

Trevor Hammons

Where: McClintic Public Library

Date: April 19, 2018

Location: Marlinton, WV

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 40:30

Trevor Hammons

Trevor Hammons is a 17-year old banjo player and fiddler from Pocahontas County, and a member of the legendary musical Hammons Family. He is the only member of the Hammons Family who still actively plays music in the family's old-time tradition.

TH: Trevor Hammons
EH: Emily Hilliard

HammonsTrevor4.19.18
00:00

EH: So could you introduce yourself and tell me your name, when you were born, and where you live?

TH: Could you say that one more time?

EH: Name, when you were born, and where you're from?

TH: Okay. I'm Trevor Hammons, I'm 17 years old, I was born on May 27, 2000 and I'm from Marlinton. I, I was born in Charleston and I've always lived here, though.

EH: Could you tell me about your family?

TH: They're very musical—pretty much all of 'em. My great-grandad Lee Hammons, he was, when he started playing the banjo—I don't know how old he was when he started, I forget—but it was his favorite thing to do but he quit when he was... I'm thinking it's 30 something. And he didn't play for like almost 50 years or something. He went and worked in the coal mines, he worked in a duck farm and he went to Kentucky to do this. The Hammons Family actually migrated from Kentucky to Pocahontas County, in Thomas Town—It's right down the road here—my grandmother still lives there. They old home place was up on the hill from there—it's where my dad grew up. It burnt down 20 years ago. Then they moved to the Williams River after that. They might have lived there before—one of the two. But he quit playing for almost 50 years and when he came back, they still had a banjo somehow and it was like he had not even stopped. He played it just as he did when he left. But the only reason he did is he had so many kids.

EH: That's why he stopped?

TH: Yeah, the only reason why they left is—he stopped playing. There's not really any way to make money here. Especially when you were, you know, you didn't really go to school or anything (laughs). So he just left to work. And when he came back, he started again. He played the fiddle and pretty much everything with a string on it. And his stories were my favorite, from like Maggie... uh, what's her name... not Ruby. Maggie's sister—I can't remember her name—it might be Ruby. And Sherman and Burl, they all had kind of the same stories, but they changed 'em up when they told them. Like I dunno. I never got to meet any of them though. It would have been pretty awesome.

EH: So you never met any of 'em?

TH: No. Actually... so my grandad died the year before I was born and Lee, he died like in '89, pretty sure. He was 93 or something. I should know that but I don't.

EH: That's okay.

TH: (laughs) But yeah.

EH: What—what are the stories you remember, how do you know them?

TH: Well actually, my favorite one... Sherman, he's walking with um, Mike Bing. I think Dave was with them. They were walking down the road—I think it's called the River Road or something—from the Williams River and Sherman was showing' 'em I think bees or something and an airplane flew over, like

a jet or something or like a bush plane or something, and Sherman just like looks up and he says, that's one of them spaceships! He said, "I've never seen one of them before, or heard one of 'em," he said. And I thought that was funny. It's actually on Youtube.

EH: It's on Youtube of him telling it?

TH: Yeah, it's on the film, it's called "Sugar in the Gourd." What's his name—It's Jim Mullins' son that gave it to me. There's a film called "Fine Times at our House."

EH: Oh yeah?

TH: You ever watch that one?

EH: I don't know. Is that about the Hammons Family?

TH: Yeah.

EH: I haven't seen that one.

TH: It's like... actually it shows my great-granddad playing. And that's where I actually learned how to, I learned how to—I try to use my right hand like he does. It's a really soft touch.

EH: Okay.

TH: And for a while I was doing things that Tim Bing does, but then when I learned that you can do this instead and still do all this melodic stuff, I wanted to play like he did. Like my granddad did.

EH: Right. And you know that from that movie?

TH: Yeah. I wouldn't have known that if it wasn't for that.

EH: That's cool.

TH: So I was really happy when I got to see that. It shows pretty much all the Hammonses basically, every one of 'em. Except for Edden—he wasn't in it. But it shows 'em doing everything. Their everyday life is what it shows. You can actually see like the workshop where he cut his thumb off one day. (laughs) And like... I dunno. My dad—you can see him in it. They're in the workshop together. I dunno, it's just really entertaining.

EH: So did your dad learn to play?

