of what he started with. I had a tin whistle, it wasn't supposed to be [?] or nothing. He went to the dime store—I didn't know he was going to play—he went to the dime store in Sutton, Braxton County, Gassaway, and bought a 10 cent or 20 cent plastic... you know what an English horn looks... no a... what is it...

EH: Recorder?

FG: Recorder! A plastic recorder. Well, it had a thumb hole and he didn't know what it was for. And it had this little sharp off for the pinky. So next time I saw it he plugged up the thumb hold and took a hack saw and cut the low note off and taped some of the notes and made it like he wanted to be and was playing the hell out of it! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) That's funny!

FG: But he had altered it to suit him.

EH: Wow.

JG: You can't really teach somebody with musical aptitude that some people have. Can't do it.

FG: He was born, see... when you hear it, you understand and if you don't understand it, I mean...

JG: Anybody can do some music. Some people can do any of it!

EH: Yeah.

FG: Some people are good at math.

EH: Who else... who else did you play with?

39:44

FG: Oh I had a band many years ago—the only band I ever belonged to...just a local band we didn't even have a name. Charlie McCoy guitar, Gilbert Williams fiddle, James [Beans] banjo, I played the fiddle, sometimes my dad played with us, sometimes he didn't. That was our little group and we played all over the town you know. Fairs and festivals.

JG: This was all homespun. You know? You played with David O'Dell, but you had taught him- he wouldn't... Dr. O'Dell and he teaches at Glenville now.

EH: I met him.

JG: Oh...

FG: That was after we moved to Roane County. My god, I was 40 some years old when I met him!

JG: And you know, people knew what they wanted to do!

FG: I was 50 some years.

40:37

JG: And a lot of ‘em wanted to do what he did!

EH: Yeah.

FG: David was a natural. I showed him a banjo and how to hold it and pick it...at the house [?]. . . and before they left that evening, his parents and him, he picked out a tune, one note at a time! And his mother says, “You know that’s good.” And the next thing I knew he was winning first prize at Vandalia! (laughs)

JG: She said, I know that tune!

FG: So, you either got it... Clark Kessinger said it was a gift, from who I don’t know.

EH: Hm. What were those John Henry Festivals and Gatherings like at Pipestem—at the Folklife Center?

FG: Oh I played that a lot. They might have had John Henry—the John Henry Festival was really at [?]

JG: Oh, I was working for the state, I was helping organize the things—that’s what I did.

EH: I know, yeah.

JG: I was just simply the director of recreation more than anything.

FG: You know Jimmy Costa?

EH: Yep!

FG: [?] in Monroe County is when I first met him.

EH: Okay. Yeah.

FG: He was already playing but he learned a lot of technique and tunes from me.

EH: Okay.

FG: His fiddling was terrible, his banjo picking was pretty good.

EH: Okay.

FG: Guitar was alright—he learned a lot of tunes, you know. And he’s... of course he’s an antique man anyway [?]

EH: Yeah.

JG: You asked me if I knew music—I played in a high school band. Sang in a high school chorus—that kind of stuff. And a lot of people do that that are not gifted musicians.

FG: ... when school's over, that's the end of the... (laughs)

EH: Right, yeah.

JG: No, that's not the end of it, I sang every other day of my life.

FG: Oh, yeah?

JG: Well you oughta know!

FG: That's right.

JG: Well, I know the words to a lot...

FG: I have to redo it... I have to manually change the notes. Our voices are getting raspy. (laughs)

JG: Oh, I can't sing like I used to.

EH: What do you think about...

FG: You do the talking!

EH: Oh well, what do you think about how—do you think West Virginia succeeded in preserving its culture and its artisans?

FG: Not yet! (laughs)

EH: That's for me to do, right?

FG: Right!

JG: What did you ask?

EH: Do you think West Virginia succeeded in preserving its culture?

JG: Oh, yes indeed.

FG: Oh my goodness.

JG: America wouldn't be like it was if people didn't like this old-time stuff. And it was going because everybody was trying, you know, to do something different that would make 'em a lot of money, and they didn't.

FG: Well the problem with music now is it's all commercial, it's not even music in my opinion. But West Virginia was so isolated up until oh, '42 or somewhere along there—started building some good roads and the radio hadn't quite knocked everything out and TV hadn't quite made it and we had a pretty good situation, but it's changed quite a lot since TV. Then we had an influx of foreigners—flatland foreigners, we call 'em. Which is fine, I know people that hate that! But I don't care if some of these people are

learning music. It may not sound quite like we play. But at least it's a start! And they're learning baskets and farming and of course they don't stay long—some of 'em get money from home and once they're out of something, they're gone!

JG: And if you needed a cane, go ahead...

FG: Well my dad made that.

EH: Oh wow.

JG: He whittled it out!

FG: No, it was growing that-a way, see the crook?

JG: Well okay, it had a curve.

FG: He just kind of trimmed it up.

JG: But nevertheless, there it is!

EH: That's nice.

FG: I had one made out of red cedar that my uncle made but I can't find it. But that's not what my dad made that's interesting. I'm gonna go get my instruments. And you probably want to photograph 'em.

EH: Yeah, I will.

FG: You want to do that in here?

EH: Yeah, do you want me to move in?

FG: In there. The light's better. And I'll have to dig 'em out.

45:11

JG: I was doing pretty much what you're doing!

EH: I know!

JG: When I was working.

EH: Uh-huh.

JG: Before I met him.

FG: She don't want me to give those away, but you take that. (whispers)

EH: Oh! Thank you very much! (whispers)

FG: She don't like it a bit (whispers) Let me get the instruments. Well, you might as well come in here and look at some pictures.

EH: Okay. Okay.

FG: I don't know if you can see or not—this is my gun room. I'm crazy about guns. I do a lot of telescope mounting and site adjusting for people and I'm ready to...but the picture I wanted to show you is... there's the band I was talking about.

EH: Oh yeah!

FG: Old Man Gilt [?] Williams, me, James Williams, and Charlie McCoy. Now that was real old-time music. And that's my parents. And me when I was 6 months old, and there I think I'm about 3. You know those old curve-backed chairs that everybody had at one time.

EH: I might take some pictures of these. (takes pictures) I'm gonna take a picture of these pictures.

FG: This is one of my awards from Concord College.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: You know I lost count of the awards.

EH: Too many awards! [unintelligible]

FG: First band. Good lord, you must have plenty of film!

EH: No, it's digital.

FG: Oh yeah! (laughs) I should have known, I'm too far behind! I think of film, I think of a camera that goes like this! (makes sound and motions a reel)

EH: (laughs)

FG: This is my mother's family. Now see...there's my mother and my father and me, and the rest of 'em are her brothers, sisters, and in-laws. Take all that and I've forgotten...

