

Interviewee: Wheatfield

Interviewer: Norie Guthrie

Date of Interview: November 1, 2017

Identifier: wrc08778

Interview Transcript

Norie Guthrie: My name is Norie Guthrie from the Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library at Rice University. I am interviewing the members of Wheatfield. Left to right, Ezra Idlet, Keith Grimwood, Connie Mims Pinkerton and Craig Calvert. Today is November 1st, 2017. This is part of the Houston Folk Music Archive Oral History Project. Could each of you tell me about your early life and what drew you to music? Whoever wants to go first.

Ezra Idlet: Well I'll go first. Um, early life, uh, raised by a single mom in a house that was full of art, uh, music was always part of our lives. My first opportunity, uh, I, I told a lie and said I could play guitar and I could play drums and, um, joined a band called the Spanish Fleas. It was a Tijuana Brass cover band and they found out real quick I couldn't play guitar but they let me play drums. I had a, a cymbal and a snare drum and I played, um, Tijuana Brass music with them. When that band broke up I, I had also at that point acquired a guitar and taught myself to play songs by reading Milton Okun's *Great Songs of the Sixties* book. It had chord diagrams. I had a Mel Bay chord book and with all that I kinda learned to play guitar but, uh, high school met Craig Calvert. I was told by friends that I oughta meet this guy that went to school and was in my grade. I never met him before and we met each other and we wrote a song together and in the first hour or so that we met each other and, uh, it, it started a friendship that has remained until today. Um, we play music, I, I've worked in high school at the Windmill Dinner Theater as a strolling musician. I got \$5.00 an hour plus all I could eat which was considerable and, um, I could take my girlfriend, uh, Laurie to, um, to a show. Every time they had a show I could take her to the first, you know, run of the show, at least once and that included a, a buffet meal that was awesome and a play, usually a musical. That's pretty close early on. I'll turn it over to Keith.

Craig Calver: Well it was about all the time we had.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Check please.

Keith Grimwood: So, I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. My dad was with the space program and we traveled a lot. I moved ten times by the time I was 12. Um, when I was in San Antonio during that stretch, my parents felt that everybody needed one year of piano lessons to become a well-rounded human being. So, they got a piano. I was real excited about it and I loved it, absolutely loved it. My sister could not wait for her year to be over. She wanted to quit but I found piano and I just loved it and I had a teacher named Ms. Shockey who I think set me off on a course. Um, Ms. Shockey was a wild haired woman, had the messiest house I'd ever seen. I thought it was fabulous. I came from, you know, suburbia. I mean real suburbia, the opposite of

the bohemia he grew up in. I was suburbia. So I went over to Ms. Shockey's house and I would play the music and I would ask her, what does this mean? What does "forte" mean and she says, play it like you feel. I said, really? What is "piano" mean? She says play it like you feel. Ah, okay, fine. She said music can sound one way or another depending on how you play it. The same song can sound many different ways. It all comes from in here and so that's kind of the way I started. My mom would complain. She would say he's not doing it right. I know this song. That's not how it sounds and Ms. Shockey would say, uh, uh, he, he, he'll learn how to do it later. First, he has to love the music and I think that is one of the coolest things that ever happened to me accidentally in my life is, she said first you need to love music and I loved music. I found baseball, loved baseball, loved music. That was the set right there. I didn't grow so I stayed with music. Um, I'm classically trained. Let's see going on I, I noticed Terry Lovern in Huntsville, Alabama when we were there for Wernher von Braun guys. We were there and Terry, uh, Terry Levern had a, acoustic guitar and he played "On the Wings of Snow White Dove" and I thought that was the coolest song I'd ever heard. So I, um, I wanted a guitar. But I didn't want people to think I'd be like Terry Levern so I held that off for a while until I got to Texas and we moved next time, then I wanted a guitar. So they wouldn't know that I was just being like Terry. I played, uh, guitar some. I took lessons classically on string bass. I went to junior high school and they had a great orchestra program. Get this, I started in D orchestra. That means my junior high school had four orchestras, A, B, C and D. It's hard to find a, a school anywhere that even has an orchestra worth having anymore. We had four and, uh, I was in the D. I moved up to B really quickly. I was all state orchestra 4 years on string bass. Um, toward England, Wales, Mexico with the Houston All City Symphony Orchestra, great group. Harry Lance put that program together and it was a great opportunity to learn the classical stuff. Went to college at the University of Texas one year, went to the University of Houston one year but I always put myself through school by playing in clubs. Uh, liquor by the drink had got going and I always played in rock and roll bands in high school, too. So I came from a lot of different styles, all at the same time, classical and rock and roll and things like that. Folk music was my weakest actually. I didn't know a lot of folk music but they didn't play folk music on the radio. I listened to music on the radio and things like that. So, uh, my two influences early on were Elvis and Gershwin. So I like them a whole lot, both of 'em. Saw no difference between the two of them. They were just identical, it was music. So I've always been a little confused that way. Played two years in the Houston Symphony from '74 to '76. Wheatfield was my favorite band in the world. Uh, when I was in the orchestra I would hang up my tuxedo, my tails, you know, and I would, I had to put my bass in a locker at Jones Hall and I'd go find where they were playing and I would go sit in the back and listen to them and they were the best band going. They had this great beautiful, beautiful harmonies and, uh, blended electric acoustic music together, wrote their own songs and they were awesome. So, um, that kinda takes me up to the point where I get to meet them in a short time thereafter. But that's enough about my early stuff.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Wow. You learn things. Um, I grew up in a non-musical household except for my, my brother who had a great voice and played classical guitar and so every time he would leave the house I would grab his guitar in his room and, uh, look at his Mel Bay chord book and any sheet music he had which the chords on the sheet music were just like, you know, Greek or Latin or something. I couldn't figure them out. But I wanted to figure them out. So eventually I figured them out and I just learned guitar and, um, and, and then I got a Beatles song

book. By the time I was about 14 or 15 and had that Beatles song book and I went through that whole thing and, and taught myself whatever song I wanted to learn that I heard on the radio or bought on a record. Um, I started getting my guitar heroes and songwriting heroes and wasn't really writing that much yet. I was learning to be a guitar player and I was just eaten up with it. So I really concentrated more on being, um, just a self-taught guitarist and the, uh, singing just kinda came natural for me and, uh, so by the time I got to high school, um, I was fairly proficient at guitar and, um, I, our high school, Lamar High School, had a hootenanny and, um, so when I was a sophomore in 10th grade I think I, that was when I had a 12 string. My poor mother had to keep buying guitars because I just needed different guitars. That started the illness and, um, so I think I had my 12 string at that point. I'm not sure but I did, um, I did, "I'm Your Captain" by Grand Funk Railroad on the 12-string guitar and, um, in that auditorium, in, in that, that just kinda started it or I'd play "Mad Man Across the Water" by Elton John and, uh, "Four and Twenty" by Stephen Stills. Those are the songs I remember playing at the hootenanny. And, um, that's where I met them. I knew Ezra from early on, we were in a swim afternoon kind of summer swim club together but we didn't hang out or anything. He was just too tall so and by the time I graduated, uh, Lamar, Ezra and Craig were a year ahead of me and, um, they were in the wings at Sam Houston Coliseum clapping as I got my diploma because I said I wouldn't join a band until I graduated. So they were there at my commencement just to remind me of what I had told them so.

Craig Calvert: A deal's a deal.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: A deal's a deal. So that's, that's me until 1973. Craig –

Craig Calvert: Well my parents were dance teachers. Um, they had a school, it was Richmond that, uh, eventually became Sand Mountain. Uh, when they left there they did an add on to their house and started teaching at the house. So I was around music constantly, I mean day and night. I would go to sleep listening to my father saying, you know, one, two, cha, cha, cha, you know, and so this beat was beaten into me that I was listening to whatever was popular during the day because they would teach kids and so anything that was coming up would get handed off to me in 2 or 3 weeks because it would be passé and something else was, was hip and they needed to stay current so the kids would stay, uh, interested. But earlier on I went to church every Sunday, sang in the choir, uh, my grandmother was musical. We would go on trips. We would harmonize in the car together. So I was just constantly surrounded by music. After the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan, which probably had a profound effect on all of us here.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes, yes.

Craig Calvert: Um, I had a desire to be in a band and started a band called The Avengers which also, just happened to be a popular show with a really cute woman on it named Diana Rigg. I wanted to be an avenger so bad and but I was just a, just was singing in that. Just in a lead singing capacity and noodled around a guitar but didn't really take up guitar until I was 15 or so and was writing a lot of poetry, uh, and I needed some way to transport it into a song and so I took a couple lessons at Highland Village Music and figured out that I could do it with the Mel Bay chord book just like Ezra and Connie did and so I started teaching myself and, um, had written some songs. The war was in, the Vietnam war was in, just full, full bore at that point and

so I wrote a protest song and, um, that's what I tried out for the hootenanny and got picked and Ezra walked up to me afterwards and said, man I really like that song. I mean, we started talking and then while we were talking Connie got up to try out and did "Mad Man Across the Water" and my jaw dropped and, uh, we just went, we should make a band and she should be in it and so we did and she is. So, there you have it.

Norie Guthrie: Um, could we talk a little bit about the duo Neat Stuff and how that got started and what the vibe of that band?

Ezra Idlet: Well Craig and I had written some music together. We wrote, uh, a song called "HollyLoriLinda" which is a combination of three women's names. That be really exciting. Three women make one name and we had this long song about what a strange name but I love her anyway even though she has a strange name, I love her anyway and, um –

Craig Calvert: She was a wonton exhibitionist.

Edra Idlet: She was, wasn't she?

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: And she was sort of the fantasy girl for us as well with a weird name and, uh –

Craig Calvert: It was high school.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah, so we, uh, we, we got to where we played together a lot. Craig and I would get together and play, uh, um, I missed a basketball, I played basketball around the same time. I missed a basketball game because we were writing a song. We were playing Rice University, our church league team was gonna play Rice University and I got there at halftime. We got our butts kicked. Anyway, but we, we wrote together and we would do jobs. He had a friend, you had a friend, Laurence Musgrove that had a, a church coffee house that hired Neat Stuff.

Craig Calvert: Lawrence, Lawrence wasn't still there.

Ezra Idlet: Was no part of that. It wasn't part of that?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Uh uh.

Ezra Idlet: Who hired us to play that church coffee house? Do you remember?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: A saint, a saint.

Craig Calvert: But we were on the Walsh, Walsh –

Ezra Idlet: Wash Allen.

Craig Calvert: Wash Allen program and he introduced us as an amalgamation named Neat Stuff. I didn't know what, I had to go look it up.

Keith Grimwood: So what did you play?

Craig Calvert: "HollyLoriLinda"

Connie Mims Pinkerton: "HollyLoriLinda"

Ezra Idlet: "HollyLoriLinda"

Craig Calvert: What else?

Ezra Idlet: And it was...

Craig Calvert: And "Evil Hearted Man" probably.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: Two skinny blond white guys trying to look evil. Well I'm evil. We weren't evil.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: But you were on TV.

Craig Calvert and Ezra Idlet: We were on TV.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: So you thought you were stars then?

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: You, you, this was it like, this was

Ezra Idlet: We saw Pat Curly and also we, we took our original music that we, we had a, I had a neighbor named Chrome Dome Jerome Fletcher and Chrome Dome Jerome had a recording outfit, a little, you know reel-to-reel tape but he was gonna record us. So we were making an album. So we started working with Chrome Dome and Chrome Dome had a drinking problem, uh, that recording kinda fell through but we, but in the meantime we had found out there was this guy named Dale Mullins who had a recording studio and we called Dale Mullins up to see if he'd be interested in listening to us. He said yes. So we went there and we played "HollyLoriLinda" and whatever other songs we were playing, maybe "Evil Hearted Man," I don't know and Dale was so excited. He said, man, there's gonna be girls pick you up and, uh, corvette stingrays. They're gonna feed you steak dinners in just a couple of years. Really? You know, we're gonna make you famous and, and so he recorded some songs, Dale Mullins did. I don't know what they were and, uh, we left there pretty inspired.

Craig Calvert: We did, yes. They, they have them here at the archives now. We found the tape, or Norie did.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah, it just says “Neat Stuff” on it.

Craig Calvert: Um, awesome.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah, that whole, that whole vision was handed to us. Then, then we kinda broke up that year. His girlfriend was kind of a, besides being just incredibly beautiful, kinda, she didn't like him hanging, I was taking, occupying a lot of his time that he should have been spending with her. We kinda, we kinda broke up at the end of high school. The album did not materialize and –

Craig Calvert: Neither did the corvettes and steaks.

Ezra Idlet: No, not then.

Craig Calvert: Not then.

Ezra Idlet: Later. He never did get the corvettes and steaks.

Craig Calvert: Still waiting

Keith Grimwood: That was with Trout.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Craig Calvert: And cut that part out.

Ezra Idlet: And so we, um, we kinda broke up for a while and then somewhere I went and played college basketball and you went to school –

Craig Calvert: Yes.

Ezra Idlet: In Houston. You went to school in Houston.

Craig Calvert: U of H.

Ezra Idlet: And, um –

Norie Guthrie: What university did you go to?

Ezra Idlet: Oh, I went to the University of McLennan, McLennan Community College. He got to Texas on a basketball scholarship.

Keith Grimwood: But you did good.

Ezra Idlet: I did good. I did good. About halfway through Craig and I got over our, our differences. I think he got rid of his girlfriend and, um –

Ezra Idlet: Or vice versa.

Craig Calvert: Oh yeah, yeah, anyway he would come up and, to Waco from Houston and we'd played at this bar called Papa Rolla's Pizza. We'd sit on this bar and we'd get paid a little money and all the beer and pizza we could eat and drink and, uh, we'd play music together and it just felt amazing to be on a stage with Craig who sang harmony. Craig just knew harmony and felt harmony. I could sing a song, any song and he could harmonize with it and all of a sudden, it sounded better. It sounded like a band and, um –

Craig Calvert: Ezra wasn't lovin' playing basketball, wasn't lovin' being a jock and about, after the basketball season was over, uh, we made a decision to go ahead with our original plan of gettin' Connie to get in the band and to get started.

Ezra Idlet: Then we stalked her.

Keith Grimwood: I liked the gig that you booked. I mean, I know part of the story. They went down to the Virgin Islands. So instead of going to play basketball back at college and getting yelled at by the coach, he goes to the Virgin Islands with these guys. I was back at college in a practice room slaving, trying to learn how to do somethin', yeah. That's what happened. They went and partied for the years while I was working and practicing.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It wasn't partying, we were working.

Craig Calvert: I wouldn't call it that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We were, we were learning our craft.

Keith Grimwood: Oh yeah?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Craig Calvert: And scuba diving.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And scuba diving.

Craig Calvert: And sailing.

Ezra Idlet: And drinking.

Norie Guthrie: So how did the band dynamic change when Connie came on board. I mean I know the band was kinda different. You guys had some time but –

Craig Calvert: Oh, it got better exponentially. Um, you know we all have our strengths that we're bringing. You know, Ezra was more advanced on guitar than I was, at least that's the way I look at it and, uh, we just kind of all brought our strengths to the table. We were really interested in, you know Crosby, Stills and Nash were really big at that time and they were harmony based and Joni Mitchell, the same thing. She always had a lot of harmonies and so we kind of fashioned ourselves after some of the bands that were well known at the time. But it was kind of a change of theme, you know in terms of music, um, because the Beatles before were not folky at all. I mean, well they, maybe one or two songs but for the most part they were straight ahead rock and roll and we were following a, a different path that was, um, happening in the early 70s.

Keith Grimwood: But still with the Beatles, those harmonies –

Craig Calvert: Right.

Keith Grimwood: That they throw out there –

Craig Calvert: Right, right.

Keith Grimwood: Were spectacular. They were not your normal stuff that everybody was laying down at the time.

