

Pre-interview discussion:

Note: Leah, I didn't know whether this was important or not, but I typed what I could understand, anyway.

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Leah: We're just outside looking at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Lafferty. Richard's here in front of the house. Richard when did you build your house?

Richard Jr.: The house was built when we moved in, in '89.

- Discussion about crab apple trees.

That is an old mission trailer from Fort Providence and when the mission shut down, we dragged it back one year from Horn River. They used it out there for picking rocks and potatoes and we just turned it into a ?? Not the boy you knew. This is the second one.

Leah: Okay, the next generation. Beautiful. Can you tell us about your mom? What she does.

Richard Jr.: She's raised animals all her life, but that's just part of what she does. We kind of grew up??grandfather had everything, cows, goats, chickens. ?and once ? continued and started raising giant Alaskan Malamutes. Just a pastime. Its sort of a hobby that turned into a small business and it takes care and she works with ? She does counseling for substance abuse???Now she's a supervisor for ???

Leah: Richard tells me that this is the oldest...Richard, this is Fort Simpson's first truck?

Richard Jr.: First rubber tired vehicle purchased.

Leah: Rubber tired vehicle. Thank you.

Richard Jr.: Purchased for Fort Simpson and they used it for hauling fuel from the boats up to the airport. I have the original owner's manual and the all the bills of sales from how its been passed down the line. It's a real true antique. In its original state. There's very little wrong with it. There's nothing mechanically wrong with it. Just needs a bit of paint.

Leah: When did you build it? Last year?

Richard: Yah, last summer. I built this on weekends. In about four or five weekends, we had it up. Just the interior we do now. Just the way it is. We enjoy it.

Leah: Is it insulated?

Not yet. We're going to do that maybe next spring and then we'll get it all wired too. The electrical is not all in there yet.

Leah: That's a good job on it, the garage.

Leah: That is the Hay River. This is the view from the yard of Mr. and Mrs. Lafferty's.

Richard Jr.: ??Bird seed, pieces of fat. ??bacon, so that the birds can eat right on the front steps. ??

Leah: What birds are common up here?

Richard Jr.: There's all kinds of ??

???

Richard Jr. The elders tell us they used to raise ? for us?? Certain areas where they used grew straight into it. For

generations ? watched these ? grow and then the elders knew where to go and get new ones.

Leah: ? How about you walk, you can be my model, to the flower cart and then back?

Richard Jr.: You know how to walk, eh?

Leah: Every day walk. Good job!

Discussion about a fiddle, possibly a child's.

- At this point there was no sound. Herb told me not to worry there was no sound on the video tape also and that they were just looking at some coats.

- Now somebody was playing guitar on the tape.

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**Richard Lafferty Sr. Interview
Hay River, NWT
Saturday, August 18, 2001

Traditional Metis Fiddle Project**

Leah: Can you tell us about when you started recording?

Richard: Well, the first time actually that, I guess my music was recorded really was in the early eighties right downtown in the Caribou Motel. Fun Country was playing in the local bars there and I knew ??so we were having a jam session Saturday afternoon and he had his tape recorder in the motel there and we played a bunch of tunes on there and about two, three months later when we went home, then he sent me a copy. But, he did put out two cassettes out of that music. They weren't actually professional recordings, but they're out there somewhere.

Leah: Believe me they are. I've already had people ? some ?to it. When we out in the garage earlier, chatting and talking. You've actually had Angus Beaulieu things ?? the guys used to send back and forth as a way of communicating. Can you tell me a little about that?

Richard: That was back in the sixties. That's how they used to communicate. ??we used to communicate with the music and stories and whatever through reel to reel tapes recorders. Back in 1959, that's how they community communicate with ? out of Fort Simpson. Morris and

Peter ? and that was some of the music that you heard me singing, because the two younger sisters were in residential school in Inuvak and then they'd play it over there and we'd put some music on that, back and forth. I believe we did the same thing with Fort Resolution, because they both lived in Resolution at one time or another. Peter and Morris and they worked ??and they did the same thing and tonight we heard three or four tunes in there from 1961 recording that Angus still had around.

Leah: One of the things that we wanted to know a little bit more...your professional recording, can you tell us when you started actually going into a more formal studio?

Richard: ?about the mid-eighties and that's when I put out that one fiddle tape. Its called Muskeg fiddling. That was done in the Spirit Walker studio ?Yellowknife. That's the only one I have out that was recorded in a professional studio as they call it.

Leah: What was going through your mind when you decided to do that?