EH: Is that in Spencer?

FG: No, it's in Tennessee.

EH: Tennessee, okay.

FG: That's my grandpa and grandma. She was a Jackson. They all grew up in that old house with no electricity or water.

EH: Wow!

FG: Water's the spring or the creek, you know, and electricity was an old lamp or candle...candle first you know. That would be made about 19 and 29. My mother was a nurse and my dad was a carpenter. He was a veteran of WWI and the Mexican campaign after Pancho Villa, 1916. And he became a carpenter—he was a master carpenter, he learned under an Italian master named Tony [Deladi?] he apprenticed to him and he became a master carpenter.

EH: Okay.

FG: And I was 6 months old, probably with a diaper full, and I was 3 years old.

EH: Alright, you want to show me the instruments?

FG: Here's the... it's taking me a minute here to get the fiddle...

EH: Oh my gosh, that is so sweet.

FG: And there's the banjo.

EH: Oh.

FW: Let's go in there in the light. Oh...there's an old rope bed. We had to put iron [pegs?] in and put slats across it... the ropes was sagging unless you get 'em real tight.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: But... woah!

JG: (Jane shouts from other room about the cat)

FG: She's in the basement I think!

JG: I hope so, because the back door was open.

FG: The back door was open?

JG: Yep, the door to the kitchen was open.

FG: Well. That's amazing. I doubt it.

JG: We have a cat but we don't let it out.

FG: Look at the original cow hide.

EH: Wow.

49:32

FG: You can tell it's been played on! (laughs)

EH: That is so sweet!

FG: And it has a copper strip on the neck so it wouldn't wear holes in the wood.

EH: Right, oh yeah.

FG: And it has a [unintelligible] off a coffee pot where the string anchor, you see?

EH: Oh yeah. (takes pictures)

FG: And this is maple and mahogany and black walnut.

JG: Let me get over...

FG: Cowhide. And my dad was out of work, you know, in the wintertime, you can get something done!
(laughs)

JG: That is handwork. (shows her a craft... woven chair bottom?)

EH: Wow that's beautiful.

FG: Well that's something else she taught... teaches.

JG: I've taught a lot of things like this to groups of people or did programs for 'em about crafts and things.

FG: You know, [unintelligible] like that?

EH: Uh-huh.

FG: She taught one of her grandsons to do that—he's an expert at it!

JG: Well, Jeff can do what I can do.

FG: Helped pay his way through college.

JG: I wouldn't say that he's an expert.

FG: Bottom of chairs...

JG: Frank has loads of those kinds of things. See 'em?

FG: Oh there are some awards.

JG: Awards.

FG: Fairmont University, Footbridge, Morgantown, Purple Fiddle, the latest one—the Governor's Award, one on the wall in there and that's quite a few.

JG: And this thing, which exists—this year, it would not be happening if we hadn't gone through the period of time and I did a lot of work but I wasn't the only one by any means—Teaching people, talking about 'em.

FG: It's a fake fiddle.

EH: Oh yeah, it looks fake.

FG: A fake fiddle! Oh...

EH: Will you hold one of those? It's nice to get the scale since they're so little.

FG: You mean hold it up like this?

EH: Yeah, yeah.

FG: Okay.

EH: (takes pictures) Cool. Thank you.

FG: This was done at the Cultural Center one time in a glass case.

EH: That is beautiful.

FG: I don't know how many people saw it.

EH: My dad made one you know, that has the small head like that—mountain banjo.

FG: Oh...[unintelligible]

EH: Yeah.

FG: Of course, that's a corn husk fiddle because I couldn't hold the regular one. It can be played, by the time I was playing the fiddle, I had my granddaddy's [unintelligible] coffee... it cost 56 dollars and a half from Sears and Roebuck.

EH: Wow. And did he carve that tiny little bridge?

FG: Yeah. Look [?] that's different.

EH: Oh yeah!

FG: There's 2 holes through there.

52:48

EH: Wow.

FG: That takes a good eye! (laughs)

EH: Wow! I might need to put this down here so I can photo it from above.

FG: Oh lord. My back is killing me.

JG: See those two little baskets over here? That's just an example of basketry. But they're small. The big ones—we showed you big ones.

EH: Who made those?

JG: Hmm?

EH: Who made those little ones over there?

JG: Oh, I don't know. I forgot. Too many people that I saw. I worked several years hunting craftsmen, getting things established at state parks, getting uh, what should I call... shops that sell crafts and those kinds of stuff.

EH: Right.

JG: Teaching people to make something they're interested in, getting a teacher, getting 'em organized. It was an interesting thing to do.

EH: Sounds like it!

FG: I forgot about genealogy people come here from all over the country, checking with her on family history. A handbook on just our family!

EH: Oh, wow.

FG: It'll drive you nuts!

JG: Well, people are interested in their... some people have always been interested in their name. And other people GET interested. You don't know who you're gonna meet.

EH: (takes photos)

JG: Nearly everything in this little thing here is handmade!

EH: Wow!

JG: See that little brown thing down yonder?

EH: Uh-huh.

JG: That's a little pitcher! Well, I forget who made that now, but I collected a lot of stuff and I kept a few things. Help people find...find shops, and learn how to do something if they wanted to. It still goes on. It goes on at state parks a lot.

EH: Yeah, Tamarack!

JG: Where? Tamarack? Yes indeed.

EH: Yeah.

FG: Now. That corner cabinet over there?

EH: Uh-huh.

FG: That's out. My dad mad that.

EH: Wow, that's beautiful.

JG: Isn't it?

FG: He made the cedar chest. But his masterpiece in woodcarving is this.

EH: (gasps) Oh yeah! I've seen those!

FG: Out of one piece of wood!

EH: That's amazing (it's a carved wooden chain) I know, wow.

JG: Frank's always bringing out something new, you know, that someone did.

FG: I always said you have to be half crazy to do something like that.

EH: I've seen this in Maine from loggers- lumberjacks would do these in the camps.

FG: Oh yeah, they have a lot of time to whittle on those.

JG: What'd she...

FG: Lumberjacks in the Maine woods.

EH: They did a lot of chain carvings like this.

JG: Mmm.

56:14

And I don't know how much she's recorded but this is one of the earlier things. What year was this one done?

FG: What is it? Oh, that's the original Kanawha, that came out as a 33 1/3 in 1967. See those 33 1/3rds are gone. That's passé. CDs came out somewhat later.

EH: Yeah.

FG: I don't know what year that is.

EH: They do keep some of those—you know, that label they still put out some vinyl.