Craig Calvert: No, you're right.

Ezra Idlet: Sittin' down with Craig and Connie, the harmonies they would come up with were amazing. Three-part harmony happened instantaneously. I could sing the melody because I didn't know how to sing harmony. But they would come up and, it was, it was architecture that I could only dream about, harmonically it was incredible and they also, neither one would say it, but they brought a charisma to the stage that was just amazing. It seemed like all the guys in the audience wanted to date Connie. All the women in the audience wanted to date Craig.

Keith Grimwood: Connie

Ezra Idlet: There was just this, yeah, yeah, yeah, but yeah, you're right it was a charisma about that band that, that took us further than say our, our, our basic skill level was. Uh, we got up on stage and there was, there was just somethin' special that happened. It was bigger than all of us.

Craig Calvert: That's a good point.

Keith Grimwood: And I, I'll point out that this part I'm in the symphony and everything he says is true. I'm a fan at that point. I go to hear this band play and I'm transported. I'm amazed. They, they did this song called "Find the Cross to Freedom," you know, for a long time. A lot of times they would end the show with that and I would sit there and I'm, you know, out of an orchestra rehearsal and all that world and all that practice and all those practice rooms and I'm just closing my eyes and I would listen to that song, listen to those harmonies and think if I can understand what is going on here, I will understand more about life. I will know life and that's, I'm such, I get real serious overly serious over these things. But I do take it really seriously and,

and I never figured out the harmonies to that. I never figured out anything about life but, honestly, it's that good. When those guys get goin', when I first got with the band I just wanted to stay out of the way. You know, I wanna sit back and listen and they're, even when I am playing with the band in years to go, in years later, when they played "Find the Cross," you can see pictures of me over there still trying to figure it out. Still immersing myself in those harmonies and as far as the, the charisma, you called it –

Ezra Idlet: Un huh

Keith Grimwood: Yeah. Look at these guys, you know, you just wanna talk to 'em. They're nice.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Okay, um, we didn't all start out in the band all coming 100 percent with original material. A lot of, you're talking about dynamics, you know. Just learning to be on stage. I was 18, they're 19, learning to be on stage to be professional, to come up with, that, that time we were playing four or five sets a night, to have that amount of material to come together that quickly we relied almost 90, 95 percent on cover tunes. But that's how we learned how to write songs. That's how we learned harmonies. We learned by covering songs that we loved that we felt with forte and, um, and so that helped us, um, shake our, our song writing and where to go from there. So he made a joke about Saint Croix but it was a really opportune time for us to literally leave everything we knew and go, the three of us go, learn how to be a band, kind of like the Beatles did in Hamburg. You know the Beatles went to Hamburg and played 8 hours a night. We played 5 or 6 hours a night, 5 or 6 days a week for like 6 weeks in Saint Croix. So we were the only thing happening on that island so every night was packed. Every night, every day we would learn new material and we would, we would learn all the hottest stuff that was happening on the radio because they couldn't hear it down there in Saint Croix so –

Craig Calvert: We, we even brought record albums –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We brought record albums in our luggage.

Craig Calvert: Vinyl with us in our luggage. So we would have things to learn while we were there. So it really was, there was plenty of fun that we had but we really did cut our teeth there. We really learned so much while we were in Saint Croix.

Norie Guthrie: So just so I can understand the timeline a little bit, you guys formed, did you go to the Virgin Islands quickly or did it, was it a little bit –

Ezra Idlet: We had a summer.

Norie Guthrie: You had a summer. OK.

Ezra Idlet: We had a summer where we all had different jobs and at night we would play clubs, uh, Tanny's Club which is right across from the University of Houston, is one of the places we played that I remember playing fairly regularly. We got little extra jobs here and there, um, and at the end of that summer we had been given this job offer, um, to either, to go to Saint Croix for a while and it was either that, and really, be serious about being a band. If we were going to do

this we were going to be a band. This was no doubt, we were going to go, abandoning college for Craig, me and Connie. We all, we don't go to school. So we had that summer to be a band and to, to experience what we experienced that summer and then we went and we made that decision. When we made that decision we took all the resources we could, the albums, guitars and time and spent that time learning and working.

Keith Grimwood: Just trying to figure out what summer that was. Was that '73?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: '73. I graduated in May.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: From high school and in September were in Saint Croix.

Norie Guthrie: Oh wow, okay.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: That's how quick it happened.

Craig Calvert: Pretty quick.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And, and we got the thing, uh, by doing a private casino party at the Shamrock Hilton, you know for, for Hess Oil Company because we had signed with a booking agency that made us get little, the guys wore bow ties and hats and, you know, because that's what you did back in the day. To get work you had to be more for a commercial booking agency, the Gerlach Entertainment Agency and, um, so, so they had gotten us this, this, uh, party to do and a guest at the party, they lived in Saint Croix and they said, oh, you really need to come play down there. And so they, the really, the person from that party helped get us down there. So it was, it was a lot all at once for three very young people.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: A lot.

Norie Guthrie: But it seemed like it was a really amazing opportunity.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Norie Guthrie: You said just to kinda hone the craft.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Craig Calvert: It was, there, there had been some problems on the island prior to us going. There was a mass shooting on a golf course and, uh, unbeknownst to us, right before we got to play the club called The Gallows, there had been a stabbing but nothing happened while we were there.

But, but of course parents were a bit concerned about us and so my folks had a friend who is a judge here in town and he wrote an entre letter to the guy who was hiring us, the owner of The Gallows, just to kinda say these guys have got people, you know, that are backing 'em up, that are looking out for 'em so you better do right by 'em. And at the end of the trip, I can't remember the guy's name that owned The Gallows. Can you?

Ezra Idlet: No.

Craig Calvert: Um, anyway he came up to me and said, you know, you didn't have to send that letter. So I said, well, we didn't know you. They was, it was heady stuff. We were young.

Ezra Idlet: Stepping off the edge of the universe.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: Wow. Um, when you came back to Houston, how did you start getting some of your first gigs? Where did you play? What were those early performances like?

Ezra Idlet: We played Steak and Ale early on over near Sharpstown. That was a regular gig. Um, when Gerlach Entertainment Agency brought us jobs, the Steak and Ale was one of 'em. The Railhead Restaurant, well the steakhouses had live music and, um, we brought in big crowds. There were other places that, that also had us and, uh, there was a hotel out near the airport –

Craig Calvert: The Quality Inn.

Ezra Idlet: That's right, the Quality Inn –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The Quality Inn.

Ezra Idlet: And, um, we, we would, we bought a PA, actually Connie bought a PA. She had a Peavey PA with really large columns -

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Always the geek, the geek.

Ezra Idlet: And, um, we carried, I remember carrying those columns up the stairs, they were heavy and we had a PA and we played there at the Quality Inn out by the airport for a long time and –

Craig Calvert: And Ezra had a checkered cab that we, that was white and we could fit the PA in the back seat, it was such a cool, a big car –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It was a clown car, it was a clown car, it really was.

Craig Calvert: It was great.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It was awesome.

Craig Calvert: It was huge, it was –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: But uh, but yeah again it's like, um, that's the reality of being a working band and it was grueling. I mean, there was a lot of it that, it wasn't fun. You know, you knew that you had to go to work and I would sometimes, you know, go, I, this is not how I wanna live my life. I don't wanna play at the Quality Inn near the airport to some guys from Poughkeepsie drinking a scotch. You know, this is not how I want my life to turn out. So I would, I would bring that up from now and then and Ezra has always been like, yeah, but we get to play music for a livin'. You know, he's always been that way and then Craig is always, we call him senator from Senator Calvert. He was always, he would talk me down off the ledge or try to talk me down off the ledge. I would be a little bit more emotionally charged on a lot of things so.

Keith Grimwood: I gotta just point out that all of us are a product of our environment, uh, growing up in Houston. I mean I moved here in '62. My dad was like I say with the space program. He was a writer with NASA. He was chief historian at NASA. So from that point on I'm here in Houston. Uh, the liquor by the drink passed right about the time that they're talkin' about here which club scene in Houston exploded. Before that it was private clubs and there were certain things and I played, see I played in bands and stuff like that before, putting myself through college. I turned down my scholarships because I didn't wanna own, I didn't owe anything to anybody and I worked 6 nights a week in bars playing pop music and stuff like that and then practicing when I hung out at the school. So my day was 24 hours a day music, just study, study and well there were other things we did too. They were very fun but, uh, this, this area, the amount of music you're talkin' about the Cajun music, the Zydeco, I mean we're so close to the blues. You've got the country. Uh, religious music –

Ezra Idlet: The folk –

Keith Grimwood: And me with my classical background, folk, folk tradition here is huge. Uh, Ezra would go her Lightnin' Hop-- I mean when I got first with the band we're playing shows with Lightnin' Hopkins. He's been seeing Lightnin' Hopkins since he was like 14.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: And just lovin' it. I, I don't know who Lightnin' Hopkins is. I play, I play in the symphony back in the bass section, you know.

Craig Calvert: Well there were a lot influences here in the community, you're right and being Houston. It was a really –

Keith Grimwood: Huge.

Craig Calvert: Fertile time for music here. Um, you know, the, the, this music scene hadn't developed in Austin like it is now and Houston was, could have easily been Nashville. Um, I'm not exactly sure why it ended up being Nashville and not Houston. But a lot of really good songs

were cut here, a lot of famous songs at Sugarhill and some of the other studios around here. So I'm sure that's why you unearthed what you did and started creating the archives.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: It was an amazing time.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, it was right on the cusp of, is where the, uh, folk music that, um, started happening here in the coffee houses in Houston. Um, ZZ Top was around then. Kenny Rogers was in, First Edition was like a club band –

Craig Calvert: Yeah, they played on the Southwest Freeway.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It was crazy –

Craig Calvert: Some hotel –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And then, it was right on the cusp and then Willie Nelson starting smokin' dope and hanging out with the hippies in Austin and all of a sudden we found ourselves playing at a Quality Inn in Austin because you wanted to get out of Houston so bad and play Austin because it was just startin' to happen with all the troubadours of the time. Michael Martin Murphy, BW Stevenson –

Craig Calvert: Jerry Jeff Walker –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Rusty Weir, Jerry Jeff Walker and, and the clubs and that whole Texas music scene was just, it was just right there. We were on the crust of that and it was just a very exciting time, just culturally for the state of Texas and, um, that's what I, I take away with my experience of not only having these friends for 40 something years but to be able to be a part of what was, became the Texas music and, um, I, I'm just, um, just honored to be a part of that, you know, and coming from Houston and keeping with the Houston presence.

Keith Grimwood: You know, as, one other thing there I just thought, I mean I really just thought about this, but how experimental the Houston music scene was early on at that point. Now I met these guys because they were hired by Houston Ballet, they were commissioned by Houston Ballet to write a rock ballet and come play it at Jones Hall. Now tell me, how am I gonna meet these guys? I mean they come down to Jones Hall where I'm playing in the orchestra. They've heard about me because I played in bars puttin' myself through school and I, that's my favorite band. But I'm shy, I really am. I know I don't appear to be shy but I've gotten over a lot of it but I am shy but I never introduced myself to 'em and then they're down at Jones Hall. It's like, well hello, you know.

Craig Calvert: You're in my house.

Keith Grimwood: You're in my house now. This is great. Now think about how, how amazing that is to, that experiment that, that Houston Ballet, hey, let's go find a rock band or a folk band

and do a rock ballet. Wow, what a great idea. Now you don't hear that all the time. That's, and that's how I met these guys and when we got together, the first thing we did, we wrote a song. The first day, the first day we got together. They had a bass player at the time too.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Their bass player was leaving and the orchestra had a union lockout, I point out, not a strike, it was a lockout and, uh, we were unemployed and I was really young.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Again, that was another one of those opportune timing things.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The timing was just, all those perfect, perfect storm materials got together and, um, you know, we, we were with, Bob Russell was our first bass player and, um, when we started playing The Railhead, we were a trio and Ezra and Craig kept sayin' we really need to add a bass player, we really need to add a bass player. You know, I said why, it will just complicate things and we went and heard Bob and he was playing happy hour at The Railhead. We talked to him and soon Bob was in the band and, so we had a lot of success but we kept growing and as, as the years go by you'll see how we kept adding, adding musicians and adding technicians and management and, which started from three people went to nine. You know, over six years, but, um, yeah, the, the, when we got with Keith, all of that timing of our bass player leaving and needing a bass player and the symphony lockout and it was just, it was uncanny. It was great.

Norie Guthrie: So in those earlier years, how did you work on building your fan base?

Ezra Idlet: Play.

Norie Guthrie: Just playing constantly?

Ezra Idlet: Play, there was nothing. There was no, there was no, um, like your mailing list came much later and stuff like. We just played a lot and all over the place and it, it, we expanded our touring base to Austin. So between Austin and Houston we ended up playing and San Marcos, Texas and Huntsville, Texas, we ended up playing the clubs that, that had the bands the, the college kids wanted to go see. And we're packing 'em out and, uh, it was word of mouth. Another way that, that expanded our fan base, K101 and KPFT in Houston would play our music. They would interview us. Then we would bring, we would play music live. When we played live music people that were listening to those radio stations, those were our, our cultural centers. They called in and, and there was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. So when radio would play local music, people in the area would come out and that was hugely important. I think that more than just playing anywhere else, the radio –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, yeah.

Keith Grimwood: A sense of community. If you get a sense of community goin' you can create a scene and it can be a good scene.

Craig Calvert: You know Ezra's always been the cheerleader and, and I mean that very respectfully. That, you know, he's undaunted. He just, you know, we're gonna go onward, you know, through the fog and if any of us ever started feeling that way it's almost always Ezra that would kinda bring us back around and focus us and, and provide that determination that he has still.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: And, uh, you know, we're gonna do it. We're gonna go, we're gonna do it and that was his mantra and we said okay. Well let's go do it and, you know, now there, with social media it's a different world but back then the radio was the world. I mean, the FM station that, that he's referring to, you could hear things you've never heard before in your life and all these brand new styles of music and this music that was evolving was all coming out and it was 24 hours a day and the jocks were hip and, you know, talked weird and low and groovy. And it really was a cultural setting.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: And also there was the written word too.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: I mean, maybe music was so important. There was, there was a book way back *When the Music Mattered* and music mattered so much. You couldn't wait for the next Beatles album to come out. You couldn't wait. I mean I could remember those feelings of just, and that's, that's in there. Then I kinda go away in the classical world and I missed a lot of the pop stuff that they're gonna talk about. I missed most of that because I was doin' other stuff. But, uh, you looked at the paper and the newspaper would have lyrics to songs and the chords written in on 'em and I would cut 'em out as a kid and I would take that and study it and learn how to play songs. Out of the newspaper. I mean, that was there.

Ezra Idlet: Scott Holtzman who was eventually a manager for Fever Tree wrote these insightful articles not about just about Fever Tree but about other bands that came. These were reviews. These were like, uh, this is what I saw, this is what moved me, this is what didn't move me. If album, live performance, Dale Adamson, um –

Conne Mims Pinkerton: Of the *Chronicle*. There was Dale Adamson and Bob –

Craig Calvert: Claypool.

Ezra Idlet, Keith Grimwood, Connie Mims Pinkerton: Bob Claypool,

Keith Grimwood: Let's talk Bob.

Ezra Idlet: These guys –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Of *The Houston Post*.

Ezra Idlet: Wrote, wrote real honest feelings about music and it, it was a feature of our media. Music, what, what was musically happening, what was musically good, what sucked. You know, this is, this is what they wrote about and television too. Yeah, I think Bruce Bryant, that *Little Ol' Show*. Um, he put us on television and hippies were awake after *Monty Python* and there we were on television as if it meant something.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: And it did mean something, you know, it –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: And it seems amazing that, how you guys were able to get so much press –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: At the time –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: And I can see that a lot here with the stuff that KTRU did because KTRU was, you know, all those reels –

Ezra Idlet: Absolutely.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yup.