Richard: I thought it would be nice to have it on record anyways, so we tried it and it seems to be okay.

Leah: How is your response from the community to the Muskeg Fiddling album.

Richard: Well I had a lot of requests for those tapes and quite a few are distributed throughout the North. I still do, in fact, people come around whenever they ?? there's always someone going ?here and there. Quite a few have been distributed.

Leah: Do you have any plans in the future to do more fiddle albums.

Richard: I have that in the back of my mind. ?In the future, I plan on recording, maybe put out some CD's and whatever.

Leah: One of the things that Herb and I were interested also that we want to get more of opinion on Danny Bouvier. When I say that, what does that mean to you?

Richard: Danny Bouvier is...of course, like I mentioned in the last interview, or whatever, he's an uncle of mine and I grew up in the same house as him and we played some wonderful music. I rate him as a pro fiddler, myself. You know, not from just growing up around him, but from listening to other professional fiddlers or whatever and I rate him as one of the top fiddlers of this part of the country anyways.

Leah: If we wanted to know more about his personality. Well what would you say about his personality and how he approached his fiddle music?

Richard: Well, Danny was a person that likes to play music to himself and he was not the type to go out on the stage and do a live performance for any audience of any sort. He was more or less liked to keep right at home to himself, more or less. Once in a while he'd come and play at the local party or whatever. Very few dances that I know he did. I used to accompany him on the guitar back in the old days. 1963 we did quite a bit of it right at home.

Leah: Why do you think that was that he didn't perform?

Richard: I think it was just the type of person he was. He was one of those types that didn't like to perform front of public and some people are like that.

Leah: Did he ever talk to you about fiddle players he looked up to an??

Richard: Many times. He talked... Graham Townsend was quiet a bit younger than him, but Graham became popular there, he talked a lot about Graham, in fact, he played quite a bit Graham's style. He liked his style, but Danny also had his own style. Picking up from other fiddlers that came up here in the North.

Leah: Did Danny he ever mention any of his favourite tunes? Did he have any favourites?

Richard: I can't really recall any specific tunes, but he played quite a few...I guess they were all his favourites. I can't name them.

Leah: What kind of teacher was he? How did he try to give you advice?

Richard: I picked it up. Actually I used to try and play guitar back in them days. After I learned a few chords well I accompanied the rest of the people that were around the house and eventually I was chording for him. So actually, you might as well say, we played a lot of music together. All the music that I played was by ear so I picked up what I could from there.

Leah: I know Danny is recognized as a traditional Metis fiddle player and ?admired for that. Is he aware of what he's kept alive through his fiddling during his days. Is he aware that he's recognized as a Metis fiddle player?

Richard: Yes.

Herb: In the Lafferty, there's supposed to be a connection between Morris Lafferty, Ed Lafferty, Danny Bouvier, yourself and this one old fiddler that seems to be the grandfather of Metis fiddle music in the Territories, Old Joe Villeneuve. Did you ever hear ???mentioning Old Joe Villeneuve?

Richard: We did talk about Old Joe and Danny, I don't think spent too much time up around the Fort Simpson area, but through your side of the family, through Morris and all the rest of the old timers. Old Joe Villeneuve was around in that part of the country. I imagine he was in Providence a few times. Danny was well aware of him being there.

Leah: Was Danny into singing or other instruments? You've only heard of his fiddle playing. Are you aware of any other instruments he may have picked up?

Richard: No, all I've I've ever heard and seen him play was the fiddle?

Herb: Are you aware of any home recordings that Danny Bouvier may have made?

Richard: Other than what was caught local on the little cassette in later years when the cassette recorder was coming out, but CBC in the early sixties came down. ??were working for CBC at that time and ?? a few recordings around then. I remember I accompanied them on the guitar ?? for CBC and I don't know where the music is today. Maybe its in the CBC archives somewhere, but they did record him.

Leah: Do you know what year that would be?

Richard: 1962 or '63.

Herb: What else we're interested in is your instruments and ??you got out a ?? and we were just wondering if could hold it up and maybe tell us a little about it. That old ??fiddle and maybe your main fiddle.

Richard: ?next to here and we'll see if we can find them. This is a homemade fiddle that I picked up in my travels. I'd say about six or eight years ago. I picked that up in Saskatoon. Off a friend of mine down there and I know that inside, when I looked in there, it was actually restored in 1927 and Blackwoods, Saskatchewan so somebody put a lot of time into this fiddle. Its kind of unique and rare. Its shaped like a figure eight I noticed and the ? holes were cut right out so they could readjust the sound posts a little easier whenever they played and if you look at it real close, it doesn't have a scroll on it. It also has the Ukulele type keys on there which makes it very easy to tune. I kind of liked the looks of it and it was for sale and I bought it. It's the one that I keep around my chair here to play around with.