FG: I got one copy of the...

JG: Oh, I put away...

FG: Well, the old Kanawha, I got one cover, I think. That's not much.

EH: What was your...?

JG: They don't even make or sell things you can play those great big old records with.

EH: Yeah.

JG: I don't think.

EH: Oh, they do now. They've had a revival.

JG: Have they?

EH: Yeah.

FG: Well, I don't even have anything to play it on!

EH: You don't anymore?

FG: I was always having to replace the needle, you know?

EH: Oh yeah. What was your dad's name?

FG: Otie. O-T-I-E. Algernon...

JG: It's an odd name.

FG: Algernon...

EH: Yeah...

FG: George.

EH: Algernon! Wow!

FG: He cut it to Alger. He didn't like the "non." So just the Alger.

JG: I had the most common name on earth.

EH: I like that name—it's a good one.

FG: Emma for her grandmother.

JG: Emma Jane Taylor.

EH: Oh, Emma was your first name? But you go by Jane, right?

JG: Mmhm. Emma Jane is the whole thing. It was my mother's mother. And my dad's mother. I was named for—they still do it all the time.

FG: Belinda Jane was your dad's mother, and Emma Snidow Senate was your mom's mother.

JG: And we still can't find out... we're trying to find out where the Snidow's were. I don't know and he doesn't know.

EH: Snyders?

FG: We found a little about them, but not much. We find 'em in [Johns?] County, Virginia. But the Taylors were everywhere. And George is...

JG: See that chair? I got a new seat in that. They got, you could put... some of 'em put a new seat in this one—this cane!

EH: That's beautiful.

JG: It is.

EH: I like the cross on the back.

JG: I ordered a book that had various things you can do with cane. And one of my boys—I have 4 sons—put the back in this thing.

EH: In that?

JG: Mmhm.

EH: Wow.

JG: Yeah, he just took a wrench and did it. But he already knew how to do the ordinary...

FG: But Eric's the only musician in the bunch. I'll get this...

JG: What did you say?

FG: I said Eric's the only musician in the bunch. Well now Alan, we've got another grandson...

JG: One of my grandchildren can do all the instruments he can do!

EH: Ah yeah.

FG: I've got another grandson that's... learning the pipes. The Highland pipes. But he's got... he's been sick, he got Crohn's Disease, he don't practice much, but he's on the way! If he can stay with it he's gonna make a good one, but he's only about halfway there now.

EH: Mmhm.

FG: He lives in Michigan so I can't get to him much.

EH: Where in Michigan?

FG: Grand Rapids.

EH: Okay, yeah.

FG: You probably know where that is.

EH: Yep.

FG: It used to be all furniture and wood.

EH: Yeah. Well what do you think—do you think West Virginia old-time music will continue?

FG: (shakes head)

EH: No?

FG: I doubt it.

JG: I bet it will!

FG: Well now something will go on, but I'm afraid, I think...

JG: I think it will change...

FG: What I hear nowadays from the instructors, it doesn't sound like...

JG: ... I used to hear... when I was growing up I heard people play these old things too. He... they did it but they weren't—nobody was promoting and teaching it.

FG: I think it'll be a slightly different version, I think the tunes are probably the same.

JG: Probably.

EH: How do you think it's changed? How is it different?

FG: It's hard to say. I can listen without even seeing the fiddler—if he's playing old-time or a modern version. And I'm not sure I can describe that.

EH: Mmhm.

FG: But now it's like people judging fifers and fiddlers. I can go- If I'm judging a fifeing contest, which I don't do very often, to judge it under the stand, where they play and is covered with roads you know, you can't see anything, they don't want you to know who's playing. But if certain people play—I know who's playing. See they're individually different.

EH: Yeah.

FG: That's the reason Tommy Jarrell's stuff doesn't sound like my stuff. You know? North Carolina and West Virginia...

JG: And I don't know how they compete with one another—how a judge picks one style as the winner. It's something they like, I reckon.

EH: Yeah.

FG: You know Jack Krack, don't you?

EH: Yeah.

FG: He learned a lot from Lester McCumbers. He's got a pretty good style. Not exactly right, but it's a lot like Lester, you see. And of course, people that learn Tommy Jarrell, you reckon now... and Kyle Creed's banjo—plays up on the neck instead of down here.

EH: Right. Yep.

FG: We had a time at Chicago one time, me and Tommy Jarrell. Of course, he was drunk most of the time when he was playing—they brought it with him, you know, homemade stuff! (laughs) I don't know how they got it (laughs)... He sang a lot you know—we had a ball!

EH: Yeah, I've heard...

FG: That's the only time I ever saw Pete Seeger and talked to him. He was fascinated by my banjo. He played my banjo.

EH: Really?

FG: Is he still living?

EH: He died maybe 2 or 3 years ago.

FG: Ok, lately. I wasn't sure. Of course, Mike was here—he came down and he taped me and he was gonna make a special banjo film and he dropped dead!

EH: You know, I used to work at Folkways—the label, Smithsonian Folkways.

FG: Folkways Records—uh, huh.

EH: And they have a film he did right before he died. And I can't remember if you're on it or not.

FG: They filmed a lot right here in this room.

EH: I bet you are, then.

1:03:26

Banjo, right?

FG: Uh-huh.

EH: Yeah. They're working on it—they're trying to get it out.

FG: Mike was a pretty good banjo player!

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: The fiddle was a little bit bluegrass, maybe, but not bad, you know? But you can't copy anybody exactly.

EH: Yeah.

FG: You can get close, but...

JG: See, Frank doesn't play. He definitely told me... he tells anybody he meets, "I don't play bluegrass, I play old-time."

EH: Right.

JG: And he makes the difference.

EH: yeah.

FG: Well, it's just a modification of old-time.

JG: True.

EH: Well, what was Pete Seeger like?

FG: Oh well he was mostly a singer.

EH: Yeah.

FG: He played the banjo kinda crude. Kind of a plunking. You know, not bad, but not complicated. But he was mostly a singer.

EH: Right.

FG: But his thing was involved in protest. (laughs) Couldn't play him on the radio for years, you know the communist-haters! (laughs)

EH: Yep, I know.

FG: They said, "No you can't play! They called you a commie and..." My god, I live in a society, so I'm a socialist, you see! And this community here makes me a communist! People here don't understand the word!

EH: Right.

JG: I have... I have 28... the last time I counted, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They're grandchildren, that's what I say. And there's one that can play everything he does. And they're not his! It's not in his blood! Well, it may be in his blood, but it's not from Frank!

FG: He said, "I learned it from my granddaddy—that's good enough for me!"

EH: Yeah.

JG: And he can play nearly anything.

