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## Interview With Homer Poitras

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Edmonton, Alberta

Interviewed by Herb Lafferty

Also Present: Darren Prefontaine

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### Tape One: Side A

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**00.2 Herb:** We are here at the Sands Motor Inn. It is November 17, 2001. Our guest this evening is Homer Poitras, a fiddler on the Gabriel Dumont Institute fiddle/CD book project. Tell us about your family, your parents, and grandparents.

**00.8 Homer:** I will start with my grandparents. My grandma was from St. Albert and she was a Cunningham. My grandpa was from \_\_\_\_\_ a descendent of Big Bear. I am proud to be part of Big Bear, as a way \_\_\_\_\_, some people are born to be lucky and I think I am lucky to be born in this family. My grandfather was the first president of the Métis Association of Alberta and there was a lot of changes you had to make in order to be one of those and he was probably one of the founders of the Métis Settlements today, the only ones in Canada and there is hardly anything mentioned about those when it comes to my grandpa and that is hurting as I sit here speaking about my grandpa, but I will leave that and I will speak on the music aspect. He was a churchgoer, I guess you would say. He would never miss mass; he did all the singing in the mass and I guess that is where we got this gift, or whatever you want to call it, that we could sing along with him and know these words and not be able to read at a young age. Yet we would grasp these songs and know the words, whether it be English or Cree. We were proud to sing either one, it didn't matter.

**02.5 Herb:** Your grandfather's name was what again?

**02.6 Homer:** Joe Francis Dion. Mom played the organ a little bit and dad played the fiddle. We were lucky in that we kind of were raised with music, not only mom and dad but also it carried on to aunts and uncles. They either sang or played some instrument, so we had no problem in creating our own music when it came to gatherings. Whether it be a dance, birthdays, whatever you want to call it, it was there. Everybody was gifted with something. We were not shy to share that, we didn't have to be told half a dozen times or begged to come and do whatever. You did it because you wanted to show your talent and that is the way things should be. That is where I am at today, even in my own family, in my own household. They are all

musically inclined, they can carry notes, they can sing a pretty mean song, once they decide they want to do that. Then I carry it on to my grandchildren. I have decided to give each one of them a musical instrument, whether it be a violin, piano, guitar, set of drums, whatever they talk about. I sure would like to have somebody say, "Grandpa doesn't close his ears when it comes to music." I try to give that to my own grandchildren so they have something they can share with their own children. Music is everything and to speak about music, what it does for me is when I am stressed out I can take my fiddle and go and sit downstairs in my own little room and play for twenty minutes, ten, or whatever it takes me and I can come out of there just rested and ready to go. That is what this thing does for me. I still do that today at my age and I enjoy that. It is my way of relaxing, this is my space and I don't want nobody while I am doing this, I don't want nobody in the circle while I am doing this. It is just me, the fiddle, and the Creator. It is a good feeling to do that.

**05.2 Herb:** Yes, that is very nice. Did you get your mother and father's name?

**05.3 Homer:** Mom's name was, she is still alive, thank God, I still have everybody alive, except for my grandparents have gone to see the maker. Mom was Mary and my dad is Lloyd and he is always involved in this Métis Association of Alberta. He has always been involved in it because I used to travel with him when he took my grandpa to meetings. So I kind of have an idea of what is going on in MAA and stuff and a lot of other stuff that I like, not only musical stuff but cultural stuff. When sweats were taboo, we weren't allowed to have those, my grandfather had those and he didn't get the devil telling him what he was going to do. He was his own man and he had his own beliefs and I help him with those sweats. At that time, I was a young fellow and I didn't know the difference; we could have both been taken away and I wouldn't have known. Stuff like that I just sit and think, I was really glad that I was born in the right place, at the right time, and in the right family. That is the feeling I get today.

**06.7 Herb:** There is certainly no doubt that you came from a musical family and that obviously influenced you to pick up an instrument. How did you get your first fiddle?