Herb: Its one of a kind.

Richard: Yah it is, so far anyways. When you look at an original fiddle, if you compare it to this one. See, this one here, that's the way the fiddles are made and this is not there. Whoever

built it in those days, just made a straight figure eight, because it was probably a little easier to make and its all handmade. They took the time to put a little inlay on the edges of it too. You notice a little inlay on there?

Herb: What would that inlay be made of ?

Richard: The back, I believe, is maple and the top is standard spruce like they used on all fiddles.

Herb: Its not some kind of fancy bone?

Richard: Inlay is just made out of willow. This one here that I use all the time, I picked that up Ward's music store when I was in Vancouver. I was fiddling for the Metis Reelers at Expo' 86 and one day we walked into this music shop. There must have been about a hundred and fifty of these fiddles hanging all over the place. It took me about two and a half hours to make up my mind, but I ended up with this one anyway. This fiddle was made in 1930 by a French fiddle maker. His name was Pierre Cladeau they tell me. Apparently he only made a few fiddles in his time. I don't know how many were made, but that's what the person that appraised it told me. When you look at the wood grain, you can even feel it when you pass your hand on it, you see the two pass back fiddle all right, but I kind of like the wood grain of it and same thing it shows on the neck. There's no varnish left on it from fiddling, but the wood grain is all in there. Right throughout, even in the scroll and the reason I like it is because of the sound and the way the fiddle looks.

Herb: So when you were choosing the fiddle, what qualities were you looking for in the fiddle?

Richard: I didn't have anything in mind, really, at the time. Once you start trying them out and looking around, I took a liking to this one. It sounded better than the last one I had so of course, I picked it up.

Herb: We know you were a guitar player. You chorded for Danny Bouvier, amongst other fiddlers and we noticed you have an old Gibson flat top acoustic. I was just wondering if you could tell us the story behind this guitar.

Richard: Well actually, I'm glad that this guitar can't talk, because it could tell a lot of stories, but anyway, I picked up this guitar in 1969 in a music shop in Edmonton. It wasn't in the music shop at the time, when I got it, but I was looking for a guitar, so I walked into a music store in downtown Edmonton and asked the guy behind the counter if he had anything Gibson's for sale. That's what I was looking for and he says, yes, I have a friend downtown that wanted to sell a Gibson. He said if you wait a couple hours and come back after lunch and I'll phone him up. We drove back in the afternoon and there it was. It was a the ????. I like the tune of it so that's when

I got it.

Herb: What year is it?

Richard: I believe it was made in 1959. Its got a beautiful finish to it. A nice color. ??finish.

Herb: It's a keeper as they say.

Richard: Yeh it is. The neck on it is very narrow. You can play this for hours and never get tired. Its easy to pick on too. Most other styles, well you play the guitar yourself. You can tell the difference, especially when you get into the folk style guitar then your playing on a two by four.

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Richard Jr.: This picture here is made of Caribou. The hair on the Caribou is much finer than the hair on a moose. This one here is made by Emily Lafferty, who is a lady from Provindence and this one in the middle is made by Margaret Vandal, who is a mother of my best friends and the one over here is the matching one to the first one also made by Margaret Vandal out of moose. Moose hair tufting was developed by my greatmother and she was the daughter of Francoise Beaulieu and Francoise Beaulieu and his son Francoise were the ones that guided Alexander McKenzie down the river and Catherine Beaulieu married Joe Bouvier, who is my great grandfather, a few generations back. She used to embroidery with the Grey nuns and they ran out of material so my great grandmother wanted to continue to sew so got a cup of white guard hair from the neck of these animals and dyed it in the same fashion as they dyed the material that the material that they used to sew with and created a whole new art style called moose hair tufting.

Leah: What was her name?

Richard Jr.: Catherine Beaulieu was her maiden name and she became Catherine Bouvier.

Richard Jr.: Those are some of the best quality moose hair tufting you can find. Margaret and Emily. Two at the top.

Leah: Do you know Margaret and Emily...are they still...?

Richard Jr.: They are still very well, very healthy.

Leah: What age would they be right now?

Richard Jr.: Margaret would probably be in her late fifties, early sixties and Emily would probably be mid sixties and these would have probably been done twenty years ago. When they were in their prime of sewing.

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