Norie Guthrie: You know it's because they were airing the live shows when you guys were playing at the colleges or at the RMC.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: And then they were, um, even like there's one, um, reel box that is really awesome where you open it up and it's like telling you exactly like, this is right before the name change and it's just like, like you can tell that the person because usually, many times when you, when you look at those old, um, reels they don't have a lot of information.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Sometimes they're blank.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: But that one, like someone just like spent the time to like write out a little bit.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: That was nice of 'em.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Well what we had, we had, still have fans that, you know, come up to us at shows and, and they say, you know I still have cassettes that I recorded when you all were live on, on KLOL and people would record our shows or record our songs on, you know, on their Marantz reel-to-reel and, uh, and so there's a lot of like bootleg stuff out there that would be a kick to, to hear. So if they know that they can, they can bring their stuff here that would be awesome.

Norie Guthrie: Um, when did you start writing original songs and was that a group effort or did you do that solo?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Well, um, I would always bring in songs that I would wrote, uh, wrote, read, write, wrote – write. You don't have to cut that. That's how I talk. Um, I would, I would write a song and bring it to the guys for arrangement, and, um, sometimes they would write a song, either, uh, Ezra and Craig or Craig and, and Keith or different combinations, and then maybe I would add something to it, but most of time, I kept my writing to myself, which, um, you know, hindsight's 20/20. Maybe that wasn't such a good idea, but, um, it, since I was the only girl in the band, and it was, like, this is my sound and I'm the softer one and that kinda thing, so, um, but it, it was great when, when I can bring my song, and then they would take, you know, chicken scratch and turn it into chicken salad, and then it be, it would become a more ensemble driven piece.

Craig Calvert: You know, there are some exceptions. We did write a few songs together, the three of us in the beginning, but what you're sayin' is right. Connie did bring her songs to us. Ezra and I collaborated more. Uh, we would, uh, each have our own songs, but that was more of a rarity than, than the norm, uh, but when we, um, had, when the ballet came along, it forced us to write together. I mean, we had to write because –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We were commissioned to.

Craig Calvert: – there was a date that this was gonna be shown, and, and the music wasn't written yet, and so that was, that was a really good exercise in tryin' to learn how to songwriter under pressure, but early on, it was more of a organic thing, just whoever had something, we would try to do, either arrange it or complete it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: It felt good. It was, it was, it was a, a happy process, and even, we would say things to each other as songwriters that might offend other people outside of that circle. Uh, no that, that really, that's trite. Don't use those words. Let's use these words. Okay. That makes sense, and we were all aiming for a common good, you know, and in, in search of that common good, which is the finishing of a song, we would say things that would be maybe difficult to, to swallow at first, but then you could kinda see it happenin' and, uh, we were sorta fearless with that.

Craig Calvert: And something a little bit off the track of the question, after we weren't playing together anymore, is when I really realized that we were doing that. That we were able to talk to one another in such a way and not be worried about them being offended. I mean we, wouldn't insult one another, but it was just, you know, no. That's, that's not good enough. That's good enough. You get, we can do a better line here. We can get a better phrase here, and when I was try, tried collaborating with other people, turns out they don't like to hear that that much.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Also the, what drove some of the songwriting, Ezra, well all of us but mainly Ezra's always picking up a new instrument. There was a new instrument every week and it was like he'd get an instrument and you go oh god, here comes another, you know. He's gonna write a song with it, and he would and he, he would be so happy, and, and his joy would like just kind of like bubble into whatever it is, and we'd be doing this song, and, you know, I'm guilty too. I brought the Dulcimer – and, uh, much to our soundman's dismay, you know, trying to mic the dul – and this is way before the – we're an acoustic band. We're bringing in electric instruments and, and flute and all these different stringed instruments. This is before electronic tuners. This was way beyond all that, be, before all that. So it was just a mess. I just don't understand how we stayed in tune or any of that –

Craig Calvert: There was a lotta –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – to this day.

Craig Calvert: – feedback.

Keith Grimwood: We didn't.

Ezra Idlet: We, we, we started out, uh, tuning a half step down because we just thought we would be able to hit the notes better, and, and so our, to a certain point what we would call in the key of E was really the key of E flat, um, but we all tuned to that. It was a, agreed on that we would all tune down.

Keith Grimwood: You think that it's only about this when I went to transcribe this old stuff. No, no, Mr. knows how to write –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Surprise.

Keith Grimwood: – music. What were you thinking? Oh my gosh.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Surprise.

Ezra Idlet: Whose idea was that?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. Well –I don't know

Ezra Idlet: Was it yours?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: No, it wasn't mine.

Ezra Idlet: Are –

Keith Grimwood: It was hers.

Ezra Idlet: – you sure? It was hers.

Craig Calvert: I'm think, pretty sure –

Ezra Idlet: I think it –

Craig Calvert: – it was hers.

Ezra Idlet: – was Connie –

Craig Calvert: Pretty sure.

Ezra Idlet: – I'm thinking it was Connie to tune up. For whatever reason. She couldn't hit the high notes.

Keith Grimwood: She has no range.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Houston, Houston tuning is a half step down, and Nashville's a full step. Well a step and a half actually so.

Keith Grimwood: Okay.

Norie Guthrie: Uh, let's see.

Keith Grimwood: Oh, you were asking about songwriting.

Norie Guthrie: Yes.

Keith Grimwood: To me you get a song any way you get a song. I, I don't wait for songs to come. I look for them constantly. You know even in here I'm looking for a song somewhere, all the time. I'm looking around. I take notes all the time. I take notes. I don't feel a big need to finish the song on my own. I, I'm more of a collaborator. I would rather collaborate than finish

it on my own. My problem is is when I can't find anybody to collaborate with or the people I do collaborate with don't particularly like my idea, and I can't give up on it, so I have to keep pushing at it and pushing at it. So I have all these levels of songs going on, still. There's my lower tier, my higher tier. Somebody liked this once. Uh, uh, somebody, this used to be a good song, why don't we play it anymore. I have these folders of this stuff, and, uh, just, here's an idea that I haven't presented. But if you throw, if you can throw some chords at me, I'll throw some lyrics back at you, and I'll throw three or four sets, you know, and we can, we'll work on it, and I don't care if you use those lyrics or not.

Keith Grimwood: You know, I'm not that emotionally invested and tied into 'em. They mean something and they're real. Connie's very attached to her lyrics, you know. If you're gonna start making chan – I'm, I'm very hesitant to start messing with other people's lyrics and things. I'm very hesitant with, with some people, not so much with him 'cause he needs help, and, and it's good and he helps me all the time. We edit each other, but you have to throw it out there in a mess, and then be able to sit there and put it together without doing any damage to each other. You have to put it together as best you can.

Ezra Idlet: So whether you do it by yourself or you do it with somebody else, you gotta really throw all those ideas out, and if you're doing it by yourself, you still gotta look at it critically. Does this work? Does this not work? And, and then be ruthless in your, in your shaving away of whatever it is to get to that song.

Keith Grimwood: Even when you're singing it on stage, if you find it doesn't work in some way, you bring it up. You bring it up.

Craig Calvert: On the first CD, uh, that we released after getting back together again, we went up to Ezra's and which we called band camp, and, um, Ezra had a renewed interest in the banjo because there was a lot of banjo music in the early part of our career, and so he was kind of re, uh, learning a lot of things on the banjo and he said I've got something and, and I don't care what lyrics you put in front of me, I can, I can make it fit.

Keith Grimwood: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: I can make it fit, so I brought a stack of lyrics and put one in front of him and sure enough he made it fit, and it's a beautiful, turns out to be this beautiful song. Um, but you just never know what ingredients are gonna, what, what it's gonna take, you know, to make the soup. It's just, you just keep throwing different things in until it finally –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And, and –

Craig Calvert: – works.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – ballet, the ballet when we, that we were commissioned for, both of them, you know, there would be, it wasn't like oh we've got this song, put it to a dance. It was the other way around so it was like oh well this is going to be a pas de deux and it needs to be lovely and it needs to be this and it needs to express this. So we would have to like, so they'd go

huh? You know, we, on, on, on those type a things but then, then some of the dances would be well this is what's gonna go on so it has to sound angry or, you know, there's, there's a tussle or a ruckus going on. So it would inspire us to write to that, and this is gonna be a flute song or I think this is gonna be a bow-bass thing and then we'd go into this jazz feel. So with all of our, again, a weird timing of things is that, uh, we're given this opportunity. It's like okay we're learning all these different instruments and all these different styles. We were moving kind of away from the, the, the country, rock, folk sound with the acou, three acoustic guitars. We were moving more into kind of like okay, little bit a jazz stuff, and a little keyboard here and there, a little flute, a little electric guitar. Then we'd get on electric bass and –

Keith Grimwood: And drums.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – and then drums.

Keith Grimwood: And drums. Damian.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Damian Hevia joined the band and, uh, brought – it is like, I remember saying you mean you can write a song from the groove up. That, he laughed, but, but it was, I, I had, I hadn't thought a that and so that changed how I would approach a song. You know, once I was like I really like that beat and I would write to that beat, and then you're, you just, it just morphs as you get older and, and more relaxed with the process and with, you know who you're gonna be collaborating with. You know where the, you know what kinda gig you're doing or what kinda recording you're doing, or what kind of ballet you're gonna be doing. It's like this'll fit. This, this is, this'll fit, and that's just about the time that Wheatfield was changing its name and all of that because we were changing our styles.

Keith Grimwood: It was right before the name change.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Right before the name change.

Keith Grimwood: We wrote it on that thing. Remember, no, no.

Ezra Idlet: Which reminds me also, there was a, one of the steakhouses called The Refectory.

Keith Grimwood: Oh.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Ezra Idlet: Which is, uh, one of those places where they had live music –

Keith Grimwood: It connects.

Ezra Idlet: – and big audiences.

Keith Grimwood: It really connects.

Ezra Idlet: We played The Refectory and, uh, as, as we feel, how does it connect, Keith?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Damian

Keith Grimwood: Let me tell you about it. Let me tell you about The Refectory. Let me tell you about this. Okay, when I was putting myself through college, you know, I played in clubs. Clubs. I played in a band called Ramblin' at the time. We're playing these band, you know, the girl singer and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Wear a tie.

Keith Grimwood: – yeah, girl singer up front, you –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: – yeah, girl singer up front, you know, and back there, you know hiding in the back.

Ezra Idlet: Did you?

Keith Grimwood: No, no, no, I'm hiding in the back of the show. So anyway, we're playing this place called The Refectory. It's a good band. Really good band. Singer's good, but it's, and they love us. Rod, uh, uh, for Bob Farrar just loves it. You know, he loves it and all is great, but we don't have an audience. We just don't have an audience and we don't know how to get an audience, and he's like finally, guys, I'm really, there's this band I'm gonna have to bring in. They can bring in an audience, and I'm gonna have to let you guys go in a couple of weeks. So he gave us a couple of weeks. Right at that time, a symphony position came open. This band is gonna break up and that band, that band – we couldn't find other gigs, so that band broke up. A symphony position comes open and these guys are coming to work The Refectory. So I take the symphony gig, and I'm down there, just brand new in the symphony, and I come out to here to The Refectory, go find out who that band was that got me fired cause I want to go hear what and I fell in love. Absolutely fell in love. I was charmed, completely charmed by them. So.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And, uh, Damian Hevia and his girlfriend, his girlfriend –

Ezra Idlet: Susan Gezelschap

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – worked there. Yeah, Susan –

Keith Grimwood: Oh.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – worked there and, um, he would be, he would be in the audience and Damian never, never holds back on what he, what he, his opinion is and he said you guys need a drummer –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – and, um, so that's really what started it and, uh –

Keith Grimwood: That's weird that he met you guys there too.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, and I, isn't that weird.

Craig Calvert: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: You see, you learn something –

Keith Grimwood: Well I –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – all these years.

Keith Grimwood: – did not know that.

Ezra Idlet: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: I did not know that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. Sorry about your band Ramblin'.

Keith Grimwood: We needed to break up. We didn't, there were some problems going on. There was some problems going on with Ramblin'. I'll tell you about them –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Okay.

Keith Grimwood: – later.

Craig Calvert: I had my D 35 stolen from there.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Did you really?

Craig Calvert: Yeah. And the guy, and the guy contacted me about the, who I think stole it. It was an inside job –

Keith Grimwood: Ah.

Craig Calvert: – but somebody that worked there and he contacted me, and he said I just want to find out what the insurance company was that you had that guitar insured because I didn't want them to have the satisfaction, you know, of thinkin' that they had gotten me and I said well, it's insured anyway, of course, I couldn't afford insurance. It was not insured and so the guy called

me. I said well, it wasn't insured. You can just give me the money 'cause he was saying it was for a friend –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Uh huh.

Craig Calvert: – you know.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: But anyway, he didn't give me the money

Ezra Idlet: Or the guitar.

Norie Guthrie: So, since we're kind of talking about music venues, what were some of your favorite places to play and could you describe them in more detail?

Craig Calvert: Liberty Hall.

Ezra Idlet: God, yes.

Craig Calvert: Liberty Hall, it –

Keith Grimwood: Chenevert.

Craig Calvert: – was just incredible here in Houston. Um, it was the Armadillo World Headquarters of Houston. We had all these people comin' in that we had their albums and you can go down and pay \$2.50 and see them, and, uh, soon, before too long, we were opening for bands there and then we started headlining there. That was my favorite one here in town.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Roberto Gonzalez

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Roberto Gonzalez.

Craig Calvert: May he –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We had –

Craig Calvert: – rest in –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – the –

Craig Calvert: – peace.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Texas Opry House.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And, um, it was on West Alabama and that was the biggest room that we played in town. We would always do a, a, our manager would keep us out of the town for 3 months prior to Christmas, and we would not play Houston for 90 days, so we'd come back and play two, two shows –

Keith Grimwood: Yes.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – or two –

Keith Grimwood: Two –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – nights.

Keith Grimwood: – shows.

Craig Calvert: Two –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Two –

Craig Calvert: – shows –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – shows –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – at the –

Craig Calvert: – Christmas –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Texas –

Craig Calvert: – night.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Opry House, which held –

Keith Grimwood: 800 –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – 8 –

Craig Calvert: A gazillion.

Keith Grimwood: – 800 –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – so –

Keith Grimwood: – people.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – um, you know, and, and we'd look back on that now and, and we see, he, you know, that was just for a, for a local band to be able to do that. It was, it, it's, it really is a feat, um, and it was, a lot of it had to do with just being in the scene. It was how music was supported and how close we're supported. Um, the live music, live original music scene and then Rockefeller's, the Criners opened up Rockefeller's and that was a great place to play. Fitzgerald's opened. We ope, we opened a lot of these rooms.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We opened Fitzgerald's.

Keith Grimwood: We closed some of 'em.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We closed, yeah. We opened Rockefeller's, we opened Fitzgerald's and, um, those, those were the, the pearls of the scene.

Ezra Idlet: A description of Liberty Hall is there was an upstairs, uh, dressing room where we would hang out and talk to Roberto Gonzalez. Roberto Gonzalez would go down and introduce the bands. He dressed up in, in a suit and, uh, he would play Jew's harp and then they played the, the William Tell Overture to start a show and it, and it, and then he'd, he'd get up and playin' Jew's harp and then he'd introduce the bands, and he gave, uh, uh, focus to that place and it was always a big deal when we played there. Some of the bands I remember playing for, with and for there are Dogtooth Violet. There were a lot of shows that Wheatfield and Dogtooth Violet played together. Uh, B. W. Stevenson, um, Roger McGuinn, um –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: New Riders and –

Ezra Idlet: – New –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Purple –

Ezra Idlet: – Riders –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Sage.

Ezra Idlet: – and Purple Sage.