**07.1 Homer:** I got my first fiddle when I was 14, I think. I got it for Christmas. It was one of those sales you know. I think it was \$19.95 and it was ordered, but I didn't know that. Grandfather bought that and he bought a guitar at the same time. But he kind of knew that he liked music because when we used to go to dances, late uncle Pete Poitras used to play the fiddle and I would sit right in front of him, right in front and just sit there and watch. When he was going out for his beer or whatever he had to go out for, at that time we had house

parties, the rooms weren't big so we didn't need any microphones and he would give me that fiddle to hold. I never played it. I had that respect that this is not mine, it is not right to do that, so I would just hold it and wait for him and when he come back, I would give it back to him. I think he was quite a, he could play the fiddle, he could play it well. I think that is where it started. Grandpa noticed this you know, I was sitting there and that how I, I am sure that is how it got to be.

**08.3 Herb:** What kind of fiddle was it?

**08.4 Homer:** It was one of those, I don't want to say cheap, but at that time it was lots of money, \$14.95 for a fiddle, that is like \$1000 today, that is the way I look at it. I treasured that thing. I still have that fiddle. It's a different color now because I had an uncle here that lived in town, he lived in Edmonton. He fiddled on it. In fact I have one of his, his name was Jed Poitras, I have got one of his fiddles and I will not take that anywhere. It is at home and I don't even tell people where it is because it is priceless. He passed away and you can't put money on this fiddle.

**09.1 Herb:** How does it compare with the other fiddles, your main fiddle that you bring out to play at a dance?

**09.3 Homer:** I guess they are pretty well a perfectionist. I like my fiddle to sound the way I want it to sound and if it doesn't sound right for me, it is not going to sound right for anybody else, so I have to be, it is there or it is not there, if it is not there, then I don't want it. The fiddle I have now is priceless. I cannot put a number on it, and I refuse to put a number on it.

**09.9 Herb:** So you began playing the fiddle at 14?

**10.0 Homer:** Yes, 14.

**10.0 Herb:** Can you remember how much practice it took you to learn your first tune?

**10.2 Homer:** It's funny that you would ask that question. I am just kind of proud as to how fast I can catch on to stuff. This is no word of a lie, I have witnesses, my brother is still alive and he is younger than me and he got a guitar and he worked on his and I worked on mine and behold New Year's Day we played at a dance.

**10.7 Herb:** And you just got your fiddle for Christmas?

**10.7 Homer:** I just got it for Christmas and we played that one tune, we learned that one tune, I can't remember what it is but it was a simple

tune. We played a waltz, a fox-step, and as a two-step or whatever you want to call it and the people were just happy. If you allow me to backtrack, we were talking about fiddling and we were talking about music. When I was growing up, there was only a few people knew how to play. They had this gift on knowing how to play, but you had to beg them to come and play, They would sooner go outside and do their thing rather than come and play for the people. That stuck in my mind and I said I am going to learn how to play this thing and mister you are going to have a hard time getting me off that chair once I start playing. You can go home because we don't need you anymore, that is how much I love music. It happened, exactly what I said that is what happened, I had friends that said you know, we asked you to come play and now you don't want to play, now we have somebody to play any tune that they want, he plays, now you expect us to let you come and play, uh, uh, no way, you can go. I guess that is, I am kind of stubborn, that is what happened there, them two went together. I caught on fast and I didn't like the idea of begging somebody to play for people that came a long way. It was so cold anyway to start with and to come and dance and to sit there for hours and wait for somebody to play four tunes and then walk out again. That was hurting at that time, just impolite. I can remember just like yesterday, and it is like that today. It's me, I am competitive, I don't care what anybody says, it doesn't matter what it is, don't bother me, you are not going to knock me over that easy. You are going to have a rough time. It is a game that I play, not to hurt anybody or run down anybody, it is just something that I have.

**12.9 Herb:** Do you remember as a teenager, as an adult and later years, did you personalize your fiddle in any way? Like that could mean going inside of the fiddle, like moving the sound post around, painting it, decorating it, or do you do anything like that with your fiddle?