FG: He doesn't play the fiddle, Jane! Jane, he doesn't play the fiddle, he plays the flute and whistle!

JG: He hasn't yet.

FG: He's working on it. And the banjos totally—he can't handle that. But he plays hammered dulcimer real good. Have you got one?

EH: Yeah, my dad made me one...

FG: Oh, made it!

EH:...for my 7th birthday.

FG: Oh! Careful! You'll give your age away!

EH: I don't really play.

FG: You'll give your age away!

JG: Where did you grow up?

EH: Indiana.

JG: Oh yeah you told me that.

FG: She's a Hoosier from the flatlands.

EH: Yep.

FG: Loped off and married a flatland farmer... (laughs)

EH: Well what was the banjo that you had that Pete Seeger was interested in? Was it an old mountain banjo?

FG: Yeah, an old homemade one. I'll have to show it to you—I couldn't describe it. It doesn't even look like a banjo!

EH: (Frank knocks chair over) Uh-oh!

JG: What are you doing?

FG: I knocked the chair back.

EH: Should I follow you?

FG: Hm?

EH: Should I follow you or are you gonna bring it in?

FG: No, I'll bring it in.

EH: Okay.

FG: You wouldn't want to see this room!

EH: (laughs)

FG: I'll put a sign up here. "Chamber of Horrors!" If you want to look at the Hall of Shame, it's right in here!

EH: (laughs) Well I could!

Um...

JG: Well, you have an interesting job. I set a lot of it up for you.

EH: I know!

JG: I did!

EH: I know, I'm thankful!

JG: And what I did in the beginning needed to be done! We just needed to let people know- what you do, other people are interested in! Are you willing to teach some kids? And things like that.

EH: Well, that's still happening!

JG: If you get a reputation of going to club meetings like homemaker's meetings or things like that or school rooms and I booked him many many places and school rooms. He's played lots of schools. And he tells 'em, "you're listening to the old music." He always gives them a good, good history.

EH: That's good!

JG: It is good! And so...

EH: Oh wow!

FG: This is the one Pete was fascinated with.

EH: I think I've seen a photo of this before. Can I set that right there?

FG: Do you want that here or...?

EH: Yeah, that'd be good. So did you make that?

FG: No, this was made by a man name Seret (sp?)

EH: Okay.

FG: Down in Johns County, Virginia, and they told me it was 100 years old made back in the long Civil War time, but I got to looking at black walnut and the chestnut, and the chestnut had holes in it! So the blight didn't hit the chestnuts until 19 and... something. Around 1900s so they were all from around the... it was newer, in other words, than they thought it was.

EH: Oh yeah, yeah.

FG: Wormy chestnut. This is walnut but the back is chestnut. This is cowhide. And I don't know what that's off of. And this is [carriage bone?] and the wood screws are homemade! And he turned this thing over so the pressure wouldn't be all on the pegs—see the pressure of the strings on the bridge. So he curved that and then all the pegs are homemade and see the screws and the bolts—there's the bolts. This is the walnut, you see. I think? Yeah, but anyway it was dated earlier than it is. And if you look at the bridge, the rim here is one piece of wood, sawed almost in two and then bent into a circle.

EH: Oh, wow.

FG: Which is quite a job.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: One piece of wood—how they did that, I don't know.

EH: Amazing.

FG: But that's all by a man named Seret (sp?) made it. According to Jimmy Costa it'd be about 1900.

EH: Oh yeah. Does Jimmy have a similar one?

FG: Hmm?

EH: Does Jimmy have a similar one? Jimmy Costa?

FG: He's got a lot of things—tools and banjos and...

EH: Oh yeah, I've visited him.

JG: We used to live in Monroe County—I was working there.

FG: But he's good at... he's good at dating antiques—that's the point.

EH: Yeah- I might just have you put it there, and then I'll take...

FG: He cleaned that up. That was very...

JG: We saw Jimmy a lot but we don't see him much anymore.

FG: You ever see a corn stalk fiddle?

EH: No!

FG: Well, there it is a cornstalk fiddle. I don't know how to play it anymore. (plays)

JG: Cornstalk fiddle!

FG: Do this awhile you can play a tune on it!

EH: Wow!

FG: You got to note it too, you know. These people made these for young'uns to play with. And you couldn't buy toys from Walmart- plastic toys? No way. Who made this?

JG: I don't know. I really don't remember. I wrote a lot of stuff. I may have written that down, but I don't know.

FG: Somebody did that down there in Summers County. Somebody down there in Summers County or Monroe, I think.

JG: Well that would be appropriate.

EH: Jimmy would probably know.

FG: Anyway, that's a cornstalk fiddle. It's a toy of course, but it can be played. This is one that Mike had... and next thing I knew he was dead! And I don't even know what happened.

JG: Are you talkin about Mike Seeger?

FG: Mmhm. Yeah.

EH: I think he got cancer.

FG: We spent most of the day up here—him recording and looking at these instruments. He had a crew with him.

EH: Yeah—and his wife Alexia? Was she with him?

FG: No—huh-uh.

EH: Okay.

FG: A film crew and somebody else. There was 3 of 'em I think.

JG: Was I still working?

FG: No no, you were here.

JG: I don't remember.

FG: That's just been a few years ago! He hasn't been dead for about 3 years or something.

EH: That's very cool. (regarding the banjo)

FG: Now that's been all over the country and I don't know who all has played it. See I played it in 9 foreign countries in Europe...some of 'em like it and some of 'em don't know what's going on! (laughs)

JG: I used to count how many states—I forget now. A great number of the states in the US.

FG: Oh, I think it's 35 or something.

JG: And 7 foreign countries.

FG: I like the British Isles and I count 4- England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. And that runs the number up! (laughs)

JG: We've done a lot of traveling.

EH: I can tell. I'll put that here so I can put it down again. Well I don't want to take up too much more of your time!

FG: We've got all the time you want! We just sit here and look at one another and say, "wonder what's gonna happen next!" (laughs) If anything.

EH: Do you guys... how do you spend your days—do you read?

JG: Oh, I used to read constantly, but I haven't read this winter. I just haven't started. But I need to because I'm bored to death with doing nothing!

EH: (laughs)

1:13:12

JG: I don't do nothing well.

EH: Yeah, I don't either.

JG: I need to be busy.

FG: I do a lot of shootin—I'm still into rifles.

EH: Okay.

JG: And I'm not interested in everything.

FG: I've got an old flintlock here you wouldn't believe.

EH: Do you shoot out here?

FG: Pistols, but rifles you have to go down the road to a friend's farm. Cause the noise and everything might bother people.

JG: Well...

FG: If it's church or...