TH: Well I've tried teaching him. When I first started playing guitar, he actually was learning with me, kind of. He wasn't actually taking lessons but was I guess watching. Or... just trying to, but he could actually play what I could for a while. Um... and then I've tried teaching him to play the banjo, and his excuse is always, his fingers are too big. Which, they kind of are in a way...

EH: (laughs)

TH: They're huge! Like...

EH: My dad too.

TH: But he could still play if he wanted to. He just doesn't want to try is how I say it.

EH: So and did your grandfather play?

TH: Harold. He played the guitar.

EH: Okay.

TH: He sang a lot. Like the blues and gospel stuff. That's about it.

EH: Okay. So it kind of stopped with your dad?

TH: Yeah, it kind of skipped him is what he says. Skipped a generation, and then I guess hit me. And it would have—if my sister would have kept up with it, it'd be great.

EH: Yeah, you could have a family band.

TH: Yeah! It'd be awesome. My mom, we bought her a left-handed guitar for Christmas 'cause she's, she's always said she can't 'cause she's left-handed. So we bought her one, and for a while she was actually doing pretty good and keeping up with it and then she had to have surgery done, and then she just kinda quit. So now I have a nice Blue Ridge Guitar that's not being played.

EH: That's a left-handed guitar. (laughs)

TH: Yeah.

EH: Blue ridge—is that uh...who makes those?

TH: Um... who makes those...

EH: Is that Henderson?

TH: It might be. I just know they're built like a Martin. I love 'em.

EH: Yeah. Are they from North Carolina?

TH: Yeah, they're really... they're a lot cheaper.

EH: Oh, what's his name. I'm blanking on his first name. Henderson...

TH: I have no idea.

EH: I think those are his guitars.

7:19

TH: Yeah. Except it should be right handed.

EH: So did... you could do a reverse Elizabeth Cotten and play it right-handed.

TH: yeah, I could. I actually did string it up right handed one day, just to see what it sounded like. It's amazing. Then she wanted to play it again so I had to change all that. But... Yeah.

EH: Do you remember your dad singing any songs around the house?

TH: My dad? Not really. Kinda the only thing I remember song-wise is Dwight Diller. I'd hear him a lot like... and now he comes to see us more than he ever has. He's kinda like, become a part of our family kinda. He hangs around with us a lot, cause he's changed a lot over the years. And he sings a lot of Maggie's [Maggie Hammons Parker] old tunes. She used to sing like, this one was about a black panther she saw, so she would sing about that, and one was about these, these guys that wanted to kill these hogs, but the hogs ended up eating them instead. So like...

EH: That sounds good. And those are original songs of hers?

TH: Yeah. Either that or some of them are one's she heard from her mom. And I dunno, she made up some.

EH: Do you remember when you first met Dwight?

TH: Hmm... um, not... it wasn't the first year I started. It was more like probably the 3rd year I've been playing. But I really remember him, he'd always tell me, this was before like... he's changed a lot. And he... he wouldn't YELL at me, but he would say to me, "quit noodling on that banjo." Cause I'd just sit around and instead of practicing something, I'd... just what a kid would do... I'd like fool around on it or something. But I dunno I probably met him when I was 11 for the first time, or 12, maybe. I dunno.

EH: What do you mean—how has he changed?

TH: Uh, he's really. He used to be really bipolar. And I dunno, I'm not sure how to explain it. He's had a lot of strokes and stuff. He was really sick for a while and he kind of like, he just acted like, you know, he didn't care about anything. And now, I think he's almost like 72 or something and he's getting around like he's 30, so he's doing a lot better.

EH: Wow!

TH: Yeah! And he's playing the fiddle like he never had before. He actually—he was always really good, and he tried to... he makes it sound like, like the Hammons Family would have played it. That's his goal. That's why I like Dwight so much. And now it's better than it ever has been. He actually wrote down the exact date of the day he started playing like that, he said (laughs).

EH: Does he know how he changed or...

TH: He always says the Lord gave it to him, which... I mean... it's kinda... he's true about that, I mean it did change a lot. But on the banjo, he's just phenomenal. Some people doesn't like his style at all, but he's really—he plays with a really loose wrist non-stop. And he's keeping rhythm with his arm while he's playing. With, I don't know how to explain it to you, cause I can't do it. (laughs)

EH: Like he audibly... you can hear his arm? Keeping rhythm?

TH: No, he keeps rhythm for his self, should I say. Like—nobody else in the world plays like that, like he teaches people to do it. Like he came up with it. It's the way you can get that old-time sound that he's looking for. It's the only way he could do it.