**13.4 Homer:** I didn't really change anything. I like my fiddle how they are because a fiddle is a fiddle if you start changing stuff on the fiddle, and it is not the same one you started with. I like to grow with the fiddle. Once I like the sound, I like to stay with that. The only thing I could say is that I like to keep my fiddle clean. The only thing you will see on my fiddle is the rosin because, that can't be helped because it comes off the bow, but if I have a chance, I clean it. It is part of me and I have a lot of respect for the violin itself. It has done a lot of wonders for me. If I backtrack again, I just mentioned that if I want a stress reliever I'd use the violin. If we run out of grub on the table there it comes again, I never worry where is my next gig, or where is that, there is too many phone calls already. I am thankful, I thank the Creator for giving me that gift and I like to share that gift and I, whenever people asks me to do something with the fiddle, I never say no, I don't know how to say no when it comes to the fiddle because of what it has done for me, what it represents as a Métis person. People

will know me, they know my name, this is Homer Poitras, they'll do this: "Oh, I saw you," and stuff like that. It is kind of a landmark for me. It is something that if people saw me on the street, they would kind of recognize me, but then down the road they will see me on stage with the fiddle, "Heck I know that guy." It is just something that is part of me, like this cowboy hat is part of me. I never go anywhere without a cowboy hat and same with my fiddle. You won't catch me too often without my fiddle and if you do, it is your lucky day. It goes with me.

- 15.7 Herb:** That is good. Do you play any other instruments besides the fiddle?
- 15.7 Homer:** I play drums, bass, rhythm, and a little lead. Get carried away on the piano sometimes and the fiddle I like playing back up for the singers. It is just another gift again and I guess I just have an ear for music. You give it to me and give me a few minutes and I can play it for you, as long as I can figure out what it is supposed to do.
- 16.4 Herb:** Getting back to the fiddle, you mentioned that you were a big fan of your uncle. What was your uncle's name again?
- 16.6 Homer:** Pete Poitras. He played well, plus all the people, that was after the fact, but he was one of the first people that I really sat down and watched. In our community, he was the one that was the kingpin when it came to playing the violin, but at that time a person can't play the violin all night long because our dances started at 7 o'clock in the evening and they quit at 5 in the morning, one fiddler will not be able to handle all that and the other people that knew how, like I say they just put, that was hurting at that time. That is why I learned all these different tunes, like listening.
- 17.4 Herb:** So besides your uncle Pete, who would have been any other musical influences, either local like your uncle Pete's friends or fiddle records or fiddlers that you heard of on the radio. Could you name me a few fiddlers that you feel have influenced you.
- 17.9 Homer:** I think that there is something...I have to mention this. There is just no way that I can't. When I moved from home to the city, at that time I was pretty heavy on the alcohol and I was trying to quit when I moved to Edmonton. I ran into a beautiful lady that time and I married her today and she is my kingpin. I guess that is where it all started. She had somehow found out that this is what I used to do and got hold of a fiddle some how and she bought me an amp and I started practicing and in the mean time they used to have dances here, the Friendship Center used to have dances all the time, every month they would have one dance and I used to go to those and that is where I met my beautiful lady, my wife of 36 years. I used to sit

and watch this Lawrence Anderson, man that guy could play fiddle. I would just sit there and my wife would say, "Are you going to dance? Boy you would like to go play," she said, and I said, "Maybe someday." Then there was a lady that used to play the piano for him and she was kind of ornery and she used to argue with him all the time and that one time he was sitting there and I was sitting close by and she would not come play the piano, she had to go and visit. There was no microphone or nothing. Everything was just flat out and it was a big hall and he just looked at me and I met him at the Friendship Center and we used to talk you know. He said, "Do you know how to play this piano?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Come on, come and play." So I jumped on the stage and I started playing for him and I never got off of that stage. After five years I was still on that stage playing for this Lawrence Anderson and that one time, I found this kind of funny that time. Without thinking he was playing the fiddle and this fellow I knew from back home he played the piano. He was quite a piano player. He comes up to me and he says, "Did you ever play the fiddle?" and I said, "No." He said, "Does this guy know that you play the fiddle?" I said, "No," and Lawrence says, "Do you know how to play this?" I said, "I play a little bit." He said, "I want to dance with my wife. Can you play it?" I said, "All right." That guy jumped on the piano and I started playing the fiddle. He just stood there and looked at me and said, "You never told me that you could play the fiddle?" I said, "Well you never asked." So it was good times to have. He would be another one, Lawrence Anderson, that I learned all kinds of tunes off of him.