JG: There's a school right here, down at the bottom of the hill. And he is very particular where he suits.

FG: There's Jane and her sisters when they were small.

EH: Yeah.

JG: Oh, that's my sister and I.

FG: She died of cancer.

JG: And there's pictures of Frank and I over here. These three.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: Yeah, in '76 dressed up according to the age.

EH: For the Bicentennial?

FG: Yeah. (laughs)

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: I was playing the fife. I could play with the fife and drum corps but we don't have any around here.

EH: Oh yeah, totally.

FG: You know who Jim Comstock and Louise Mc Neil are?

EH: Yeah?

FG: That's them right there. Right on the left.

JG: Under that...

FG: Louise McNeil and Jim Comstock.

EH: He did the...Hillbilly...

JG: Hillbilly Magazine.

EH: Yeah. Mmhm.

FG: Hillbilly Newspaper.

EH: Hillbilly Newspaper, yeah.

FG: He did that for several years.

JG: I have wrote him... a magazine... That's Louis McNeil Pease who is a poet. Famous poet of West Virginia.

EH: Oh yeah.

JG: And Jim Comstock. I know 'em both personally.

FG: He said something one time I'll never forget, you can lead a horse to drink but you can't make him water.

EH: That's true!

FG: (laughs) Jim Comstock was a sight—one time he printed the weekly edition with ramp juice in the ink? And the post office sent him a big letter!

EH: I heard that!

FG: And warned him! That it was gonna be a federal case or something! (laughs)

EH: Because it smelled so bad or...?

FG: Oh yeah! It stunk! (laughs) Ramp in the ink.

EH: Well are there other people around who I should talk to? Crafters or musicians who are still around?

FG: Oh, not around here much. They all moved away. About the only people we contact now, if we go somewhere, you know Vandalia, but only people that we talk to now mostly like you, awhile back...

JG: Somebody wants to do it for something...

FG: Two boys from Point Pleasant came up with Kim-- we had quite a session. And last fall...

JG: I didn't even know him until... what year?

FG: '66! Oh, a year a gal from Switzerland stopped by... wanted me to give

JG: That was the third year of the Art and Craft Fair, and '63 I was very...

FG: We went through that, Jane!

JG: ... I had an awful lot of...things to do that were events for West Virginia's birthday.

FG: When we lived at Sink's Grove [?] in Monroe County, three Germans stopped by, they were on their way back from South America. They stayed a couple days.

EH: Wow.

FG: And people here the music and something and I don't know what it does... and Sweden has some of my records, Germany, and the British Isles, and that's about it.

EH: Do you still play much at home?

JG: He hasn't played—no he doesn't... hasn't played this winter nearly at all.

FG: Not unless somebody comes by, you know? The two boys—you know Preston and Jordan?

EH: The Modock Rounders?

FG: Pierson? They come by wanted to learn. And the gal from Switzerland wanted to learn Clawhammer banjo! I thought, by god, what's happening to Europe, you know?

EH: (laughs) Well would you play for me?

FG: Huh?

EH: Are you feeling up for playing?

FG: Oh, I can play a tune on that banjo.

EH: Okay, yeah. Here I'll get it for you.

FG: It's probably out of tune...let me get over here and sit down. Do you see my black snake? (points at metal forged snake)

EH: (laughs)

FG: Blacksmith friend made it.

EH: It's going by your... it's going for your fiddle.

FG: I got up here one morning and...probably about a year ago... I looked down at the refrigerator and there was 3 or 4 inches and the head of a black snake!

EH: Oh my gosh.

FG: Well, they're perfectly harmless. He found out the house was full of mice and he was livin' good! He was that big around the middle.

JG: We're not full of mice!

FG: Huh?

JG: We're not full of mice here!

FG: Well anyway. He was full of mice!

(tunes banjo)

1:18:38

Uh-oh. (tunes banjo)

JG: Frank's family weren't—they weren't a publicly known family. Mine were. My dad was county superintendent of the schools. He's the one that put the schools in place in this county and I've always done an awful lot of stuff with school people. But, you know. Frank's were just people.

FG: (plays "Sourwood Mountain")

Well, you get the idea.

EH: Nice! Sounds good.

1:20:20

Let me just take...

FG: Yeah, I learned on the fretless banjo too. The fiddle doesn't have frets, why should the banjo?

(laughs)

JG: You know Frank doesn't—I never heard him refuse to play for anybody if he was a festival or fair or somewhere where they asked him. I also never heard him promote himself anywhere. At all. I've done an awful lot of telephoning people and setting up things for him. But I didn't meet Frank until 1966.

FG: You realize I'm one of the last people that learned from the people? Most of the people now are modernists...or something like that.

How much does a camera like that cost?

EH: Oh, like a few thousand?

FG: Plenty! (laughs)

EH: But it was my work.

FG: Is it digital, you say?

EH: It's digital. I'm just gonna close that (the door) 'cause the light is... I can't see you very well with the light.

JG: You needed to shut that didn't you?

EH: yeah. That's better. So that was the first tune you ever learned on the banjo? "Sourwood Mountain?"

FG: I think it was "Sourwood Mountain"—that's what I tried to play!

EH: I know, I know! I recognize it.

FG: Do you play banjo too?

EH: Oh, not really. No.

FG: What do you play besides dulcimer?

EH: I play fiddle and I play guitar. But, yeah my dad made me a banjo.

JG: What do you like best of the instruments you play?

EH: I don't know, I mean I like... sometimes I don't like calling all the tunes all the time so I like to relax on guitar! (laughs) But I like playing fiddle.

FG: Well, I like guitar with fiddle and banjo. That's a great combination.

EH: Yeah. That's the best.

FG: When I was growing up, you couldn't hardly find a guitar.

EH: really?

FG: Kind of rare?

EH: Cause the banjo and fiddle were homemade and the guitar you had to buy?

FG: Well, that was part of the reason, you know, but the mandolin was unknown. I was a grown man before I saw a mandolin.

EH: Yeah.

FG: But the guitar was coming around, mostly with the black people who used guitar mostly. If you were a southern West Virginia black, the thing you needed mostly in life... work in the coal mines or railroads, mostly... the thing you really needed for status was a bicycle and a guitar. You couldn't afford a car, mostly, and there was no roads anyway. If you had a bicycle and a guitar and a job, you were doing fine.

EH: And that was McDowell... McDowell and Mingo?

FG: McDowell, Mingo, Wyoming, Raleigh, Logan, Boone...uh, not so much Mercer... maybe a little bit in Fayette and Kanawha, you know, then kinda scarce. Even up north—the coal mines up and around Fairmont and all, didn't have all the blacks. They had a lot of Italians and Poles and European immigrants.