EH: Um, let's see. Why don't you tell me how you first got interested in playing music.

TH: (laughs) Uh... I think I was 7. I had no idea that I even had a great-grandpa that played music or anything. I didn't know about the Hammons Family or even what I was. That I could have been musically talented or anything, but my dad... I found this CD one day, and it had this dude named Lee Hammons on it, and I was like—who's that? Like, "oh that's your great-grandad." And he had a banjo in his hand. So I listened to that CD for the first time. I thought it was the weirdest thing I ever heard ever. I didn't really like it. I was like, it doesn't sound good at all! (laughs) But I didn't know what I was talking about. And so I met Pam somewhere. I think it was actually in this room.

EH: Pam Lund?

TH: Yeah. But Pam Lund... she asked me... when she found out who I was, she asked me if I'd like to take guitar lessons. So we went out and for a while I was using an old guitar she had. And then I went to Allegheny Echoes that year—it was like 2 months I'd been taking lessons or something like that, and I went to Allegheny Echoes and I did that for the whole week and just learned rhythm and stuff like that, and they ended up giving me a guitar from there, so I didn't have to buy one. That was pretty helpful. But after like a half a year, I just kinda lost interest in the guitar and thought it was boring. After going over chords, like flat picking's the only other thing you can do, kinda, so I thought it was really... it wasn't fun for me. So I wanted to quit—like I'd make excuses to my mom, like "I'm sick, I don't want to go to my lesson" and I'd try to act sick and stuff. But I wanted to play the banjo. I wanted to try so bad, I just didn't want to go. So my mom called Pam and told her that. She said, bring me up and I could try to play her banjo. Well that first lesson, I had already learned a tune, I learned how to use my right hand in that first lesson, and my uncle told me that... 'cause I needed a banjo after that. So my uncle told me that if I could play a banjo tune for him, then I could have my great uncle Dewey's banjo. It's Helen's brother. And Lee's son.

EH: Okay.

TH: Yeah. So I did. I played "Boil Them Cabbage Down" for him. And (laughs) so I got the banjo, and it wasn't anything like, really a great banjo, but it was something to learn on. I still have it. So I played with that for like 2 years and those 2 years I progressed more than I should have or something. I really enjoyed it! And when I got home, where most kids nowadays would play a video game or something, but I'd sit down like constantly and play this, I think it was "Muddy Roads," it's my favorite banjo tune, really. Sherman's version. I learned that and played with a few local kids for a while. We had a little band. For a few years, just something to do.

EH: What was that called?

TH: For a while we were called the Young and Restless Pickers.

EH: (laughs)

TH: It didn't last very long, just something to do. And just to have fun. And then for Valentine's day one day, one year, not one day, I woke up and I went to the bathroom, and when I opened the door it wouldn't open. I thought somebody was holding it shut, but it was a banjo case! A hard case. And I looked around the door and it was like a brand new one—a banjo case, and I was like okay, cool. I got a case. I wasn't very excited and I opened it up expecting candy or something but it was like a brand new Mike Ramsey banjo.

EH: Oh wow.

TH: And I'd been wanting one for like the past year.

16:03

And I was so mad at myself 'because I couldn't tune it. I could tune any other banjo but that one had such a better sound to it, like, I don't know how to explain it, but it was so much better. 'Cause it was a good banjo, I guess! A quality one. And I couldn't tune it for like a week. And I didn't want to take it to Pam 'cause I was embarrassed. And I did... I fell in love with it. And I played it until like... I think I had it for 3 years, that one. I was at Clifftop—you might have heard of him, his name's Junior McCumbers?

EH: Yeah.

TH: He's always walking around selling banjos. (laughs) And he brought me this White Lady and I fell in love with it. I couldn't leave there without it. And I was like, determined. I wanted it so bad. I'd never heard a banjo like it, 'cause the tone ring is so much different.

EH: Is the tone ring bigger or smaller?