Keith Grimwood: That was, uh, I was thinkin' of the fiddle player but that was over there –

Ezra Idlet: Johnny –

Keith Grimwood: – at the –

Ezra Idlet: – Piney was at –

Keith Grimwood: – Johnny Piney –

Ezra Idlet: – it was at the Texas Opry –

Keith Grimwood: – Texas Opry –

Ezra Idlet: – House.

Keith Grimwood: – House. Sorry.

Ezra Idlet: Um, Lightnin' Hopkins, we played at Lightnin' Hopkins, uh, which, we, we were being backed up by the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys and I just got to interject a little thing about those guys, Rex and, uh, Mickey, were the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys. They backed up Townes for a while, but they would go off on their own and do a duo deal, and they had this, this magic trick that was awesome. Rex would stand up in the front of the stage and Mickey – Rex was tall, Mickey was a little short guy – and Rex would hold Mickey right there in, in, it's right there at Liberty Hall, he stood up, they said okay watch this ya'll. Said stay to Mickey and then he dropped his hands, and Mickey would fall, boom, and he hit the floor hard and bounced. Man, it worked last time. I don't know what happened, and they'd get, and then they would start their show, but he would just hold him and say, stay, and drop his arms, and Mickey would hit it. And every time, he'd get up and do it again. It was just astounding.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mickey was never right after that.

Keith Grimwood: I saw Cold Blood at, at Liberty Hall. Cold Blood, great band, horn band. I also played in a band, uh, back earlier days, it was called the Southwest Freeway, nine-piece horn band. Uh, uh, the rhythm section stayed kind of the same for a while, but the horn players were constantly changing, so I got to meet all the best horn players in town coming through that band, and they were just great to get to know and play in that band. But Cold Blood was the band that came through there and played.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton, Ezra Idlet, Keith Grimwood: Bruce Springsteen.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Bruce Springsteen played Liberty Hall?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I was up in the balcony for the Bruce Springsteen show and he by the time he was doing, uh, Rosalita, jump a little lighter, the floor was literally, I mean the place was rockin'.

Ezra Idlet: It was.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: But that floor was like, hmm –

Keith Grimwood: Uh huh.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – probably like the Dodgers Stadium last night.

Craig Calvert: There again –

Keith Grimwood: We're not talkin' about it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we're not talkin' about it.

Keith Grimwood: We're not talking.

Craig Calvert: – there again, you know, I had never heard of Bruce Springsteen before he played Liberty Hall, but the radio station got behind it –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: – and after they, he was done with that show, you sure knew who he was.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: And uh, more, more places. Uh, Armadillo World Headquarters is right up there too.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Oh yeah.

Craig Calvert: Jones Hall, not bad. Not a bad place to play. Um, we played The Troubador out in –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Los Angeles.

Craig Calvert: – in Los Angeles, which was really scary, because there was a lot of famous people in the crowd, and, uh, we were tryin' to get famous, you know.

Keith Grimwood: Pretty Lady in Oklahoma City.

Craig Calvert: Pretty Lady.

Keith Grimwood: Scary for different reasons, but it was cool. I liked that place.

Ezra Idlet: We played Sand Mountain once –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I don't –

Ezra Idlet: – Some –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – remember –

Ezra Idlet: other –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – that –

Ezra Idlet: – decent venues.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – at all.

Ezra Idlet: – we played. We did. We played there and, uh, it was, it was on the heels of, um, Uncle Walt's Band played Sand Mountain. It was like a week or two after Uncle Walt's played there and we were really influenced a lot by Uncle Walt's Band. Uh, they, we heard them in Austin. They had a bass player. That was incredible. He played upright bass and, and I think that's really when we decided, we needed a bass. We heard what a bass could do, not only would it hold on the low end, but if you, if you could bow a bass, it just added this sound that put goosebumps and I still have goosebumps thinking about it. Um, to you, when you listen to what that band could sound like, they had great three-part harmonies. At Sand Mountain, we played once, I think –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We played –

Ezra Idlet: – just –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – it –

Ezra Idlet: – once.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we played, um, Damian's –

Ezra Idlet: Yes.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – which was a converted house behind the, uh, the River Oaks Center area and then Birraporettis landed there, so we played at Damian's and then we played –

Craig Calvert: Carnaby's.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – at Carnaby's –

Ezra Idlet: And –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – which is –

Ezra Idlet: – Grand –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – the same –

Ezra Idlet: – Central –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – I think.

Ezra Idlet: – Station.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: Was it the same company –

Ezra Idlet, Craig Calvert: Grand Central –

Craig Calvert: – It was on Westheimer.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And then we played Birraporettis, which is where the people from the ballet, uh, came to hear us in, uh, and propose that to us and –

Craig Calvert: Oh, that's right. They, they used to rehearse across the street –

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – from Birraporettis.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: At least that's where their –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: But, we got –

Craig Calvert: – rehearsal –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – But –

Craig Calvert: – hall was.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – but what we forgot to mention was the place where we really amassed a huge audience at the very beginning was Village Inn Pizza Parlor on Westheimer. Remember?

Ezra Idlet: Oh –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – yeah. Oh –

Keith Grimwood: – pizza.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And that was huge.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: Village Inn Pizza Parlor

Keith Grimwood: There were these steakhouses and pizza parlors all over –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: With –

Keith Grimwood: – town –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – great –

Keith Grimwood: – because –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – bands.

Keith Grimwood: – I played at the Village Inn Pizza downtown on the square with the Southwest Freeway. There were clubs the whole, uh, square was just club after club after club. You're, afterwards, I'd just go hear all these different bands. Different things going on. La Bastille was down there.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: We didn't play La Bastille but that's one of the other places I would go to, to go hear music.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We didn't play Anderson Fair that much. They would do some, they would very famous street parties, though, and we would –

Ezra Idlet: We played at one of those.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we'd play –

Ezra Idlet: Papa –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – and –

Ezra Idlet: – Papa Roach was, was the headliner –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – the day that we played. I remember that. Uh, uh, Village Inn Pizza Parlor, had, luh-live –

Keith Grimwood: It became Dean –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Dean.

Keith Grimwood: – Scott's.

Ezra Idlet: – it became –

Keith Grimwood: Dean –

Ezra Idlet: – Dean –

Keith Grimwood: – Scott's.

Ezra Idlet: – Scott's. We were playing there one night and there was this guy opening for us and he was a young studly kind of guy, long hair, awesome body and he wore knee-high boots and he wore, he had played 12-string and he was playing “Stairway to Heaven” on a 12-string guitar. He could sing the high notes and everything, and he just was not, he was bombing, and somebody, it was in front of our crowd, and somebody threw a pizza at him –

Craig Calvert: Well, wait.

Ezra Idlet: – and hit him in the guitar.

Craig Calvert: He, he did, uh, “Who's That I See Walking in These Woods” or something, wasn't that?

Ezra Idlet: He did that too? Yeah, he was, he was doing “Stairway.” We-we-well anyway he got hit in the guitar with a piece of pizza and it shattered him emotionally, and he came backstage at the pizza parlor crying, and, uh, who, who, [mimics crying] threw, threw a pizza at me [mimics crying]. Craig just looked at him and said, maybe it was a comment on the pizza. It was one of my favorite stories from then and he –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And you get a clean version –

Ezra Idlet: – and he –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – of it –

Ezra Idlet: – was so –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – too.

Ezra Idlet: – nice. I think that was a comment on the pizza. And Damian's, Damian's, uh, had, uh, just a little bit of extra, uh, color commentary about Damian's, rows of pinball machines and pong machines, early videogames and then also rows of –

Connie Mims Pinkerton, Craig Calvert: Foosball.

Ezra Idlet: – foosball machines, and there was a drunk rowdy crowd that would get in there and often, you would find, um, Quaalude wrappers on the floor. So that was the mindset of the people. It was always crowded. So what would normally happen is somebody would get pissed off at somebody else in the foosball part, smack 'em and they'd fall into somebody who'd get pissed off and there were these, these sort of contagious bar fights that would go, start in the foosball room, worked their way around to the pinball machines and all into the, to the front part, and I remember one time being in one of those fights, uh, not in the fight itself, just the, listening to a band, Chris Hirsch was in the band and, uh, the fight started coming. We saw it coming from the foosball room. We saw it coming back through the pinball room. He put his banjo down, and he stood in front of his girlfriend. He was just waitin' for somebody to fall into his girlfriend, just and then the fight was over and then he went back and played banjo again.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah Chris.

Ezra Idlet: But it was, it was a, it was a tightly –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Oh.

Ezra Idlet: – packed club full of drunks, and there was always fights in that club. It was packed too tight.

Craig Calvert: Well, you know what, my parents used to come and see us all the time, all the time, and they were always the best-dressed people in the place. And they would always sit right by the door, and so they could make a quick escape if somethin' broke out.

Keith Grimwood: One of the Austin clubs we played, Castle Creek is –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: – one of the first Austin club I played with these guys, and I just remember standing there on that stage listening to the audience packed crowd, all of 'em yelling where is Beaver Bob, where is Beaver Bob, the whole night. It was great. It was one of my great memories.

Norie Guthrie: That maybe is a good segue. You've kind of mentioned, um, adding Bob Russell and then later, um, Damian –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hevia.

Norie Guthrie: – Hevia, um, as drum, at drums. Could you just kind of talk about how they kind of came on and what –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: – added and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hmm.

Norie Guthrie: – you know.

Craig Calvert: Bob had a really good stage personality. Uh, he looked, he had a big beard, and we nicknamed him Baver, Beaver Bob 'cause when he played, he's kind of stick his top teeth out, uh, but he was, you know, he looked hip for the time. You know, it's kind of like the styles right now. They have –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – beards are –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: He's –

Craig Calvert: – really –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – yeah.

Craig Calvert: – really in –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: If he had a man bun then, he'd be like –

Craig Calvert: – and long hair, and, you know, dark and he was a good-lookin' guy and he, he had good stage patter in between, which we were still developing, but he had some, for some reason, either just gift for gab or had developed it. And, um, so he would kind of point out what was happening on stage, um, when, and he would set things up, and so kind of was a, a bit of glue in the show.

Ezra Idlet: He also had the best business acumen of any of us. He got us jobs that, uh, moved us forward. Um, he, he, he was able to talk to people and ask for money, and this is nothing that we were really good at. I mean, at that point, we're, none –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – of us were really good. Bob, I believe, is the guy that got us into San Marcos at the Too Bitter –

Ezra Idlet: – the first time we played there. I mean it, we played there and he also, we, we played, uh, Steamboat Springs. I think Bob might have been one of the guys that got us into Steamboat Springs, um, early on to play these clubs. Bob was really good at that. That's what, he could harmonize and he could, he, he bowed the bass and he played upright bass, and that's what we wanted. He filled that, that gap real well and he did fit, you know, uh, as far as charisma went on the stage. He added to that as well, in, in a big way.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: There was never any songwriting, though, I don't –

Ezra Idlet: No?

Craig Calvert: – think.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Not too much

Ezra Idlet: Not too much.

Craig Calvert: He just kind of concentrated on the business side of it –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Which we –

Craig Calvert: – when he –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – needed.

Craig Calvert: – wasn't playing.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. Which we needed –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – up until the time then, uh, we were approached by Bob Burton, uh, to book and manage us, and, um, so that's when, when the machine started to happen, and then Damian starts rehearsing with the band and all of a sudden, we're a five piece and then, uh –

Keith Grimwood: You add –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we –

Keith Grimwood: – drums and the venues change.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Right.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The –

Keith Grimwood: And –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – venues –

Keith Grimwood: – the –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – change –

Keith Grimwood: – change. The venues get bigger and the crowds get larger.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, and the sound changes and, and it gives you a lot more flexibility in what rooms you could play, and so then, uh, our manager, Bob Burton, um, starts, that was the, that was the era when you had, uh, like Columbia Records and Warner Brothers and Electra and Asylum, all had, uh, representatives living here and working in, in, and officing here, so we, we would be able to or in Dallas, and we would invite these record labels out, uh, to see us because our, our manager was, you know, trying to get us a record deal to take us to the next level, take us out of the clubs and get a, a, you know, a re, a record label deal out of Los Angeles or New York or whatever. And, um, so now, it's like, okay, we have a sound man, and we have a light guy, a lighting guy. We had Don Lawrence, uh, working sound and Richard Evans on lighting, and we had Art Donisi just doing all of –

Ezra Idlet: The stage.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – our technical stuff. We had so many instruments and so many –

Craig Calvert: Broken strings.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – broken strings and Art was, he, he would, he would keep the show runnin'. Um, and so, you do that and then you need a truck, and then you need a van, and then you need this, and so all of a sudden, we fit, we were incorporated. We were drawing salaries. Um, uh, it was, we had a record label of our own, um, and it, it, it's the, it's the machine started to happen and you had to keep feeding the machine and the beast of the machine, 'cause we had a big payroll now, so.

Ezra Idlet: Bob, uh, Burton was the guy that got us on *Austin City Limits*. He made the connections with and made that whole thing happen, *Austin City Limits*, the first season. No idea what that was about. It was just another television appearance, didn't mean anything at the time that huge, and then, realized the number of places that that show showed even the first season was pretty huge. I think we actually even got some money out of that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: I mean like a pay, like a little –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: paycheck each of us.

Craig Calvert: And the, the show itself.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: And, you know, you don't get that now –

Ezra Idlet: Hmm mm.

Craig Calvert: – if you play ACL, it's, it belongs to them but that was part of our payment was to, to be able to have it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: Um, you know, Bob did a lot of great things for us. Um, you know, when Damian got in the band, um, it was kind of in a transitional period when we were picking up electric instruments, and so, it was kind of a natural thing to start working with the drums, and, uh, you know, he brought, uh, a really cool feel. Uh, he didn't play in what I would call a straight-ahead fashion. I mean he had had a, a Latin group. He's Cuban, uh, just really brought a different kind of a sensibility to us and different, it opened up new areas that we could go in musically, stylistically, and, uh, it was, it was a real strong thing that, uh, that we felt or that I felt when we, when we moved up and had drums.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, and also, the fact that he was so creative and in his own right on so many levels, and it, the different styles that we would write in and the different time signatures, the different, just all the different styles. It would take a heck of a drummer to work with that with the writing that was happening and it, it couldn't be somebody that, you know, played Gilley's, uh, and knew how to do a shuffle really good. We might do one shuffle a night. You know, it, he would have to be able to switch time signatures and he created, and, uh, innovative so it was, it was great to, for him to, for him to hear what we had written and put his beat to it. It's like oh, wow, yeah, that's it.

Ezra Idlet: He had a giant record collection.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: He had an enormous record collection. First time I ever heard Little Feat, he played it for me, and a lot of, a lot of first music that I had heard, uh, came from Damian's record collection, so.

Craig Calvert: Lincoln Mayorga.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah, yeah. So many different things, and he, he is the guy that really got me readin' and payin' attention to album liner notes. I have always, since meeting Damian, believed that that was super important to read –

Keith Grimwood: Oh.

Ezra Idlet: – and to know about and also, as an artist, to deliver those –

Keith Grimwood: Oh yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – liner notes.

Keith Grimwood: We spent hours writing liner notes.

Ezra Idlet: Who played on what and why –

Keith Grimwood: Blah, blah, blah, blah. Bob yawned on that song and – Gosh.

Craig Calvert: I like liner notes. I just want to go on record.

Keith Grimwood: 'Kay, fine, fine. I'm glad somebody reads 'em.

Norie Guthrie: I used –

Keith Grimwood: I'm –

Norie Guthrie: – to –

Keith Grimwood: – glad –

Norie Guthrie: – when –

Keith Grimwood: – you –

Norie Guthrie: – I was –

Keith Grimwood: – read –

Norie Guthrie: – when –

Keith Grimwood: – 'em –

Norie Guthrie: – I was –

Keith Grimwood: – too.

Norie Guthrie: – when I was younger, yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Gosh.