EH: Yeah.

FG: You've heard the word "wop"?

EH: No.

FG: We used to call all Italians wops. It wasn't derogatory—it came from the tag they had around their neck when they came over on the ship. Because they didn't... they didn't know your name, they didn't care about it, they didn't want to know your name. They said "without passport" and when you got to Ellis Island, whatever they said, you might get your name you might not! Some of them—the Jews of course changed their name on purpose. They took German names. Nobody knew what Hebrew was anyway!

EH: Right.

FG: So I know one time a German came up to me—somebody said "name please" and it's Yiddish "fergisin" which is "I forgot" and some man wrote down Ferguson. And so that's the way it goes.

EH: Why did they say he forgot?

FG: To not tell him their name, I guess!

EH: oh yeah.

1:24:50

FG: It might have been Stravinsky. Or Papanopolous, or god knows.

JG: There are some strange names.

FG: Polish Jews and...

JG: I see 'em...

FG: Russian Jews. We had an awful lot of Russian Jews. Some German Jews and some Polish Jews, but Russian Jews came over by the boatload! 1900 and 1910! That Czar you know, he was pretty rough on

those people. In fact, I heard that the Russian Jews was glad to see Hitler, find out Hitler was coming because of what they were under. Now that's hard to believe!

EH: Yeah.

FG: Now, if Hitler had been smart, he could have got Ukraine, the whole thing on his side. But he didn't have it quite right.

And one of my best students is [?] Barnett, and he's a Polish Jew... his girlfriend was Connie Davis... Davidough, a Romanian Jew, and of course Mark Gunther... Gunther wasn't his name!

1:25:55

JG: People—an awful lot of people come here. That's a fact.

FG: Course we had a bunch of Jews in Bluefield. They were merchants and had pawn shops, clothing stores...

JG: Frank's never promoted himself or his music. He needed somebody to do that!

FG: One of my friends was Abe Schwartzberg, well Schwartzberg is German for "castle mountain" you know that (laughs) and another fella named Lubliner—Lublin, Poland!

EH: Right!

FG: Where he came from. Irving Berlin? The best name you could buy was Goldman. You could buy a name you see, if you had money.

JG: Was what?

FG: You could buy a name. You could buy a name.

JG: What was the best one?

FG: Goldman. Because there's Germans named Goldman. But you don't find Jews with their original name. Nobody would know how to write it, spell it, or anything like that.

EH: And you said your family was Scottish? Scots-Irish?

FG: The only Scots I have back there is McGregor on my mother's side. My dad's name was George, Welch, my grandmother's name was Ellis Welch, my great-grandmother was an O'Connor—Irish, my great-great-grandmother was O'Sullivan—Irish. On the other side of the house, my mother's side was Jackson, Marlin, and Fifer from Germany. And Swopes—Swopes Knob-- on the grandmother's side. They left Germany for several reasons—the church and the military and somebody was opposed to dunking—the baptism, and the dunkards left and they came over by the droves. In the 1700s!

EH: Right, Anabaptists.

FG: Long before it was a country. There are Germans all over the place—Pennsylvania, a lot of the people in West Virginia--Germans in Virginia came from Pennsylvania. They didn't come in through the

east coast, they came down. But the first Welshman I could find, Rufus George, came over in 1819, now that's been a while! Same year that the Plymouth colony came. Slaves- first year they had slaves.

JG: We have an ancestor whose name is Snidow, and we can't find him.

EH: Snidow?

JG: S-N-I-D-O-W.

EH: Interesting.

JG: Ever heard of that?

1:28:33

EH: No.

FG: It's not Snyder, it's a different name.

EH: I know, yeah. I haven't heard that.

FG: I gotta tell you something interesting—my grandfather—my dad's dad was born in 1856 and he was orphaned at 3 and guess who raised him?

EH: Who?

FG: Black folks. Where do you think he learned the banjo and how to buck dance?

EH: Yeah.

FG: I got it second hand from the slaves actually. Cause he was 7 years old when he was freed and that didn't mean a damn thing. Where was he gonna go, what was he gonna do?

EH: Right.

FG: He stayed home!

EH: And where was that?

FG: Greenbrier County.

JG: Where?

FG: Greenbrier County- Muddy Creek.

JG: Oh.

FG: [?] Knott. You know where Blue Sulphur is?

EH: Mmhm.

FG: Close to there. Home.

EH: Okay. Well the banjo has African roots.

FG: I'd like to know its whole history from the day it was first brought over.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: Some are still arguing if it came from Africa or the Caribbean and we'll never know 'cause the first people in New Orleans was the creole. And they escaped from Haiti, slaves, and then the French brought 'em over for the coffee and bananas and whatever plantations they were doing, and they got made—homemade rafts and finally got to Louisiana. They were the first people there.

EH: Wow.

FG: Then you had the American Indians—Pikasaws (sp?) and then you had the Cajuns. The banjo was tied—so it's quite a mixture but they were first as far as I know.

JG: He gets into history every time.

FG: You don't know—oh what's his name? Paxton. Jerome Paxton?

EH: Jerome? Yeah.

FG: He's one of my cohorts on the banjo. Man we hit it off. First time, we just sat down and started playing. Didn't even have to tune the instruments or say what we were gonna play! Just started, you know.

EH: Where did you meet him?

FG: Port Townsend, Washington.

EH: Oh yeah. And that's—I think you were playing with my friend Joseph Decosimo? You remember him?

FG: Oh yeah, but that was in California.

EH: Oh, okay.

FG: That was in Berkeley or what is it—one right across the bay. Same thing. Oakland and Berkeley are just one street difference, you know?

JG: Frank's made a couple more trips west and played a lot of places and they... he... he said to me one time... those people really, really react to it. They like it.

FG: Oh, they learn Round Peak stuff—unbelievable! And they pay good!

EH: Yeah!

FG: They pay for my plane ticket! And they give me a bed and meals! Can you beat that?

EH: Nope. Well, do you think there's...

JG: Well he played many years, never got a cent!

EH: Well, yeah.

JG: And now he gets pretty good money sometimes if it's a big festival or something.

FG: I never dreamed I'd get paid that well.

EH: Wow, that's amazing.

FG: What was your question?

EH: Well, I was just wondering if you could describe what the West Virginia old-time style for banjo and fiddle? Is there something particular you hear and you're like—oh that's a West Virginia fiddler or that's a West Virginia tune?