TH: It's got, it's more...It's a... how do I explain it? It's a lot bigger than the one on my Mike Ramsey. The one on my Mike Ramsey is like a piece of brass ring—it looks cheap, after you look at something like that. And [phone rings] this one—has all these cutouts and stuff to give it different sounds and it lets it, I guess, go out more. So I thought I wasn't getting the banjo after all. It was the last day at Clifftop, I was getting ready to leave, and our friends they take this horse trailer. It's got a big camper in the front of it and the trailer's in the back. And I see this little piece of black coming off the corner of the top of it. And it was like, probably 2 hours before we were leaving, and I like get up on it and pull this case down and I open it up, and it was that banjo I'd been wanting all week. And (laughs) I'm pretty sure I was 14. And it was the best feeling ever to play it.

EH: So were they hiding it from you?

TH: Yeah, they didn't want me to know.

EH: Your friends?

TH: I found it. My mom and dad. I wasn't supposed to get in until I got home, but I found it.

EH: I see.

TH: Yeah. So we ended up staying an extra night and I played it all night with these people. We play in these... we camp in a circle, so we park all of our campers in a circle, or a square. And like, we literally just stay up—just like they do up top.

EH: Uh-huh. So where do you camp?

TH: We camp—as soon as you drive in to the left—like where they give you your band and stuff, if you look to the left, we camp there. We've never really tried to camp up top before. It's really hard to get up there.

EH: So when you go in...

TH: Yeah, right there as soon as you drive in.

EH: Yeah. And up top you mean more like in the...

TH: Like where the water tower is.

EH: Oh yeah.

TH: And the field where the stage is, and the one in front of the stage.

EH: Okay.

TH: Back in there. We've never tried there. It's hard to get a place in there.

EH: Yeah, I like to be more isolated actually. I've camped down in...

TH: They bottom?

EH: Yeah, I don't like it down there very much. (laughs)

TH: It's crazy down there.

EH: Yeah. It gets too crazy.

TH: Yeah.

EH: Okay, so... and you were learning clawhammer. Have you learned any other styles?

TH: I've learned 2-finger styles. Just a little bit. Actually, this was my first year at Augusta in 2016 I think, I took a class from Ron Mullenex, and my great-grandfather actually taught him to play the banjo basically, so it was like really an honor to play... like learn from him, cause I was actually learning from a man that plays just like him. Like his right hand—they sound the exact same when you listen to recordings and stuff. And he taught me all kinds of tunes that my granddad played and wrote and stuff like that. And he showed me a 2-finger style that my granddad showed him. And it's just one tune, but I can kinda fool around with other ones at the same time.

EH: What's the tune?

TH: Hmm. You asked me that too fast. It's really... it's not um... I'll probably think of it here in a minute. I can't remember. It's really weird—I'd never heard it before. And it had words to it.

EH: Do you remember the words?

TH: No. I don't sing at all really. I've never really wanted to.

EH: Is it a modal tune?

TH: No, it's in C. Yeah. But I got to learn just all kinds of tunes that he was shown directly from him.

EH: That's neat.

TH: It was awesome.

EH: Um, and then what about fiddle?

TH: I've... the fiddle became my favorite instruments. I used to hate 'em. I thought they were just like a big, like a matchbox basically, or cigar box. But like after you sit down... so my first fiddle, I was at the Highland County Fiddlers Convention, the first year of it. It's been 5 years now. And I was walking by the vendors there and I saw this fiddle laying there. I thought it was a fiddle. So I was like fascinated with it—I wanted it really bad. I was only like 13 or something and I just wanted a fiddle, to have one. And he wanted \$200 for it. And I tried playing it and I told my dad I was gonna learn to play it, and we bought it and it ended up being a viola. It sounded terrible. It was like the kind of music that needs to be played... it sounded awful. And...

EH: I've heard good fiddling on a viola, though.

22:11

TH: Maybe a better viola! This one was terrible. But I still have it, actually. I've been trying to sell it for the last 2 years at Clifftop. And nobody wants it. I actually don't think it's that bad. But I ended up getting it and I took it home. After like a year of having it, I realized it wasn't a fiddle. So a man named Mike Burns... you ever heard of him?

EH: Yeah.

TH: Mike and Mary Sue? They live up Frost, where the high school is.

EH: Okay.

TH: I was at his house. My banjo actually was getting ready to fall apart, like the neck was gonna come right off of it.

EH: The White Lady?