Norie Guthrie: Um, you mentioned *Austin City Limits*. Can you talk about that experience in more detail?

Craig Calvert: Terrifying.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Terrifying.

Craig Calvert: Absolutely, terrifying. You know, it was a, it was a real, it was the real deal. The studio was, you know, topnotch studio. This, this was something that Willie Nelson had started. He was the first one, and we were one of the first acts to go on.

Keith Grimwood: Were you as Wheatfield or was this St. Elmo's Fire?

Craig Calvert, Connie Mims Pinkerton: We were Wheatfield.

Keith Grimwood: You went on as Wheatfield.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: 'Cause that's right about the name change.

Craig Calvert: – and then set was different then. Uh, the, you know, now, it's got the Austin skyline in the background. We were surrounded and there were people behind us and people in front of us. Uh, it was the, another heady experience for young people. Um, but it wasn't what it, anything then. It wasn't, had not been established as the formidable show it is today. It was just getting off the ground. And so we were, like Ezra said, you know, this could be a *Little Ol' Show after Monty Python* except for there's a ton of people there.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: They put makeup on us and that's the first time I ever remember being made up. They sat us all back stage to put bibs over our shirts that we were gonna wear and then, they started, you know, dealing with our faces.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And you hair was that long.

Ezra Idlet: It was that long and I had a shirt that was special made for me by my girlfriend, Betsy Strout. She sewed me a cowboy shirt with, uh, –

Craig Calvert: Snaps.

Ezra Idlet: – flaps with snaps, yep. And I wore that and, um, it was, it was, it was interesting. You had on a, uh, Mexican, um, peasant shirt, I think. Craig had on a white shirt. I don't remember what Beaver Bob was wearing.

Keith Grimwood: I didn't know he was –

Ezra Idlet: I couldn't –

Keith Grimwood: – so into fashion.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I don't know he was so into fashion.

Ezra Idlet: – tell you what Damian was wearing either but I, but –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – I do remember those things, yeah, about that. And Bobby Flowers was sitting behind us.

Craig Calvert: A big fan,

Ezra Idlet: Bobby Flowers is a big fan and a, kind of a, he always wore a cowboy hat and had a big beard, about Keith's height and, uh –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Would –

Keith Grimwood: A big –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – the –

Keith Grimwood: – tall –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – audience –

Keith Grimwood: – guy.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – was the audience sitting on the floor, because –

Ezra Idlet: They –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – it was a lot like Armadillo World Headquarters with a bunch of carpet squares. They had bleachers behind us.

Ezra Idlet: They had bleachers behind us.–

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm. I can't remember.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Bleachers on the side but I think the audience, I don't know if there were chairs in front of us or not, or if it was mainly just cameras, but, uh, a very interesting, uh, difference in the way they do it now. Um –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – but, uh, but techni, just technologically, like our technicians, uh, Don and Richard and Art, they, you know, all of a sudden, Don is in a new world of audio engineering. It's for television, you know, broadcast, so it, it was a stretching time for all of us, and Art had to deal with, with the, you know, TV sound stage guys, which was hilarious in itself, and then Richard, just the lighting for television. It was, it was a great time for all of us to stretch in all of our different acumens, you know –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – and, um, it was, it was interesting. Then we all compared notes afterward. It was kind of like going on a rollercoaster at Disneyland and poof, it was over –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – so, um.

Norie Guthrie: Did you guys realize that you were also being filmed for *Heartworn Highways*? You guys –

Craig Calvert: No.

Norie Guthrie: – didn't know that.

Ezra Idlet: What is *Heartworn Highways*?

Norie Guthrie: Um, *Heartworn Highways* is the, uh, uh, it's filmed around the same – yeah, it was filmed around this time. It was done by a name, a guy named James Szalapaski, I think is his, how, how I might pronounce his name, and it was, it's that film where Townes is in it, Guy Clark is in it, Rodney Crowell, Steve Earle, um, one of the guys who donated the materials, Richard Dobson is in it, briefly. Um, David Allan Coe –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hmm.

Norie Guthrie: It's a, yeah, I, I think it actually came out around 1979. Um –

Ezra Idlet: Hmm.

Norie Guthrie: – I think there might have been some funding issues, but they recorded at the *Austin City Limits*.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hmm.

Norie Guthrie: And the, you guys were going, you, you made it, I think, through the first cut and then when the, he did a recut, it got cut out.

Ezra Idlet: Well, I'll be darned. No, I had no idea.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: It –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – would make sense that we would be cut, because we really didn't fit.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, we didn't –

Ezra Idlet: That outlaw country, that kind of thing. Those guys really all fit in that, in the category and although we were influenced by those, the same people, we were just really on a different, a different wave length back –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – then and it's –

Keith Grimwood: Well, what kind of music did you play?

Ezra Idlet: It wasn't outlaw –

Keith Grimwood: It wasn't that –

Ezra Idlet: – country.

Ezra Idlet: – country. What, what kind was it? Um, it was hyphenated music is what I understand.

Craig Calvert: Eclectic.

Connie Mims Pinkerton, Keith Grimwood: Eclectic.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Eclectic.

Craig Calvert: They call it Americana now.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Um, moving on from *Austin City Limits*, could you talk about *Caliban*, its inception, working with the ballet, how is it, how it was received?

Craig Calvert: Um, yeah, I was at my parents' house, which I think I had a, maybe had a business card but since I was moving around a lot, I just put their number on it and I happened to be there and answered the, ph-, or my mother answered the phone and she said it's for you. It's the arts history director for the Houston Ballet, and, you know, I said he probably wants us to write a ballet. I want you to write a ballet. So, uh, we said yes, of course, 'cause we were too young and dumb to know that we couldn't do that. And, uh, thankfully, we were, because it was a great experience and we, it turns out we could. But, you know, at the time, there was no one in the band that wrote or read music. Um, we really didn't think it through. We just said yes. And there was a particular song that we had written when we were in Saint Croix that's called "Cruzan Time," and this was the, the one standout song for the artistic director that he was kind of basing all of this around this vision of *The Tempest*, uh, told through the slave, Caliban's eyes instead of through Prospero's eyes. And, uh, um, I read it. Personally, read *The Tempest* so I would know what we were talking about and then, uh, we started having these rehearsals at the rehearsal space across from Birraporettis on West –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Gray.

Craig Calvert: – Gray, and, uh, we would be set up along the wall and we, you know, we determined songs that had already been written that would fit, and then we had to fill in the rest of the space and when the artistic director, when James Clouser was, um, he was, you know, just this, just this was coming out of him on, in front of us, and he would, he would figure out what he wanted to do step wise, and he said okay, I need 36 bars or he wasn't, sometimes it'd be odd numbers of bars and we'd look at like 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 2, 2, 3,4. We were counting out bars in our heads trying to figure out how long he was saying we needed to be. And, uh, I remembered my stomach just being in knots –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – the whole time.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. 'Cause we were out of our, out of our element –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – because, uh, you know, we were now told we, you know, this, I need this amount of time and this type of thing, and I think we recorded those re, rehearsal –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – sections, because –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we would just freeform –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – whatever, and, uh, I think that's probably when we got a lot more jazzier than we ever intended to be, because we were just improving as the dance was actually being choreographed and created, and, uh, so we would record on a reel-to-reel, um, and listen back to just know what we had done. Um, so then when, when Keith got in the band, thank God, he could write the stuff down.

Keith Grimwood: This is right when I met this guys. I, they were kind of down to John's house to rehearse this stuff and they were coming down there, and I had been out, uh, for lunch during rehearsals and I was coming back to get my bass and pick it up and take it home, and I ran into Craig and Connie, and they're down rehearsing this ballet and I was like, wow, this is really cool. And then they started talking about this great idea about having me come be part of their rock ballet. And I thought wow, that'd be kind of interesting. I like their music a lot. What do you want me to do? He said well, bring your bass and you come, I said you, you got a bass player. He says oh, it'll be fine. It'll be fine. Come to the rehearsal. And I was like okay. So I bring a bass to the rehearsal. They wanted me to do an extra bass part. This was not going to go over with her other bass player at all. They didn't ask him about this stuff and so, well, I got out of that real quickly, 'cause I could tell that there was something weird going on, but I knew right away that there was a connection with these guys, 'cause that ballet thing. What an idea. What a great idea. And we did more. I worked, the, we did rest, well, we did *Caliban* again about a year later and I got to work with 'em on that, and then we wrote another one called *Rasputin* about a year after that, and we played in Chicago with re, uh, with *Caliban* and we played in Fort Worth, different things, but these guys doing this, imagine that.

Craig Calvert: And, and we were –

Keith Grimwood: Imagine that. I was so impressed.

Craig Calvert: – we were, we were a big part of it. Not only did we write the music, but we were on stage. They had a scrim, uh, that they could like in different ways to make us more visible or less visible, and, um, so, you know, they were, they were counting on the draw that we had established in town to fill the house, and so they wanted to have us, at least I'm, that's what I think they were doing, uh, they wanted to have us as part of it, and then the last act, we come out in costume. Um –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Trick or treat.

Craig Calvert: You wanna?

Ezra Idlet: Sure, so we came out in costume and they dressed us according to what they thought that, Craig had a toga, a white toga and he played flute, and, uh, Connie was sort of a princess, and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Of course.

Ezra Idlet: – Beaver Bob, I think sort of looked like a Ewok, maybe. I don't remember Beaver Bob's costume so much but for me, they braided my hair, two braids and, uh, no shirt and a bear claw necklace, a loin cloth, sandals with straps around – and I see you're laughing already, okay – and this helmet. It was a leather helmet with deer antlers that went up. I'm 6-9 at that point but the deer antlers made me 8 feet tall, and, uh, arm bands and, um, I played that whole last act like that, and this is, we're very young, and this is our first time in actual theater. So when we get done, Beaver Bob looks at me and says, we're all meeting in The Green Room to talk to the audience and, and when this is over. Come on. I want you to come with The Green Room, put your guitar away and go to The Green Room. I said no. I'm not going to The Green Room dressed like this. I'm not going, I, I, I am in no way going like this. He goes fine, don't go like that. So he went off and I'm putting my guitar away and I'm kind of relenting a little bit. I'm thinking well, I'm a little bit precious, it's just art people, theater people and I'll just go to The Green Room dressed like this with no shirt and bear claw necklace and my hair in braids and fricken hat, and, um, so I walk out of Jones Hall and down the street, cars are honking at me, up the stairs to this bar called The Green Room. And, of course, there's nobody from the, the ballet there at all, it's just a bunch of drunks and I'm in The Green Room with this stupid costume on, and the place got real quiet. And I'm looking around and looking around, and I sit down and waitress finally comes up and she goes, can I help you, and I said left my wallet in my other pants. Pissed, I was pissed. Finally, after sitting there for 15 minutes knowing I had been had, I stride up to the bartender, I look him in the eye and say man, if Beaver Bob comes here, you tell him I was here, and I just walk out. And that's all they knew about me. If Beaver Bob shows up so I don't who they think was comin' after me, I don't want to see Beaver Bob, just kind of scared the hell out of me and, uh, it wasn't 'til the next day, I found out that The Green Room was actually attached to the theater and anyone you'd meet, they would, they would know that you were in costume and I found that out later.

Craig Calvert: Be, before we leave this subject, that's one of my favorite stories of any story that has ever happened to us, but there was one thing. Um, back then, there was, there was a certain amount of tension, uh, between what I think was known as the establishment versus hippies, and –

Ezra Idlet: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: – we, this place, Jones Hall, was, we were defiling it by being in there and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The season ticketholders in the minks in the front row were like; oh, it's a rock band.

Craig Calvert: Well, even before we ever played, they were picketing. I mean they were, they were, did not want us in their, their mausoleum. They didn't, I mean it was, it was, that was

another thing that added to the stress. That was a stressor and so we would, you know, we had these people that didn't want us there and we're writing stuff out of our element and we're having to create this stuff on the fly, and it, you know, one day, we'd go in and we'd think boy, this is a great idea and we'd leave. Another day, we'd go God, this is really terrible.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Horrible.

Craig Calvert: This is gonna be awful. And then, we go and we played the first night, opening night, sold out, and the next night sold out, the next night sold out, and –

Keith Grimwood: 3,000.

Craig Calvert: – when you're in Jones Hall, and Keith knew this well before we ever did, it's like people are on top of you. I mean it just goes up and up and up and up, as far up as you can see, there are people, and we finished the first night and there was 6-minute or 7-minute applause, which just didn't stop. People were on their feet and we had never experienced anything like that either, and so we, you know, we were in a strange land, we, and, you know, it, we got used to it really fast, but, uh, it was just a, another heady experience for young, really young people.

Ezra Idlet: I remember, uh, when we were rehearsing and with the dancers from the very first time being in tears –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – to see –

Craig Calvert: That beauty.

Ezra Idlet: – the combination of art forms.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, you know, so –

Ezra Idlet: Right.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – a lot of it was the dancers also would count in counts of eight and, uh, you know, we do a lot of things in counts of four, four and so, uh, there was just, it was, it was kind of nightmarish stuff. I remember like having, uh, nodes on my vocal cords and I had to go, it was right before opening night and I had to get that taken care of, and, and the throat doctor I went to said well, these are like gastric ulcers. He said are you under some stress. I went oh no, I'm not under any stress at all. I'm totally out of my element and I'm not –

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – **** at all. So, um, but again, it's just, uh, the, the opportunities that we have been given, um, as a collective creative unit and the odd things that have been thrown in our path to take advantage of and the offer have just been just once in a lifetime experiences, which are, which isn't in, I'm intrigued. That's why we stay together, because we just never know what's comin' down the pike.

Craig Calvert: It –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I'm intrigued.

Craig Calvert: – still happens. It –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I'm stickin' –

Craig Calvert: – still happens.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – around.

Craig Calvert: But, I guess, we said yes.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: You know, we, we decided yeah, we'll do that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so right around this time is when the name change happened. Um, I mean, you know, we have to talk about the name change. Um, my assumption is that the name change came because you guys were – well, I know why the name change happened, but you guys chose St. Elmo's Fire because of an influence from *Caliban*, is that correct?

Craig Calvert: Hmm –

Norie Guthrie: No?

Craig Calvert: – not really.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Craig Calvert: Not really. Um, we struggled mildly with the name change. It, it went, went on for weeks and weeks and weeks, and we knew that we had to do it because we had been threatened, uh, legally, um, if we didn't do it by a band that had the same name, Wheatfield, and, and it, they may or may not have, but we didn't have the resources to find out. We didn't want to hire a lawyer. We were, you know, we were, we just kind of said okay, great. And there was some awful names that came across, but none of them stuck, thankfully. And I'll –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And we didn't go back to Neat Stuff, for sure. We're not going there or The Avengers.

Craig Calvert: – we, um, we, we, the –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The Rambling Avengers

Craig Calvert: – sound crew or the production crew that Connie talks about, they, uh, they had a band and there was, the Hindenburg movie had just come out, and, uh, there was always these terrible movies about the time that, there was the one about the fire in the *Towering Inferno* and we had one of these –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Disaster –

Craig Calvert: – disaster –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – movies.

Craig Calvert: – movies, thank you. And so the Hindenburg was a, you know, in that line, and so St. Elmo's Fire, the, the effect, the electronic effect or electrical effect that happened, happened on the Hindenburg, and so Art decided that they should call their band St. Elmo's Fire, and they would play after we were finished with gigs, we'd have a packed house and people wouldn't leave and they'd get on stage, and the people would leave –

Keith Grimwood: They –

Craig Calvert: – but –

Keith Grimwood: – were terrible. Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – you know –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: They did –

Craig Calvert: – but –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – one song or maybe two.

Craig Calvert: – but they, uh –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It was awesome.

Craig Calvert: – they called themselves St. Elmo's Fire and we stole it from them.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: So we stole the name from our roadies and our technicians.

Keith Grimwood: You know, I did not know that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, now, you know.