FG: It's hard to describe but if you ever hear a Round Peak banjo and a West Virginia banjo, you'll know the difference, you see. The music I can identify the easiest is southern West Virginia, mostly South East West Virginia. Now there's some good East Kentucky music traditions. Now I've never—we don't hear 'em or see 'em much. And then you go across to Southwest Virginia and it's about the same thing. Almost all the way from Kentucky and Tennessee, you see? It's a narrow part of Virginia. And it's kinda like Southern West Virginia and that's pretty much the same. And it's hard to describe northern West Virginia or Round Peak. And Galax is a whole amalgam, it's many... that's lost its original sound I think. But there is a difference and northern West Virginia and Eastern Panhandle, well northern West Virginia Ohio valley doesn't have many musicians. I don't hear much music. But the Eastern Panhandle has some Virginia stuff, you see. It's all [unintelligible]. But when you come down in Southeast West Virginia and Southwest Virginia, it's kind of a unique sound but I couldn't put a word to it, but I know it when I hear it.

JG: People used to sing a lot. It'd be the rural church—it was—the community I grew up in, you know, the only place that was a meeting place where everybody went was the church. And a lot of 'em were union or even if they weren't, people went to it. And the words to tunes were known by nearly everybody and nearly everybody sang. Now I did—I don't hear that in this time when we were reviving the old way. But people still do sing and they sing more than they did before we tried to answer everybody's questions and everything.

1:34:22

FG: We were listening to classic gospel one Saturday on TV, of course it's a big money thing now—they've got bands and...it's big money. But we listened and we heard some old-time gospel—we call gospel. But most of the rest of it didn't even sound like old-time gospel. And I like the black stuff—the black gospel. I don't know if they know which is black or white. But I know the black stuff and I like that. But there's a lot of stuff I didn't understand. It's very modern. And the words... doesn't...

JG: I can remember my dad had me...my dad had me memorizing things when I was 4 years old, we started. He was a... a teacher. My dad and mother.

FG: My god, he was teaching school when he was 12 years old. Can you believe that? They had no system.

JG: You wouldn't believe. Somebody ought to write up the beginning of the school system and the kind of unit system had not yet been adopted by the legislature or any authority. And he became county unit... I mean he became the county superintendent of schools of this county—it's not here but at Speed, toward Spencer. And everybody sang. A lot of people sang. I still know the words to almost all the songs too.

EH: What style was it.

JG: Old style.

EH: Just hymns?

JG: What do I sing?

FG: Wherever you are at home or church!

JG: I mean, as far as style?

FG: Well, all the song books—the hymns.

JG: She asked me a question I can't answer.

FG: I don't really know if it's 100 or 150 years old.

JG: I just remember the words... he plays something and I know the words to it!

FG: Every morning I'm up making coffee and she gets up and comes in here, reciting a damn poem or singing some old song. You know this one? No I don't know that one. But sometimes I do!

EH: Like what?

JG: It's not every morning!

FG: What was the one you were reciting the other day? Who is the boy... that poem you recited the other day about the fiddle?

JG: About what?

FG: Fiddle! There's one great one about the fiddle. It's all kind of.

JG: Well if you can say a line, I'll pick it up.

FG: The master's hand? You know they had a fiddle at auction and nobody played it. They were bidding and they said 1 dollar, 2 dollars, and then some old geezer comes up and takes hold of it...

JG: The Touch of the Master's Hand. I'd have to get...

FG: Plays a tune on it—55!

JG: I bet I know 50 poems I can recite!

EH: Wow—that's amazing.

FG: It's all about the Master's hand.

EH: Oh yeah.

JG: I can't think of the first line.

FG: But, the way you all did the standard stuff, you know? Old Rugged Cross, and you can name a couple dozen... but then they had some that was local.

JG: My parents were both teachers and dad was kind of superintendent of the whole thing when the county system was put into place in the counties and I don't know who worked up what the county system included but somebody did before they tried.

FG: They had gospel sings at Speed that were something else. Remember what Gayle Hathaway (?) said? He said gospel singing has had it! It has! And it wasn't like he grew up with, right?

JG: People sang even if they didn't have instrumentals.

1:38:30

EH: Yeah.

FG: I'll tell you where they learned some new stuff—old books... people couldn't read music. They had shape notes.

EH: Yeah.

FG: And that wasn't too difficult. But that old guy picked it up, "Well bless my soul, they're all sols!" They had the white notes, you know?

EH: Yeah.

FG: "Well bless my soul, they're all sols!"

EH: (laughs)

FG: Anyway, when they come through, they brought some different tunes—circuit riders? They'd sometimes bring a singer along, and you know the congregation would pick up...

EH: Yeah. Well I might run to the restroom and then head out.

FG: Do you need to take a rest?

EH: I just need to... (laughs) go to the BATHROOM.

FG: In the hall—it's dangerous, be careful.

JG: Another interview with you...

FG: Yeah, but you got a lot in there.

JG: Well if I hadn't, she don't know anything about me.

FG: She does now!

JG: Not much.

FG: Plays "Cripple Creek" on the banjo

JG: He's been interviewed time and time again. You wouldn't believe it. And he didn't promote that at all. I've done an awful lot of...

FG: We went to see Uncle Homer Walker and he didn't have a banjo so I happened to take this one along.

JG: Hmm?

FG: When we went to see Uncle Homer, he didn't have a banjo.

JG: Uncle Home Walker.

FG: And so I had...

JG: I found Uncle Homer, and he knew about him. And we took him... took an instrument and went to go see him.

FG: We had [unintelligible] with us. We had...soon as we got to his house and went inside, the phone rang, and that neighbor across the hall was wanting to know what was going on. Not just anybody coming to...so anyway, he said, I said, so I've got a banjo and I want you to play. And he said no way and I said "it's got no frets" and he said "It don't matter". He probably'ed never played... but the Morris boys have him one, Jenes Cottrell made him a banjo. And somebody stole it but they found it though. John Marshall's got it now. But Uncle Homer carried it to Washington, D.C. See, but when people found out about him, "hey, we need Uncle Homer for this program!"

EH: Yeah.

FG: So there you go. And it's not often you hear a black person play the banjo.

EH: Yeah. That's true.

FG: He was half white of course, his daddy was a white man (laughs)

EH: Oh yeah, uh-huh.

FG: All that started when the first slaves were brought over. No big deal.

EH: Yep.

FG: They'll be us all someday, if the world goes on a couple hundred years, you'll probably won't see many white people at all, you just see tan. Brown and tan. I'm [unintelligible]

EH: Right.

JG: I'm trying to think of another craft or something I could show you but I can't.... I've...

FG: What about [?] the blacksmith? The snake!

EH: The blacksmith! (laughs)

FG: He was black by the way. He worked for the railroad.

JG: At Cedar Lakes?

FG: No, Bluefield.