TH: Yeah. And I like wanted to get it fixed really fast, and he was like, oh well, I'll do it for free. You know, I didn't want him to so I didn't bring it to him forever. I finally got tired of playing a banjo that was like—you could literally like wiggle the neck—and I didn't want to do it myself, so I took it to him and he fixed it, he had it for a week and he fixed it. When I came to, when I went to get it, uh, we was sitting there, he was showing me all of the banjos he has, he has like 8 White Ladies and so many Tubaphones and stuff. I was really jealous. (laughs) But like we were sitting there and I was telling him about the viola I had, how crappy it was, and he says, well I have a fiddle that this woman donated to me to give to people trying to learn. And he said it probably isn't any better than the thing you have now, but I was like, it has to be. It's actually a fiddle, probably, or a violin or whatever. And he said, he went and got it and it was actually, it was from the 50s, it was actually ordered out of a Sears catalog but it was in Germany. It was actually a really good fiddle.

EH: Yeah, those are good.

TH: Yeah. I just couldn't... I mean I play it for like a year. I've only truly played the fiddle for like 2 years now. Actually playing it, playing it. Learning-wise, but I played it for like a year, but the action was like playing a guitar.

EH: Oh wow.

TH: Like a cheap guitar. Like...

EH: That's rough.

TH: That's how high that action was. He said he couldn't fix it very well. So I ended up getting a scholarship last year, the Melvin Wine scholarship and they told me I could use the money for my music needs. So I went to...

EH: What's the Melvin Wine Scholarship?

TH: I actually had no idea what it was. I literally, my mom saw it online, and just wrote my name down on there and just submitted it and somehow I got it. And we had to type a little bio and like say who you were and stuff, and somehow I just got it.

EH: Yeah. And it's like for young musicians?

TH: It's for anybody really. Somehow I got that and I took that money and I went to Clifftop and I was... I forget the man's name... he's got... he's kinda old and he can't hear at all. He's always doing this. And um, he's like right in the middle of all the vendors and he's got like all kinds of fiddles every year. And I walked in the circle and I played every one of 'em and I found that one and it was actually handmade. At first I thought he said it was made in China, so I wasn't gonna buy it. And then he said, no, made by a Chinese guy in Ohio. And I was like, oh, okay. I understand. So I was playing it and it's like—it was the best sounding fiddle there, you know what I mean? So I bought it and I can actually play it now, like I've always wanted to.

EH: Nice. So how did you learn that?

TH: The fiddle?

EH: Yeah.

TH: Well I took lessons from Pam for a few months just to get the bow down and stuff like that. But it, after that, I haven't took lessons for like the past year. It's all self-taught, really.

EH: Yeah.

TH: and just recordings I have. Like every tune I know on the fiddle besides the few I learned from her, have all just been—I just sit and think of 'em and start playing 'em somehow.

EH: Wow.

TH: I just love it.

EH: So do you listen of recordings of your family members or other people or both?

TH: Well I used to. I actually... uh, when I was taking banjo lessons with Pam, we were gonna learn every tune on my granddad's CD. My great-granddad's CD—his recordings. But then after I got to looking, it's like the same tune played like 10 times and there's 60 tracks, like 64, so there's really only 10 or 12 tunes on there.

EH: Okay.

TH: But I learned all those. But he only played like you know, 10 tunes. And um, the fiddle though, I've really just listened to pretty much everything. But I like Edden's version of "Queen of the Earth, Child of the Skies." So I learned that one, and "Fine Times at Our House"—that's my favorite tune to play. And the Pine Woods, pretty much any old tuning is what I like to learn on the fiddle.

EH: So what do you mean by old tuning?

TH: Like... we call it mountain tuning. That's the one you play like... the A, A C# and triple D tuning for like "Washington's March" and "Hawk Shot a Buzzard."

EH: So triple D, is that like G,D,D,D?

TH: Yeah. Pretty sure. I don't really know the names, like the notes and stuff. I just have it in my head. I'm pretty sure that's what it is. (laughs) But yeah, that's all I do on the fiddle. I just play whatever comes to my head.

EH: So who do you play with?

TH: Like locally?

EH: Mmhm. Yeah.

TH: Well pretty much the only kid that stuck with it out of all of us, his name's Ben Davis, and we had a band... we've had 2 bands now. We keep losing guitar players.

EH: So when you say all of us, is that all of the old band, or the Allegheny Echoes kids?

TH: No, the one I was in, probably 10-15.

EH: The Young and the Restless?

TH: Restless, yeah. The rest of 'em, they just kinda, you know, I don't want to say they don't care anymore, but as they grew up, they didn't really want to progress with it. But me and him, we've been in 2 bands now in the last like 3 years. You ever heard of Mud Hole Control?