**20.8 Herb:** When you were playing the piano for him, can you date that?

**20.9 Homer:** That would be, I moved to the city in 1963, 1966 I got married, about 1967, 1968, somewhere in there, the late '60s.

**21.2 Herb:** Do you have any good stories about your uncle Peter Poitras, fiddling or otherwise, kind of stories, and a funny story about Peter Poitras?

**21.5 Homer:** I guess the funniest part is, I don't know how a guy can do this. He used to play his fiddle, kick the same time, and call square dance. How does a person do that you know? I can't even talk when I play the fiddle.

**22.0 Herb:** He was pretty talented then eh?

**22.0 Homer:** I know, he did all these, *ha ha*, I can just see him, you know call square dance, play the fiddle at the same time, and kick his feet. Boy I don't know how that is going to work you know, but it worked. I guess that is stuff that just kind of stuck with me. Good times to be had.

- 22.3 Herb:** So where did you learn your fiddle tunes? How did you learn them? Was it mostly from listening to the people that you mentioned, like Peter Poitras and Lawrence Anderson, or did you listen to the radio?
- 22.6 Homer:** If I can remember right, we had this old radio with the big battery packs and then you had to run this line outside. I think once a week there used to be this Don Messer's and the Islanders, they used to play their half hour every week and I would be glued to that radio. I guess I can thank the Creator for giving me the gift where I could listen to a tune two or three times and I got it, you know. There are some people that work on the same tune for hours and hours and days and days and they still don't play it right you know, and I guess I have that gift and I was happy with that. I didn't have a tape recorder, we had those little \_\_\_\_ phones that you wind up, but at that time I didn't have the money to go and buy that whatever it took, that certain tune you know and I guess really we didn't even have the books. I didn't even know the name of the tune but I knew the tune. Somebody could tell me, "Could you play Big John?" "What?" I would tell them and then I would say "Can you hum it a little bit?" The minute they started humming it, heck I knew it, but I couldn't put the name and the tune together for a long time, and at that time it didn't matter. It wasn't a big issue. Who gives a damn what the name of the tune is, as long as you play it and people dance and had a good time. You could play that thing all night long and nobody cared.
- 24.5 Herb:** Nowadays they would have a big fuss. They say it is pretty important to announce what the tune is, the key. Is there anything else that you might want to tell us about the history of fiddling in your family? Correct me if I am wrong, but did your grandfather play or your dad play the fiddle?
- 25.1 Homer:** My dad played a little bit. But at that time growing up, he had this big problem, playing I guess that is the only time he could do it, after he had a few nips you know and I can't really remember him really picking it up and playing at home, only at parties. When he had enough courage to go and play the fiddle that is the only thing I can remember.
- 25.8 Herb:** You mentioned that your family was pretty religious, and I am wondering can you recall the church or parish priests encouraging playing fiddle music or do you recall if they discouraged Métis fiddling? I have heard stories some places, even back home, mom would say that my grandfather, old Joe \_\_\_\_ carried the sins of the town on his shoulders because he was playing the fiddle at the Saturday night dance and there would hardly be anybody in church on Sunday morning.

**26.7 Homer:** I can't recall something like that. The only thing I did think of was grandma used to say, "Hey put that away now (*Cree*). The devil will come." But at that time I was like, "Let him come." I didn't know what was that. A myth I guess, I really don't believe in something like that, a myth like if you want to be a good violin player you have to kind of meet the devil and all that. I said the devil is not a person, if you want to meet that guy, if you want to abuse the fiddle then go for it. But for me, a fiddle is, that is me. As a Métis person the fiddle, I can't take that away from anybody or myself. If I pick up the fiddle and somebody mentions the fiddle, that is part of me, that is me. I can't change that and I am really proud of that, to go anywhere. I can go and stand somewhere and say you know, they might not remember my name but the minute I pick up that fiddle and it is next to me and it is part of me, a light bulb goes on. I'll just go back a little bit, like I was standing in a big gathering one time and I just, stepping back and just standing there looking. Then this little kid came by me, kept looking at me, and looking at me and then finally he came up to me, had enough guts to come up to me and he said, "Were you on television?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I saw you," then I said "Where?" "At Yellowknife," he said. And I was really, I shook his hand and said "Thank you for noticing." He said "Yeah, I noticed," and away he went. That was quite an honour for me; a little kid after you and walk back and forth, he just couldn't put me in place.