JG: You know, the art and craft fair at Cedar Lakes has done an awful lot to promote this thing we're calling revival. But a lot of other things have to.

FG: After 10 years of operation, 90% of the people are from out of state, doing the crafts! (laughs)

EH: That is...

JG: It's a problem. The West Virginians just stay at home and they don't care one way or the other!

EH: Right. Well that's you know, like you're saying with Frank not promoting himself, that's the traditional musician's problem! (laughs)

JG: That's right!

EH: Well thank you so much for having me.

FG: Where I grew up it's not a big deal you see.

EH: Right, yeah.

FG: You could have music in the church. There's very few, just the Christian church that wouldn't allow music. You would sing. A lot of churches had organ and pianos and sometimes you could have a fiddle—violin or fiddle or something. But most people just didn't think about instruments, you know, other than the organ it was singin.

EH: Right, yeah.

FG: Some people were totally against music. Period.

EH: Yeah, right.

JG: We actually have done an awful lot of traveling. People call him or write to him to come to things they are sponsoring, and of course they pay him now. But they didn't for many, many years. More than half his life! Before we got paid for playing, wasn't it? How long?

FG: Well now, when we played for square dances in Bluefield, we'd get 5 bucks a piece.

EH: (laughs)

FG: But you know, most of the time it just wasn't...a profession or anything. So that means that the whole lot of dancing from 7-12 would cost the group twenty bucks! Man!

JG: Well it wasn't a living but it was something. It was recognition.

FG: I worked a lot of summers in between school. Grocery... I made \$20 a week. People couldn't understand that 40 hours... 50 cents an hour.... I thought \$20 a week was great! After 2 weeks I bought me a pistol! Cost \$37.50 or something like that. Now it would cost you \$750.

EH: Right. Well yeah.

FG: Or something like that.

EH: Well do you think you might come to Vandalia this year?

FG: I didn't know there was one!

EH: Yeah, end of May.

FG: Whereabouts?

EH: At the capital.

JG: He hasn't been contacted yet.

FG: We have no letter.

EH: okay.

FG: We have no letter or nothing.

EH: Yeah, I don't know what they're doing.

FG: People be asking, they keep asking me now... "Well, have you heard from Vandalia?" "No, I haven't heard a word."

EH: Uh-oh!

JG: I used to organize that!

EH: They should invite you!

FG: Kim Johnson keeps me posted real good.

EH: Yeah, she'll keep you posted.

FG: I got one more picture to show you. The last of the frontier [?]. Not the last of the Mohicans.

EH: Oh cool!

FG: This is quite a book here.

EH: So who did that book?

FG: [?] Dent. He's got some interesting stuff in it. 'Course you know where that come from. Oh, I got something to show you but...that was made by a Cabell County boy who made real good banjos. His name was Holmes.

EH: Okay.

FG: This is Monty St. Clair. And here's Jane doing her thing. And there I am spokesman...

JG: So what are you gonna do with this?

EH: Well this is gonna go in the archive.

FG: This is out at Pipestem, you mentioned Pipestem. This is Mark Gunther, Old Man...Bill Hicks and that's Austin, one of the Austin boys. Looks like I'm mad as hell!

EH: (laughs)

FG: This was in the service. I was the only piper in the 5th infantry division.

EH: Oh wow.

FG: During our... we did a lot of marching to that, you know. That's the 2 drone, war pipe. Pat Dunford [?] An awful good guitar player, well he was a good musician all the way around.

1:48:03

There's one of my favorite rifles, here's my hammered dulcimer, there's the banjo you saw, there's my pup [?] and there's my fiddle.

JG: The dulcimer became known because somebody made one! It wasn't to play it but to make it.

FG: There we go Johnny Up [?]. Great fiddler, taught himself. Didn't have a fiddle 'til his brother brought him one. Taught himself, well he had a radio, you know. Here...

JG: And the last guy who got interested in Frank and took him to festivals and things wrote this book.

EH: Okay.

FG: He was way up on Clinch [?] Mountain away from everybody! The nearest store was something like 10 miles away, you know, by itself, and of course you had a nice stream coming out of the house. He had one cow and he had a fruit tree and he had an apple tree and some fruit trees and he didn't have chickens. He lived on deer meat a lot. And that was about it—people wondered how he survived but he did. Great big old house. It was a big house, but all the family was gone, you know. And I don't remember who took

this. It was the Connors. But he was a hell of a good fiddler, but that's the only thing he could play!
That...

JG: Frank knew that man a long time ago.

FG: Here I'm talking big stuff.

EH: (laughs)

FG: And there's Todd Wright from Tennessee. One of my best students—he plays in all kinds of instruments. Don Ramsfield, he'll be... up to camp.

EH: There's Jimmy [Costa]

FG: Tennessee Breaking Up Winter.

EH: Oh yeah.

FG: At—what's that camp out there east of Nashville? A state park. Cedars of Lebanon. There John Morris—a good fiddler, Jimmy Costa, David O'Dell.

EH: Sounds like someone's at the door.

FG: Oh, that's the kids.

JG: Come in!

FG: They're not wanting to come in! There's [?] who got me started on the pipes. There I am at the Purple Fiddle—that's Morgantown. This gal played a good banjo but it was Round Peak style! (laughs)

JG: I'm unsteady today. I've been sick lately.

EH: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

JG: Will you answer it, Frank?

FG: John Morris, there's Dave Bing. John Wayne—stuck that damn thing up... Anyway, well... Parkersburg. I do a lot of lectures anymore. There's Larry Dan.

JG: Hey, answer the door.

EH: I don't think they're there anymore.

FG: Hey, you need to read that...

EH: Nice. That's really sweet.

FG: Read that back. Oh.

JG: I fell one time and I hurt myself a good bit.

EH: Uh-oh.

JG: And I've been sick lately. That's the reason I... I tried to get up and realized I was gonna be unsteady.

EH: Uh-huh. I think we might have this at the Humanities Council.

FG: One of the kid's bicycles out here—that's all that's here.

JG: Huh?

FG: One of the girl's bicycles!

JG: Oh.

FG: Is laying out here.

EH: Well...

FG: See they didn't want anything.

EH: I have a release form so we can put this in our archive.

JG: In other words, it isn't for us, but...

EH: Well, it's for our archive for now.

JG: Well you do that all the time.

EH: Yeah. Yep. So...

JG: It's not something new to do. That's not an event.

EH: Yeah. So could you... this just lets us use it in the archive. Could you sign this? I think I have a pen.

FG: I can't write!

EH: I just heard you play the banjo. I know you can!

FG: I'm just playing.

JG: The chair...

END OF TAPE

1:52:25