EH: Hmmhm.

TH: The band's like 80 some years old—Charlie Loudermilk and Junior Spencer, they're both passed away now, but we played with them a lot. So we met these boys from Greenbrier County—that's where they were from, the band, we met their grandson Brandon Loudermilk—he plays the bass, and his cousin, his name was, we called him J.C. but it was Jarett Shepherd—we always called him J.C. He was just one of the best guitar players rhythm-wise. He played hard and just loud. And he could keep any rhythm you wanted. So he played with us. And we played for like a good 2 years and then J.C. left for some reason. I haven't talked to him for a long time. But then Brandon's friend Dwayne Shepherd—I don't think they're related. They might be! They might be! He was just, he was, when he talks, you know he's just normal, when he sings—you know his voice for singing-wise is the best ever. So when he sings like, he sings like new stuff though, new country, and a little bit of old stuff.

EH: How is it good? Is it like the high lonesome sound?

TH: Like how he sings?

EH: Yeah.

TH: He has a really like tenor voice and he can hit anything. Any note. It's awesome. My favorite one he sang is "The Simple Life," you ever heard of that?

EH: Yeah.

30:34

TH: He used to sing that a lot. But then he just decided not to play anymore, for some reason, a few weeks ago. And we haven't really practiced a lot in a while, so I don't know if we still are or not. So I've kinda just been doing stuff myself for like the past year. (laughs)

EH: And so when you go to Allegheny Echoes now, do you teach or do you take lessons or both?

TH: I've wanted to teach, but you have to be 18, so this would be the first year I could actually teach, but I didn't get to this year. Hopefully, I want to next year, but since I'm playing the fiddle now I want to take fiddle lessons.

EH: Yeah.

TH: This year I'm taking 'em from Henry Barnes—you probably know him?

EH: Yeah.

TH: Him and Libby?

EH: I don't know if I know her.

TH: It's his wife.

EH: Libby...is her last name Barnes?

TH: I don't know what it was before, but she's actually from here I think. (laughs)

EH: Okay. I know...

TH: Or her family was. So I'm taking lessons from him this year. For the whole week and in the springtime now I'm supposed to start taking lessons from Jake Krack. Weekly. A day a week or something. I've always wanted to.

EH: Does he live in the county?

TH: He lives right down here on where the water plant is down there, I think it's 3rd avenue? He just lives right down there.

EH: Oh wow.

TH: Yeah.

EH: That's great. What about Augusta? Was that the first time you'd been?

TH: With Ron it was.

EH: Yeah.

TH: I went this year. This was my second year. This time I took lessons from Dave Bing. I learned a few fiddle tunes from him—they were great. It was my favorite class I've ever taken. I usually take Tim Bing's class for banjo if I go to any like where I can take lessons. That's where I've learned all my like, little tricks and stuff. Tim has a lot up his sleeve. It's fun.

EH: And they both spent a lot of time with your family, right?

TH: Yeah, just Sherman and all them. Him and Mike and Dave. They all did.

EH: I interviewed Dave. I haven't talked to Tim or Mike yet.

TH: You should (laughs).

EH: Yeah, yeah. So Tim lives in...

TH: He lives in Huntington.

EH: Yeah, that's what I thought. And Mike?

TH: Mike lives in Huntsville just 15, 10 miles up the road. He lives here still. And Dave, he lives in like, it's close to Huntington. He still lives in West Virginia. But, yeah.

EH: And who are some others? Have you played with the Morris Brothers—John Morris?

TH: I played with—I haven't played with him a lot, but I talked with John a lot at like Vandalia. Keep in touch with him a little bit. So at Vandalia I just talk to him a lot. And he's great. I like John.

EH: Do you record any of those guys playing when you go to festivals like that? Or record stories or anything?

TH: Yeah, it really depends on who's playing. If it's somebody that I know I can learn a lot from like John or Dwight or Tim or any of 'em, yeah, I record every one they play. Especially like at Clifftop or something, if it's like, especially if it's a tune I've never heard before, I kinda always have a recorder in my pocket. (laughs)

EH: Smart.

TH: Yeah.

EH: Oh, it's 5 o'clock. Okay. Well how do you feel about the... like carrying on the tradition? It sorta seems like you're the single tradition bearer at this point in your family. What do you think the future looks like for that family tradition and then just the old-time scene in general?