Keith Grimwood: I didn't know that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The truth will set you free –

Norie Guthrie: 'Cause –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Keith.

Keith Grimwood: Right.

Norie Guthrie: – I thought there was a, there was a Liberty Hall show where you were asking for a suggestion.

Craig Calvert: Yes.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Craig Calvert: Name –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yes.

Craig Calvert: – change cards.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Name –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – change cards.

Craig Calvert: How embarrassing.

Ezra Idlet: We were looking for it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: We were –

Ezra Idlet: Couldn't come up with it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah

Ezra Idlet: Really terrible. Unique Invisibles was, was one of the names suggested.

Craig Calvert: I suggested it.

Ezra Idlet: And it, it came from like a, a, a zipper or something. It was some sort of zipper or maybe it was pantyhose or something like that.

Craig Calvert: I think it was pantyhose.

Ezra Idlet: I, I –

Craig Calvert: It was a sign. I found it. It was laying on the ground. That's it, it's a sign.

Ezra Idlet: Literally.

Keith Grimwood: But that, it wasn't 'til after the name change that I played any shows with the band. So you got to do it. I am the new guy that was in 1976 is when I first played, playing with St. Elmo's Fire, and I played my first Wheatfield show in 2005. These guys got together for a reunion tour in 2004, and after listening to each other play for a few nights, they realized how badly they needed a bass player.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: So they asked me to come along on the next tour, so I went along on the next tour, so I've been in Wheatfield only since 2005. I may be the oldest, but I'm the –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: – newest.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: The newest member of the band.

Keith Grimwood: That's right, so just so we're straight on that.

Ezra Idlet: So on –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Chronological humor.

Ezra Idlet: In that time period, we were watching a decline in Wheatfield. We were watching crowds disappear, places that we would normally pack. We'd go to Austin and we'd see, we'd pack this place, uh, it was on Fourth Street. It was call,

Craig Calvert: Alliance Wagon Yard –

Ezra Idlet: – No it was nearer to –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: No guarantee.

Ezra Idlet: – Boondocks –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Boondocks.

Craig Calvert: The Boondocks.

Ezra Idlet: And, uh, I'm watching crowds disappear and it, no opening act is helping us and is buying, and there's a lot of internal tension, a lot of internal strife going on in the band, and, uh, it's right before Beaver Bob left. He finally left. We scouted around for, uh, another bass player. A couple said, including Chris Hillman, um, played with The Byrds, he set in for one night at Armadillo World Headquarters. It's, it's diving. We're taking a nosedive for, for audiences. It's just there's not a lot of unity. Keith joined the band right then in that nosedive, and all of a sudden, we could do anything. There was a member on stage that could play solos on his bass better than either Craig or I could play solos on our guitars. He, he was from the symphony. He had symphony credibility. He sang like a rocker and he could harmonize. He, he, he occupied that space in a way that had never been occupied, and we developed a confidence in our ability to do anything. You can't throw anything in front of us that we can't cover and make it happen. The band just, just all of a sudden, just like putting air in a, a, or in a balloon, helium in a balloon. He just, he just rose back up again 'cause we had this strength and this belief in ourselves. Uh, Keith went from playing in a tuxedo at Jones Hall to, uh, wearing jeans and whatever the hell kind of shirt he put on and barefoot, and he had hair –

Keith Grimwood: I gave it up.

Ezra Idlet: – that was out like this –

Craig Calvert: Bright red.

Keith Grimwood: – and he was called the dancing shrub.

Keith Grimwood: And in one article called it referred to me as the dancing shrub.

Craig Calvert: I forgot about that.

Keith Grimwood: Yep.

Ezra Idlet: There was a lift in confidence and Keith liked to write. We all liked to write. The music just elevated. All of a sudden, what was passé and what was becoming passé, became brand new. Old songs were given new life, new songs elevated and, and the band took a real heavy turn up at that point.

Keith Grimwood: I mean, if you imagine with me, I mean, I'm just the, the liberation of all those years of studying and practicing and all that stuff, and going in one direction. I was married at the time. Uh, my marriage was falling apart. I mean we were living separately and I'm trying to figure out how to live back together again, and it was, you know, it wasn't going real well. Suddenly, I'm playing bass with my favorite band in the world, and lit, getting to listen to them and write songs with them and get through the – man, I, I just, I gave it all up. People don't quit the symphony. They don't just walk away. You work your life to get a job like that. You stay

there. You stay there your whole life. I love that stuff. I love playing in the orchestra, but this is what I'm supposed to be doing, so I just took off with these guys and joined the circus.

Ezra Idlet: It, it, when it, and at that same time too, our manager, Bob Burton, was finding strength and independence in his, in, uh, occ, occupation in the managerial stage, and so we're starting to spread out. We're going to California. We're going to –

Keith Grimwood: – Colorado

Ezra Idlet: – and Colorado, we're going all over the country now. We're starting to get, become national. Think of ourselves as national and being able to, to be up there with those national bands believing in ourselves that way. Uh, we, we go in recording studios that are better than the recording studios we had ever been into before. We went to Robin Hood Brian Studios in Tyler, Texas, which is where they recorded “Judy in Disguise,” it's where they recorded ZZ Top, and we're playing in the same studio, and we're being given the same kind of credibility, and things are happening. They're moving, and there was just great reinfusion of energy at that point.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: Radio stations kept taking us seriously and we kept packing places, so it was nice –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – to feel that.

Keith Grimwood: It was a good ride for a while and then it all fell apart.

Craig Calvert: Shhh, don't skip to the end.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Don't skip to the end.

Norie Guthrie: But before, before it falls apart.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Oh, it's not finished it, it fits back together.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It fits back together.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah, yes, it does.

Keith Grimwood: It fits back together.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, it's a happy ending and –

Norie Guthrie: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – still being in a –

Keith Grimwood: And then, and then –

Keith Grimwood, Connie Mims Pinkerton: – it'll fall apart.

Norie Guthrie: What's the, um, what's the story behind *Rasputin*, the second ballet?

Ezra Idlet: It is the story of the transition from the tsar of Russia to, uh, communist Russia in a time period when, um, a crazy monk who, um, had powers over a hemophiliac child, uh, came and took over, uh, a whole group of, of monarchy and maybe perverted it a little bit and it, and through the distraction, allowed for change. It was the story of that monk, his power over the tsars. It was a dance.

Keith Grimwood: I thought she was asking about the story of how we got to write about it.

Ezra Idlet: Oh, oh, I was talking about Rasputin.

Keith Grimwood: That story, she probably knows about Rasputin.

Ezra Idlet: Oh, I'll back up. Somebody else take over.

Keith Grimwood: Take over.

Craig Calvert: No, I was fascinated by –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I was –

Craig Calvert: – that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – fascinated by that.

Keith Grimwood: We didn't read that book, Craig read *The Tempest* but we didn't read that book.

Ezra Idlet: Nicholas and Alexander.

Craig Calvert: Was it.

Keith Grimwood: What happened?

Ezra Idlet: So anyway.

Craig Calvert: But just this, and while you were talking there, you, I, this thought came in my mind. James Clouser was the artistic director for the Houston Ballet, but he was a square peg in a round hole –

Keith Grimwood: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: – over there. I mean he was a free thinker and, you know, Houston Ballet was trying to, to become, you know, a power house, you know, like the Bolshoi or, or just, you know, like a really respected, uh, ballet company and he was interested in doing avant-garde and, and trying different things instead of doing *Swan Lake* and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: *Nut* –

Craig Calvert: – and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – *cracker*.

Craig Calvert: – yeah, *Nutcracker*, exactly. And so I just thought about the correlation between, uh, him being Rasputin and the, uh, and then the Houston Ballet being the oligarchy here or the monarchs, you know, and this was his way, because he had just, uh, formed, he was fired and Ben Stevenson was brought in who was a pillar here for, what –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Years.

Craig Calvert: – 20 –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – probably 25 years and that's who he, but he just filled that spot for 1 year, so he started, uh, his own company called Space Dance Theater, and that's who we were working with when we did *Rasputin*.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: In conjunction with U of H –

Keith Grimwood: But look how –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Clearlake.

Keith Grimwood: – but look how far he –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Right.

Keith Grimwood: – took that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: Look how far he, okay, James Clouser took that, we did University of Houston in Clearlake. We also played some stuff at Miller Outdoor Theater with that, also played Fort –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Fort Worth –

Keith Grimwood: – Worth Ballet –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Ballet.

Keith Grimwood: – with Erik Bruhn dancing the lead.

Craig Calvert: Who was the Nureyev before Nureyev –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: – Erik Bruhn.

Keith Grimwood: Excuse me, how far had, did, did he manage to take that –

Craig Calvert: And, and we met Anastasia.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: And Ezra, at the big party afterwards, got into the vodka. He didn't drink it so much as he baptized people with vodka, that he had that Stolichnaya vodka.

Ezra Idlet: It was illegal at that point in time to have Russian vodka. It was illegal and, and the people at Tanny Corp, had this whole, uh –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Caviar war.

Ezra Idlet: – what do you call the top of a, of a, a penthouse.

Keith Grimwood: Man.

Ezra Idlet: Had a big penthouse and, um, we were drinking, uh, Sto, Stoli out of a, um, ice sculptures. They had giant salmon and they had Chicken Kiev. It was like, they were giving away at this party, uh, Fabergé eggs as door prizes. There was more money in this party I could even imagine and I was baptized, and I had had my own bottle of Stoli and I was baptizing people and with Stoli as they came in, you know, patrons and, um, that was great. But yeah, he took it, he took it really far.

Keith Grimwood: I mean think about that how far he, how far he managed to get away from the Houston Ballet, out of the sanctioned, all that, and take a group called Space Dance Theater, put it together with a band and do all this stuff with it and take it all over. That's amazing.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: That's amazing stuff.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Very cool.

Keith Grimwood: Very heavy.

Ezra Idlet: Because he thought, it could be done. It could be done. It, the possibilities were endless.

Keith Grimwood: That's his ideas too.

Ezra Idlet: If somebody can do it, we can do it. I know that. Now, as I get older, it's a little bit harder to believe all of that, but no, if somebody could do it, it should be able to be done. We, we're smart, we're creative, we're resourceful –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – individuals. You know, and as a group, man, we're so much bigger than any individual one of us. That was, that was always the truth too.

Keith Grimwood: Just like The Beatles. Well –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Not just like The Beatles.

Keith Grimwood: – not just like them, not just, make the, a little bit different.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Paul is dead.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Um –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I am the Walrus.

Norie Guthrie: – you were, kind of touched on this a bit, so post *Rasputin*, in that time of like '78 to '79, what were your gigs like at the time? They still kind of like –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: – you guys are still riding high.

Craig Calvert: We, it was leveling off. Uh, there was tensions in the band. Uh, and, um, we weren't writing as much as we were before. Am I skipping too far ahead?

Keith Grimwood: Can I just go –

Craig Calvert: Sure.

Keith Grimwood: – go on the defensive here.

Craig Calvert: Yeah, all right.

Keith Grimwood: The world was not particularly conducive to a rock and roll band at that point. I'm sure some did pretty good, but the price of gas was going through the roof. Uh, disco was very, very popular.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: People –

Craig Calvert: Hmm.

Keith Grimwood: – didn't go to places to look at the band on the stage, the band was the show. No, they went and they were the show, the dancing –

Craig Calvert: Hmm.

Keith Grimwood: – was the show to me. Music styles were changing.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: By '79, you're looking at a band that's acting like they're playing the late 60s, early 70s and it still has all that same kind of beauty and –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Art.

Keith Grimwood: – this art and nostalgia to it and all that. But we're talking '79. We're moving into the 80s here. Something's got to give, so there's tension in the band. What do we do now? What do we do next? And things weren't, we were coming up with different ideas. Ideas that one would come up with wouldn't fit perfectly with somebody else.

Craig Calvert: And then there was that all-mighty record deal that we had bought into –

Keith Grimwood: Uh huh.

Craig Calvert: – hook, line and sinker, which was an illusion. If we had put out an album in the mid 70s, it would have sold just fine. Maybe not millions, but it would have allowed us to have growth and it would have given us that experience and we would have seen – oh, well now, we need to create another album. You, you know, you're only as good as your latest effort. But we stubbornly held out and it was all of us. It was all of us. Um, but we were getting offers in the

meantime. Bill Ham, who had ZZ Top, was trying to wrestle the, a, wrestle us over to his management company, Lone Wolf. Um, so, Heart, their record label, uh, contacted us offering us a deal. They were a small label. Not big enough for us. We wanted a Columbia or a Sony or a maybe that's the same thing, RCA or, you know, something that would really say we're here, you know, and, and we were, it, and it was being fee, spoon fed to us through *Billboard Magazine* and through all of the rags at the time, the *Rolling Stone*. I mean this is how you were, we couldn't get on, we tried, we were trying to get on, uh, late night shows. They wouldn't let us on 'cause we didn't have an album. And we were, couldn't get on, uh, *Saturday Night Live*. We, we go the rejection. Well, you have the rejection letters now. But we got rejection letters from so many different places because we had not recorded. And so it was this real catch 22 thing, and then these, we would get interviewed and the interviews would be about us not having an album, and so it just became this albatross.

Ezra Idlet: If you define your success or failure by whether or not you are signed by a major record label and you're not getting signed, it is terri-, it is terrible. You feel horrible about yourself. No matter what you do, you're not being signed, so you feel like this is failing. Why is it failing? Well, if that guy just played better guitar or she'd, she'd, she wrote better songs or if, you know, if, if, uh, whatever. You know, you, it's easy to, to feel like you're being held back or something is not working right. That is, that was sort of a big mistake. I think, ultimately, um, what we've done since then is found that we really love playing music, and recording records is not that big of a deal. It can be done and that's a whole 'nother conversation, but when you define yourself as I like what I do, I like what I write, this is, this is what I do, this is what I like.

Craig Calvert: I'm good at this.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: You're a whole lot happier and you're not –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: I think you have also, you know, uh, looking at it at a, as, as a, as a family module, um, again, 18, 19, when we got together and that was really the nucleus of a family that was starting, and not, we didn't look at it as a business model. Business model came later when the machine is already up and running, so when the machine is up and running and you have all these people and now, their spouses, um, coming into play, all are banking on the brass ring, like everybody is invested, like I'm sticking with this band because they're, they're about to hit, they're about to make it, and it was, it, that was the thing, it was so much of it was so carrot on the stick. So you can't, you can't help but go internal and start imploding, uh, because, uh, people get impatient and by this time, I was 24 years old, and, um, I was tired. I, I, you know, it was like I've done this for 6 years and yes, I've gotten all, all of these places, I've written all this stuff, it was great, but there was this kind of just I'm really done. I'm really done with all of this drama. I wish it didn't have to be this dramatic. I really love these guys. I really love what I'm doing, but I'm just, I'm tired of chasing the brass ring. And, um, so when, when Craig left, that started the, you know, the concussion that went down that line and, uh, and, you know,

when one of the, when a founding member leaves, then it's like okay, something, something's happening here, so.

Keith Grimwood: We got Mike Sluncka in to play at that point, playing –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: – guitar. Mike's a great guitar player.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Great guitar.

Keith Grimwood: Great guitar player. We added a really cool sound, but things were still falling apart. Um, the chasing the record, I think you're right. I think that was a big deal. Ezra and I, our response to it, when the band broke up in, uh, '79, Ezra and I continued on as just the two of us as Trout Fishing doing these shows. The first thing we did, because of him, if it can be done, we can do it. Let's go record a record. How hard could it be? So within a year of St. Elmo's breaking up, we're selling records from the stage. One year, we're selling an album from the stage. We have no idea what we're doing. No idea, but it got recorded, we printed up 2,000 of 'em and then so we sold about 1,900 of 'em. And that financed the next one.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hmm.

Keith Grimwood: And that financed the next one and that, and that's how things kind of got rolling, but that was our whole attitude was St. Elmo's ended that being without the record deal. It didn't start out that way, but it sure ended up that way.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: So –

Craig Calvert: We weren't –

Keith Grimwood: – let's go do something –

Craig Calvert: – we weren't –

Keith Grimwood: – else.

Craig Calvert: – the only band that, that believed this.

Keith Grimwood: Oh no.

Ezra Idlet: Right.

Craig Calvert: We weren't, you know. There were, there were other bands. There's other stories I've heard. There was like a, I can't recall their name. It was a country band, and they were packing houses, and they were putting out their own albums and selling 10,000 albums.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: But they still thought that they had to have that record deal. They went and had the rec, did the record deal, got signed. It turned out it was all a bunch of lies and that they were gonna have to pay everything back, and it broke 'em up.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: Mm hmm.

Craig Calvert: Broke 'em up. But, you know, if, if you're, if you're hinging everything on that, then other things that are good that are happening around you are just dwarfed. I mean we were still, you know, we did a show with Not Ready for Prime Time Players, you know, the, the original *Saturday Night Live* cast while we were imploding. Um, there was still good things that were happening to us, it was just that we –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Fast moving comet taking stars with him.

Craig Calvert: – but –

Keith Grimwood: Yes –

Craig Calvert: – then –

Keith Grimwood: – it is.

Craig Calvert: – we just, we couldn't enjoy it anymore. It's or I, excuse me, myself, I didn't.

Keith Grimwood: I was having a great time.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Drama. Love it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Nah, nah.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so what did you guys all do post Wheatfield? Can you talk each about it, I guess, you guys kind of formed a group, but –

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: – kind of everybody kind of talking about what happened before you decided to come back together.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Hmm.

Craig Calvert: Uh, I teamed up with our favorite opening act, Vince Bell. We formed Calvert Bell and, uh, I think that lasted about a year. Um, he was used to being a solo artist and I was used to being in a band, um, so we were having trouble making it all fit. Um, we did write a ballet, though, another one for Jim Clouser, and, uh, performed at Miller Outdoor Theater. And then, I went on to get in a band called CPR that was a swing band. We played old 30s and 40s swing songs that were real fast and a lot of chords, so that was a really good learning experience for me. Uh, then I put out an album called *The Sweaters*, which I co-wrote with a guy named Tim Hailey. Uh, we wrote 50 songs in a year and we picked what we thought were the best ones and put out an album. It's a pop album. Put it out about '85, and, I was given free reign with it so we could hire whoever we wanted to play on it, so I just got favorite players, singers, uh, that were handy and put that out on a record label that went under as soon as it came out. And then, uh, by that time, my wife was pregnant with our daughter and I was offered a gig at a place called Anchovies on 6th Street in Austin, and it was a club that was owned by some luminaries including, uh, Ben Crenshaw and some other well-known people that live in the Austin area and they said if you'll play 60s and '70 cover music, you can play Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night every week, and I said phew, this is great. You know, I really didn't care about it, because I had Thursday, Friday and Saturday open, and I could do my own thing, and that's what I was really concentrating on was my music. Well, it just took off and we were on the crest of a wave and it eventually took us from coast to coast, over to Europe, down to Mexico, traveled a lot, and, uh, that was kind of my business education too in the music business 'cause I was dealing with, we were playing for Fortune 500 companies and I was dealing with CEOs, you know, that make deals every day and I read books to try to be on a level playing field with them, and it was a great learning experience too, but my original music became smaller. I was still writing, but I was not performing it. And then, when I found these tapes in my parents' home, um, and we found the only tape player in Houston that could play them to digitize them, um, I contacted Connie and I said we should put this out. And we contacted Ezra and the three of us were on the same page about it, 'cause it was early, early stuff before Keith was in the band that we were gonna be releasing. And it turns out, there wasn't enough on there and, um, so I went to *Austin City Limits* and got permission to use some of the tracks from that recording. And we put that out and that's what started this new incarnation of Wheatfield.

Ezra Idlet: And I felt like if we were gonna do that, that we needed to tour it in order to sell it. If we just put out an album and said here's Wheatfield, it wouldn't do anything, and so we needed to tour it and we got together as a, as a trio and worked on it, and just really found out, remember how much we like each other, liked playing –

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – and, and also realized, at that point, how much we needed a bass player to, to really make that sound right.

Craig Calvert: Actually, it was kind of a hard sell for me. So had, what did you do after?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: What'd I do?

Keith Grimwood: Yeah, what did you do?

Craig Calvert: What did you do?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Their story is still ongoing, so. All our stories are ongoing.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Um, so the band broke up in '79 and, uh, our manager and his wife moved out to Los Angeles, and, um, so I would go back and forth from Los Angeles for a few weeks at a time and work, work temp jobs there and play in, in clubs and college coffeehouses and things, all in an effort of trying to get a record deal as a singer songwriter, and so, um, Bob had, uh, developed his relationships with all these labels to this point that they would accept demos and to listen to, and so he had developed a really good relationship with the people at Asylum Records and, um, so, uh, he was able to, uh, get me in the studio with Joni Mitchell's producer, Henry Louie, and a wonderful, uh, arranger, Jeremy Lubbock, um, and some fantastic studio musicians, who might, I had never played with another drummer or bass player or anybody. I had never played with other people on recordings, so it was a very interesting experience for me. So I did a five-song demo and presented it to Asylum, and they decided they were gonna pass on that. They were going more towards bands, so I continued to write and I'd record three or four songs, 'cause I really wanted to be, to sell my songs and not so much concentrate on the artist type of track. And, uh, so in the interim, I, I got married and, um, wanted a little bit of normalcy in my life, and, uh, so when, when I, when I got pregnant with my first child, I realized that, you know, performing was gonna be hard for me, and I was just doing solo things here and there. Um, so I, I went into this, I got the opportunity to go into the studio and learn, learn how to be a, a, a vocalist, and we're, and recording your vocals is different than live vocals. So it was a whole new thing. I learned to read charts, I learned to read sheet music and I got to do a lot of, uh, jingles for the radio. I did a lot of vocal impersonations for the Q Zoo radio network and, um, I got, I was in a Bluebell Ice Cream commercial and did a lot of fun things, um, on the recording end of it. And, uh, then at, I started singing in cover bands, much like the bands that, that Keith cut his teeth on, um, and learning how to sing, you know, everything from, uh, Patsy Cline to Madonna and to Aretha Franklin, um, stretched me vocally. And, uh, and I performed with Craig's Hotcakes band, uh, uh, a few times and performed with these guys. They were, they were getting, uh, a lot, very popular by then and they, they would do some shows sometimes and I would come in and do a number or two. And, um, then I had my own band and, and was in different bands and, uh, really didn't write that much. Uh, I, I was really learning the business side of it, and, uh, the, the technical side of it. So I, I, uh, went into a, a entertainment agency with two other women and I started, um, uh, working with, uh, festival production companies in town, because I, I knew, I knew what kind of sound systems should be on what size stage, for what kind of act and this act would work good with this radio station, so I kind of created this hybrid of a, of multiple stage format for festival programming. I really

enjoyed doing festival, uh, stuff. And, and so during the recording stuff, I got involved with the recording academy, which meant I'd, I, uh, got on the board of the recording academy which met in Austin, so that's when Craig and I really started talking more about well, Wheatfield, that could be a reality. I found some tapes, you know, so that was around 2002, 2003.

Craig Calvert: Yeah, we both sat on the board of that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah, but Wheatfield, Saint Elmo's Fire did a couple of reunion shows.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: Mm hmm. '87 was one.

Craig Calvert: At, uh –

Keith Grimwood: Uh –

Craig Calvert: – Fitzgerald's.

Keith Grimwood: At Fitzgerald's.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: And, uh –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: And then one at –

Keith Grimwood: Rockefeller's –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Rockefeller's.

Keith Grimwood: – too.

Craig Calvert: And I just brought something to Norie, all of my notes about the, uh, letter that I sent you guys saying that we should do the Rockefeller show 'cause it would class things up a bit and –

Keith Grimwood: Oh, cool.

Craig Calvert: – and all the breakdown of what we spent on what.

Ezra Idlet: Interesting.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: So that, so here I am now, back in the band and, uh, writing, writing a whole lot. I spent some time in Nashville and, uh –

Keith Grimwood: I'll bring up, let me add this about Connie 'cause she's not saying it herself. She originally wrote her own songs and just stayed with her own songs and didn't co-write very much. She's gone a different direction these days. She's done the Nashville thing where you get with people and write and co-write, and she's really good at it. Really good at analyzing things and going right to the point of what do we need here, that doesn't work, and letting it fall on, you know, being pretty, pretty ruthless.

Ezra Idlet: And –

Keith Grimwood: It's good.

Ezra Idlet: – helping develop young songwriters –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Yes.

Ezra Idlet: She's been real instrumental in that and wherever she is, and she's, she's tried to start a songwriting groups, uh, and, and then bring young songwriters up and, and sort of pass that knowledge on to young people, so she's been doing that too.

Keith Grimwood: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: That's where my heart is, is to encourage others in their creative path, so, um, and I've broadened that, just not from songwriting but just creativity, 'cause people and, um, I'm on the Board of Young Audiences Northeast Texas and trying to bring arts into, integration into school curriculum, and, uh, it's a fight these days to keep arts in, in the schools, and I'm very passionate about that, so that's where my energies are right now. And then there's Trout Fishing. We could be here for a few days.

Keith Grimwood: Well yeah, we can't talk as, we'll just talk as one person.

Ezra Idlet: We'll talk as one.

Keith Grimwood: Why don't you talk and I'll throw numbers, okay.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: One person.

Craig Calvert: It's like, it's almost like they're married.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: It's almost like you're married.

Ezra Idlet: St. Elmo's broke up. Keith and I were roommates at the time, and we decided that since we had done jobs as Trout Fishing in America, we opened for St. Elmo's Fire as a duo. Um, we had played jobs, uh, Trout Fishing in America. We would continue doing that. Went back to steakhouses, Steak and Ale, The Railhead, around to places that still had live music and

paid enough money to get by and to make, to make rent. We had a little bit of debt, you know, when we were, we were done with, with St. Elmo's, we wanted to pay our bills, so we started working these standing gigs, uh, 4 hours a night.

Keith Grimwood: Five hours, five hours.

Ezra Idlet: Five hours yeah, five nights a week. And, um, we, we would rehearse during the day and we would play during the night, and we made money, and we had a great time, and it was a specific reaction to St. Elmo's in that we learned just cover songs. We –

Keith Grimwood: But –

Ezra Idlet: – got to learn –

Keith Grimwood: – we –

Ezra Idlet: – an original –

Keith Grimwood: – we –

Ezra Idlet: – song at all.

Keith Grimwood: – refused to write a song –

Ezra Idlet: We were –

Keith Grimwood: – for –

Ezra Idlet: – Refused.

Keith Grimwood: – a year, we did not write a single song. No way and we recorded and we put out an album right away. We did everything backwards.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: And on purpose. We had –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Rebels –

Ezra Idlet: – one of our other jobs. I remember this. We were in, uh, cel, celebrating the, the, uh, the arrival of the 1980 Ford pickup –

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: – truck line –

Keith Grimwood: Mm hmm.

Ezra Idlet: – at some Ford –

Keith Grimwood: A. C. Collins.

Ezra Idlet: – A. C. Collins Ford over on South Richey Road.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Ezra Idlet: And in order to celebrate that, they backed up two pickups back to back, tailgate to tailgate. We put our, um, PA on the front hoods of the, of the cars and stood, each one of us, in a, um, the bed of the pickup truck playing to South Richey Road cars just zooming by, nothing. The, the salesmen were in the, uh, uh, the, the, the showroom, which is air conditioned, sucking down helium balloons and coming out and requesting, play –

Keith Grimwood: Play –

Ezra Idlet: – “The Gambler.”

Keith Grimwood: – “The Gambler.”

Ezra Idlet: Kenny Rogers. We don't know that song and there was a couple kids with ice cream cones on bicycles pulled up, they wanted to hear Kiss. You all know any Kiss.

Keith Grimwood: Okay, this is gonna take a while if you got get through all of this.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Move along.

Keith Grimwood: This is the bad gigs.

Craig Calvert: That's hell what you're –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: That's hell.

Craig Calvert: – describing.

Ezra Idlet: It is, it is.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: That's hell.

Ezra Idlet: But we went through it paid money.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: That's a good down ****, yeah.

Ezra Idlet: We paid, yes.

Keith Grimwood: We became really blue-collar working class musicians in the trenches. That's exactly who we became, but we met other people and we kept, we found a place called The Rising Star. I don't know if the rising stars shown up on anybody's radar, definitely a place to check out. It was –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: In –

Keith Grimwood: – in –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – the –

Keith Grimwood: – the –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – Heights.

Keith Grimwood: – Heights. It was a bar over near where we lived. It opened up and Ezra and I were doing five, six nights a week somewhere else, but we always come by this bar. It's like two or three blocks from the house, you know. We could go and drink here and crawl home. It would be great, you know. So we started going in there, and it was a great little place, but they had nobody there, so we offered to start playing there on Sunday nights, and we put together The Rising Stars softball team.

Ezra Idlet: For free. That's –

Keith Grimwood: We played –

Ezra Idlet: – we told 'em we'd play it, but we'd play it for free. They couldn't pay us any money.

Keith Grimwood: You could not pay us any money, because if you paid us, we would have to do it. This is just 'cause we wanted to show up, and we had advertising but we played for free all the time there. We made our money elsewhere but we could get people to come sit in and then Connie would come over and different things. We could, we did all kind of stuff like that. Then we played, uh, there was a teacher that asked us to come play music for kids.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah, her name is Patsy Harris at the time, no, it was Patsy Lester at the time. She's been married many times.

Keith Grimwood: Many times.

Ezra Idlet: Rice, Marks, all over her face.

Keith Grimwood: She's been married several times, but great. She is a music teacher. She asked us to come play for her kids. This is back in St. Elmo's Fire days, '78 or '77 even. She's a music teacher. We thought hey, great idea. She wanted her kids to see that music came from people, not from the radio, not just from the TV and stuff like that. We didn't know any kids' songs. We

went in with the instruments. We played Beatles. We played Beatles songs. We played, uh, blues songs. We played folk music, and it was fun. So then –

Ezra Idlet: They kind of started the kids branch of our, of our –

Keith Grimwood: Then we –

Ezra Idlet: – program.

Keith Grimwood: – started having kids and then writing, you write what you know, we started having kids, started writing kids, that kid thing took off on us. It –

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: – really took off –

Ezra Idlet: But, but –

Keith Grimwood: – we got four Grammy nominations for kids albums, zero for four, never won anything. Well, we did win. I, back in the day, in the 80s, they did, uh, no it was the 90s, wasn't it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: *Parents* magazine.

Ezra Idlet: I don't know what you're talking about.

Keith Grimwood: 90, oh, okay, they did a thing called Indies.

Ezra Idlet: Oh.

Keith Grimwood: Indies were like, the majors had the –

Ezra Idlet: The Grammys.

Keith Grimwood: – Grammys, then they have their independent releases. We won, uh, in 1982 for best, uh, independent, uh, pop album of the year, and we did, I think in '83 and '80 something, I believe, for kids' albums there too.

Ezra Idlet: Before that, though, um, we rented the Alley Theater for one night –

Keith Grimwood: Yes.

Ezra Idlet: – and this is before, I think before records even, we rented the Alley Theater and, uh, put together an evening's worth of entertainment. The first half of the entertainment was, uh, um, a play that we made up about our career up to that point, and, uh –

Keith Grimwood: Going to show business school getting kicked out by Connie.

Ezra Idlet: And then we, um, and then the second half was a, a, a concert portion of the program, and, uh, it involved a lot of people some simply musicians, some horn players from the area, Connie was involved. My friend, Rick Gordon, was involved. Uh, Chris Hirsch, the banjo player, was involved.