TH: Well, I'd like to keep it alive in my family. I'd really like to. I've always wanted to have somebody to play with in my family. But as being in the whole world, they say it's dying, but there's a lot of kids at Allegheny Echoes that come every year, like different kids. And the same ones that come, you know, the year before, there's a lot of just like 5 years old starting. And the ones I'm teaching they're like 8 and 11 I think. Um, yeah, there's a lot of young kids now. I don't think it's—I know one day it'll be gone, but I don't think anytime soon. It's pretty sweet.

EH: How do kids at school, or like your classmates, how do they respond to it?

TH: The majority of 'em in my high school, they don't care. It's just, to them it's just something, it's just music. It's not, you know like rap or something that they like. So they don't care about it. Actually a lot of them do, but I dunno, maybe over half. But there's not that many in our school anyway.

EH: (laughs) How many?

TH: There's like 400 kids altogether. A little less than that.

EH: So 100 in each class, basically.

TH: Yeah. Actually there's only like 80 in the graduating class this year. Our class only has like 70 some. I think the Freshman class has the most this year.

EH: So are you...you're a senior? No, you're a junior?

TH: I'm a junior, yeah. But the talent show's next Friday—the Friday after... wait, it's in 2 weeks, yeah the Friday after next. And I'm gonna play the banjo in that. I do every year, just for something to (laughs)

EH: By yourself?

TH: Yeah.

EH: What are you gonna play?

TH: Uh—I plan on playing... I haven't really thought about that. Really, um, I guess I might play some of my granddad's tunes. I'm not really much on playing the really up to beat ones by myself. I like playing the really old ones and slow.

EH: Yeah. I think I like those ones better for solo.

TH: Yeah. If you're in a big group, though, I like them when they're as fast as you can go, you know? (laughs)

EH: Yeah. You said that your grandpa played, or he sang some gospel and blues?

TH: Yeah.

EH: Do you remember what sort of blues songs he played?

TH: Actually I really don't have any idea. My dad just told me that. I didn't get to meet him either. My grandpa he died the year before I was born. I just know that he sang, he sang like a few like, his favorite

song I know was like, he played the “Wildwood Flower.” He played stuff like that. He fingerpicked a little bit and flat picked mostly, but when he sang, I guess it was... I wouldn’t know what it was (laughs). Stuff like uh... what’s it called... like “May the Circle Be Unbroken.” Stuff like that.

EH: Yeah.

TH: You know what I mean.

EH: Like religious songs?

TH: Yeah, things everybody knows around. Music stuff.

EH: Oh and then Allegheny Echoes—are those kids mostly from Pocahontas and Greenbrier Counties or all over?

TH: There’s actually a lot of, the majority of ‘em are from other states. We’ve actually had a few these past few years from other countries, it’s pretty awesome. And they’ve never really seen that there in the past 10 years. But every year they have more things to learn. Like they had tenor banjo last year, but there was only one student, so they kinda didn’t have it last year, it was the year before last when they had it. But I think there’s actually a hammered dulcimer class this year or something. They have something new every year.

EH: Yeah. And it’s a focus on West Virginia musicians and traditions?

TH: Yeah, yeah.

EH: Nice.

38:52

Um... oh ok, so what do you think is next for you musically? Are you gonna learn other instruments or kinda go deeper into banjo and fiddle?

TH: I really want to keep playing the fiddle. Because after I’ve played it now for a little bit, I’ve learned that it’s the most fun to play. Especially when you can get the sound that you like. And with the banjo, I don’t want to stop playing it, it’s what I’ve always liked. Uh, I still sit down, most of the time I play the fiddle now. Actually that banjo hasn’t been out of its case since my last lesson I taught 3 weeks ago so it’s hard to tell what it sounds like right now, but I dunno. I always play my fiddle now, though. But actually, I want to go to college at D&E—they have a... that music program, that ensemble. I want to play in that, really bad. (laughs) I think I’d really enjoy that.

EH: Yeah, cool. Yeah, the old-time ensemble.

TH: Yeah, they have their dancers and stuff?

EH: Yeah, it’s great.

TH: Yeah.

EH: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

TH: I dunno.

EH: That's fine.

TH: I'm just answering questions.

EH: Well maybe you could play a few?

TH: Yeah.

EH: You wanna play fiddle to start?

TH: Sure.

40:30

END OF TAPE