Keith Grimwood: Had the bassoon section in the symphony. All, with the whole –

Ezra Idlet: So we, we had a lot of people involved. I figure 26 people, I think, we, we involved, uh, in one way or another.

Keith Grimwood: 16.

Ezra Idlet: How many?

Keith Grimwood: 16.

Ezra Idlet: 16 people, I knew that. Anyway, at the end of the night, when we got done, I think we'd lost, what, \$5.00?

Keith Grimwood: \$5.00.

Ezra Idlet: That's all and we, we, for the amount we paid and paid all the musicians, it, we, we lost \$5.00. That's –

Keith Grimwood: \$5.00.

Ezra Idlet: – all we lost.

Keith Grimwood: It's, the thing is called “It'll Never Work,” and, uh, it was written up all in the papers and stuff and it was well received, and never worked again.

Ezra Idlet: We had gold lame jumpsuits.

Keith Grimwood: Yes.

Ezra Idlet: Skin tight gold lame jumpsuits. That were, I, I, I may still have the tattered remains of one, that was mine.

Keith Grimwood: We looked like sausages. It was a

Ezra Idlet: It was a, it was –

Keith Grimwood: – awful.

Ezra Idlet: – embarrassing.

Keith Grimwood: It was horrible.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Things you can't un-see.

Ezra Idlet: But it was on purpose. We did that –

Keith Grimwood: It was –

Ezra Idlet: – on purpose.

Keith Grimwood: – a, it was, it was a skit and they were basically a bunch of skits, you know, showing music and music problems that you would have in the business. It just ended up as a concert and it was a lot of fun.

Ezra Idlet: So, I guess, a lot of our, our, our post St. Elmo's was sort of reactionary, silly in a lot of ways. We, we'd include a lot of humor in our programs both for kids and adults. Um, have still remained as interested in the music and the integrity of the music as we ever were. Um, we're a little bit lighter attitude for a while and then we got a manager and things got really intensely serious, again. You know, we weren't chasing. Yeah, we owned our own record label but it got serious again and now, here we are.

Keith Grimwood: But –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Now, you're a Trout Fishing machine.

Keith Grimwood: Trout Fishing in America has done well. We're doing fine. We're doing all that stuff, but this Wheatfield thing, I want to point out that there's another thing. We all had kids. The kids all graduated or they're, they all grew up, at least, and they left. And right at that point, there was a lot more freedom when the kids are gone. It's not that they're not causing trouble constantly in our lives, because they are constantly, but we love them dearly, but they're not there every day. So we can do other things.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: And I, I noticed that when the kids were graduating, that's when Craig started, you know, Craig and Ezra's daughter are back, are almost the same age, I think –

Craig Calvert: Real –

Keith Grimwood: – exactly.

Craig Calvert: – close.

Keith Grimwood: Real close, so the, the girls are gone for a while and next thing I know, they're wanting to do stuff together, and it makes perfect sense. We've come to a time in our lives that we can –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Do whatever we want.

Keith Grimwood: – but the perspective has changed. I go back to this. When we were young, these guys are great writers. They're great singers, great writers. Some of 'em are learning to play too.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: You know, but, but we've heard about a coming of age experience and it was great. Those were good songs and, and it was a lot of fun, and they're alive and electric. It's different now. We can't stand on stage and sing songs like it feels like the first time. You know, we can't be that coming of age anymore. It's –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Retrospect.

Keith Grimwood: – retrospected and yet, looking ahead still, like what do we do now.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: What do we do next, and when we got together with Wheatfield again, one of the, I, I love playing the old songs. I'm, I'm really, this is my favorite band. I love this band. I love those old songs. I love 'em dearly. Um, the band cannot be a museum piece. If we're gonna play together, if it's a museum piece, it has a certain life and it dies, goodbye. I still like writing songs with these guys. These guys are great writers, so let's grow. So we started writing and we'd get together and lock in and write, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, it doesn't matter. It's the actual getting to do it. You got to write the bad ones to get to the good ones and all that.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. And there's –

Keith Grimwood: But –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – a, there's a relaxed intensity that's going on, like we know that we have probably enough songs to do our next recording. We've done some basic tracks on things and, but we also don't have this hardened pressed deadline, and, uh, we go out once a year and, and, and tour usual spots. We don't really go get that adventurous anymore. We, we really just come together to, to, for some quality time with the, the people that get us that have been following us and, uh, we've gotten some new, new fans out of it. Um, and it, but it, but it, there's not this machine feel like we got to, we got to get this record done by this time or we've got to book this new place or whatever. There is, there is not that. There is just like when can everybody, 'cause we live in three different places, so it's, we, we have to like all come together

and when it makes sense for everybody and no one's pressed to be there. That's what makes it good and relaxed and fun. You want to have fun doing this, you know, so I'm having fun.

Ezra Idlet: There's a friendship that sort of, for me, is, is when the, the most overarching themes. There is this renewal of a friendship that dissipated for a while after we broke up, but has certainly renewed itself back together and it's a friendship based on who we are now, as well as the, we got the shared experiences that we came through as children, young people. Um, we've, we've all had children. We've all dealt with hardship. We've all made our way, you know, our individual ways, but we will find common interest and passion in what we do, and that friendship is maybe the most precious thing that we've got. And I love the music that we do, for a fact. It, it, it, it thrills me. It fills me up. But I think that friendship with, with all of us is just the most important thing that we've sustained through these years.

Craig Calvert: I agree.

Keith Grimwood: Well, it's not the money.

Ezra Idlet: They're not paying you that much. Craig and I make a lot of money.

Norie Guthrie: So what are your upcoming plans for the band?

Keith Grimwood: We had a tour planned. You see –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: A tour?

Keith Grimwood:– I knew it. I knew it. I told you I should have never sit over here without my calendar. I always got a calendar. It's in March.

Craig Calvert: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: It is in March. We have a date booked in Texas at a big dance hall, and Craig is gonna fill it up with stuff on either side. This is the man.

Craig Calvert: He's the man.

Keith Grimwood: This is the bus, the guy, all the things we've learned, Ezra and I managed not to learn it, a thing about business.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Right.

Keith Grimwood: Not a thing. We hired business people so we could know nothing. His, without his wife, we would not be here. This is true. But –

Craig Calvert: She's very –

Keith Grimwood: – if he had –

Craig Calvert: – very wise.

Keith Grimwood: – if he had to figure it out on his own, that's the business guy.

Craig Calvert: We're playing in, uh, Fayetteville. I'm not, which is –

Keith Grimwood: Texas.

Craig Calvert: – near, in between Columbus and La Grange. There is a family, the Hruskas, that there's a Hruskas –

Ezra Idlet: Barbecue?

Keith Grimwood: Barbecue.

Craig Calvert: No.

Keith Grimwood: Sausage.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Store, it's just –

Craig Calvert: I guess –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – a store.

Craig Calvert: – just a store, yeah, a big store. It's kind of a small Buc-ee's, and, um, they have a dance hall that they purchased and they fixed up, and they want to have us –

Keith Grimwood: Yes.

Craig Calvert: – be the opening first band that plays it. Um, so we're gonna do that and then we'll put other dates together around that. I'm not certain yet what. Uh, we, we hit the Mucky Duck a lot. Um, we have places in Austin that we play. Probably to keep it in the Texas area. Uh, but got another call for a place in Llano that wants us to be the first band to open up their dance hall in June.

Ezra Idlet: Nice.

Craig Calvert: So it's the first they're hearing of it.

Keith Grimwood: Let's do this. Let's do it.

Craig Calvert: Yeah. So, we're gonna do that.

Keith Grimwood: But when we say it, we put together the, the, he'll, we'll find an anchor date, like if you got the anchor, then I'll tell our agent, block out this and then we'll just sort of block it out and then Craig fills what he can, and then, we take a look at it and get together the week before maybe and do some rehearsing and hang out in Tyler at Connie's place. She's got a great place. We used to playing out in Arkansas but it keeps snowing too much.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah, that moving too. I'm, I'm building a studio in, in a house in Arkansas that'll be nice to record in. We got good songs towards an album. Don't have the whole album done.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: We've recorded 'em in, in Arkansas mostly, with the occasional part being recorded somewhere else and flown in to Arkansas, and Craig's been out several times and just helping put that stuff together. Um, but I think we, we would like to have another album out. Uh, I like the songs that we're doing.

Keith Grimwood: We'd sure like to play a couple for you.

Norie Guthrie: That would be awesome.

Keith Grimwood: Of the new ones?

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah, we could do that.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah.

[Wheatfield performance of "Some People"]

Some people got money
Some people got time
Anybody got both
Really hard to find

When I got time
I ain't got no money
When I got money
I ain't got time

I work hard for my dollar
(I work hard)
I work hard for my pay
(Work, work, work)
I work hard for my time at the end of the day
When I punch that clock

(Drive away)
When I drive away
It's my time and I'll spend it my way

Some people are lucky
Some people are lost
Some people keep trying
No matter the cost

When I'm feeling lucky
When I know where I stand
I grab the world
And hold it in my hands

I work hard for my dollar
(I work hard)
I work hard for my pay
(Work, work, work)
I work hard for my time at the end of the day
When I punch that clock
(Drive away)
When I drive away
It's my time and I'll spend it my way

If I had my way
I'd have lots of time
You could keep my pay
But in the mean time

Some people drink whiskey
Some people drink wine
Some people are sober
Some people get high

Well it ain't easy
Takes lots of time
But with a little money
We'll all get by

I work hard for my dollar
(I work hard)
I work hard for my pay
(Work, work, work)
I work hard for my time at the end of the day
When I punch that clock
(Drive away)

When I drive away
It's my time and I'll spend it my way

I work hard for my dollar
(I work hard)
I work hard for my pay
(Work, work, work)
I work hard for my time at the end of the day
When I punch that clock
(Drive away)
When I drive away
It's my time and I'll spend it my way

Like this

[Wheatfield performance of "Lori's Song"]

Well, it's early in the morning and the stars are in the sky
And I'm thinking about the girl that I left the other night
Moving down the road I watch the cars fly by
Like a newborn babe I cry

Lovers like no others we were always side by side
Walking through the park or hitching for a ride
And I still remember watching clouds build castles in the sky
As lasting as the breathing of a sigh

Songs were written long ago by patriotic men
(Ohhh, ohhh)
Well they passed them to their sons who sang them once and then again
(Ohhh, ohhh)
This song I'm writing you could never be passed down
This song's for you and me alone

Ohhhh, ohhhh

This song I'm writing you could never be passed down
This song's for you and me alone

Well, it's early in the morning and the stars are in the sky
And I'm thinking about the girl that I left the other night
Moving down the road I watch the cars fly by
Like a newborn babe I cry

Norie Guthrie: Um, looking back, kind of, what was it like being this kind of Americana band in Houston in the 70s?

Craig Calvert: I don't know. It was, we were, it's, it's hard to look back and, and, for me, um, it was moving so fast. Um, a lot of the memories that were shared today, uh, I don't really remember. Um, I think we all have our own memory of the times and some of it's shared and some of it's not. Uh, I think we, I keep saying heady, but that's what it was. I mean but we had no, there was nothing that we could compare it to. It was happening to us as we were living and the only thing we could compare it to was a national act or something we've read about. Um, we didn't know what the scenes were like at first in other cities. You know, it, for all we knew, it was just like this and we didn't know that this was a burgeoning movement or a, you know, a time that was musically so relevant, uh, for the area. We were just immersed in it.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Also, we were, um, just from my personal experience, we would be on the road and we, we'd come off the road, I just want to be at home and, um, I, so I wouldn't go and hang out and go hear the bands and all the, all the bands, uh, you know, that are in this folk music archive, a lot of these people and artists, I never met until after the band broke up, because I had, it, if, if they weren't the opening act or co-billing with us or in the same festival that we were playing or whatever, we would, I wouldn't see them. I didn't, I knew about Shake Russell. I knew, I knew about Townes Van Zandt, I knew about a lot of these people, but unless we were doing a show with them, um, I really didn't go and listen to them and hang out, so it, it was kind of like being in a, kind of in a, a little encapsulated, uh, thing about being, um, many of you guys went out a lot more and –

Ezra Idlet: And I think really we were all fairly encapsulated. I think that was, that was ****.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: So we were in our own little world and, um, and really just with blinders on just focused like that, and, uh, that's when I look back retrospectively.

Keith Grimwood: I was, um, I was, I came, you know, I, like I said, if these guys came from one place and I came from a little different spot, I was having a blast. I could not believe my joy at the time. It was, it was crazy. It was wild. I was free, uh. Like I say my marriage was breaking, my first marriage broke up and I was breaking up at home, so as far as getting off the road and going home, no, I didn't really want to go home. I wanted, I wanted to go out, you know, I mean, go out, hear some bands or do something. I don't know what, but, uh, I'd go out a lot, but at the same time, although I was having a wonderful time, creative outlet, loved these people and all this kind of stuff, there is always that sort of outsider feeling on the inside of I don't belong, and it has stayed with me a lot. I think it comes from, uh, traveling so much early on. You know, you're always the, the, on the outside looking in just slightly, and I don't mind it. I'm comfortable with it. But if they're, I remember being at the Kerrville Folk Festival. We were as Trout, uh, these guys played the Kerrville Folk Festival as Wheatfield, like in like 20 –

Ezra Idlet: '74?

Connie Mims Pinkerton: 1975.

Keith Grimwood: – 1530 –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: – or something like that but they, the, uh, 1588 along with the –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Magna Carta –

Keith Grimwood: – Spanish.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Mm hmm.

Keith Grimwood: Right, exactly. So but, but with me, I played there in '88. They asked us to come play as an opening act on the main stage. I'm going we don't play folk music. What, what are they talking about. I don't know what to do. But who's playing. Then he tells me all these people are playing. It's like wow, I've always wanted to hear them and they want us there for 3 days and I play 1 hour and then listen to everybody I always wanted to hear. Okay, I can do that but I'm not folk music. I don't know, and I remember staring around, walking around the campers feeling so out of place. I just, what am I doing here. What am I doing, I'm ****.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: You still do that.

Keith Grimwood: I still do that, you know, but it's, there's a, there's always that sort of feeling there of not being quite confident enough. These guys have more confidence. They can, I mean when they, we were up there at the, uh, Texas Opry House, I'm looking at 800 people and they're gonna clear the house and 800 more are gonna come in, and I see those candles on those tables, and I look and I see them and I say, you guys did this. This is amazing. This is truly amazing, and I'm blown away by it, and they're giving me a stage to play, I'll play. I love playing music. Do I belong? I don't know. I guess after, you know, 40 something years, maybe I do.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: Yeah. But –

Keith Grimwood: And –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we'll, we'll let your –

Keith Grimwood: – it's a –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – we'll let your, we'll let your people –

Keith Grimwood: – it's a –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – know.

Keith Grimwood: – it's a different way of coming to it. It just is. But I remember a lot of it and I had a great time.

Ezra Idlet: Mm hmm. It was my dream come true.

Norie Guthrie: Well, I want to thank you so much for coming in. Uh, this has been really great. Um, is there anything else that you guys would like to talk about?

Craig Calvert: Thanks for doing what you're doing.

Ezra Idlet: Yeah.

Keith Grimwood: Yeah.

Craig Calvert: It's really meaningful and it's gonna grow.

Keith Grimwood: I don't know why you're doing it.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: But now, you have a place –

Keith Grimwood: But –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – that –

Keith Grimwood: – I –

Connie Mims Pinkerton: – where you belong.

Ezra Idlet: To graze.

Keith Grimwood: – I –

Ezra Idlet: To graze.

Connie Mims Pinkerton: You're archived.

Keith Grimwood: – I really do like that you are doing it and I don't know why you would do this, but thank you.

Norie Guthrie: Thanks.