**28.9 Herb:** That is neat. About reading sheet music for the fiddle, do you think reading sheet music for the fiddle would help or hinder a Métis fiddle style and fiddling?

**29.4 Homer:** This is my own opinion, this is my own way I see it. Métis fiddling is from the heart and there is a lot of feeling when it comes to that part for me, is that when I play from here and if I was reading from, thinking from the notebook, I would be too busy looking at the notebook trying to be perfect on my notes and forgetting my music, losing the feel for the music, so my music would not flow, it would become choppy. I come across that a lot of the time at fiddling contests. I can tell you who is reading notes and who isn't. Everybody is different. I am my own person. I can play a tune maybe not note for note, but it will have feeling with that music. There will be a lot of feeling with that music.

**30.5 Herb:** To you that it is more important than being able to read, play with feeling first.

**30.6 Homer:** That is me, you know. I am not knocking people that read notes. I wish I could do that, to make my work easier, but that wouldn't be me. That would be the person that wrote that song, that music, that is him. I am just an instrument playing somebody else's.

Instead of me, everybody is, there is one tune that everybody plays, I don't care where you go. Maple Sugar, each player has their own way of playing Maple Sugar. There is not one that will play it note for note, you can't tell me that, not Maple Sugar. Everybody has their own little style, their own nicks, their own little choppiness, they add on to it. I would sooner add on to it, improvise you know, rather than hold that note there really extra long. There is no meaning to it really. Why hold it that long when you can put four or five notes in and make it sound just a little bit completed, full? That is the way I look at it.

**32.0 Herb:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. About fiddle tunes, in particular the Red River Jig, there are many stories on the origin of the Red River Jig. Can you tell us what your ideas are on the origins of the Red River Jig? Where the tune came from or any stories that you might of heard that are believable?

**32.6 Homer:** The Red River Jig. I guess to me it is competitive. You get to these dances where there will be people from different families, will come in and say, "Okay, I can do five steps, that is the way I see the Red River Jig. Can you do six? If you can do six, I will do seven." That is the way I see the Red River Jig. It was a competition. Who was going to do better? It was a game; it was not meant to hurt people, it was a game and it was meant to bring the personality out of people. That is Red River Jig for me. To me, when I play the Red River Jig I think this is me and you can't take that away from me, try as you like but you are not going to take it away from me. Because the Red River Jig, that is Métis. When I see dancers, when we are working together, look out because there is chemistry there. He can do ten steps, he is not going to slow me down and yet there can be somebody else and I hate to say this but there is always the right and left they call it, two sides to the story. Yet I can get somebody who gets up and they can do one step and I am just about ready to put the fiddle down because they are making me work so hard. I am trying to dance with them and they are not paying attention, they are doing their own thing and I am just back here making lots of noise and that is hurting you know. That is the jig for me, it is competition. I think where it originated from, I am not sure but first time I heard the Red River Jig, I had bought this record and I was listening to it one time and this old Red River Jig came on and it was played really slow and I listened and it was one of those 78s you know where you can speed up your thing. So I said gee, this sounds familiar but being at a young age I could not put it together, what is going on here you know. So I speed it up and I said that is the Red River Jig. So I think maybe at one point it went really slow and somebody decided to say, "Hey let's speed it up and see what happens here." *Ha, ha.*

**35.2 Herb:** Oh yeah, another twist to the story on the Red River Jig.

- 35.3 Homer:** Yeah, where it originated from I could not tell you. I guess I didn't do my homework when it comes to that.
- 35.5 Herb:** It is just history I guess, because you read about how the Red River Jig was well, being the Red River Jig, it must have come from the Red River area, but you hear it now being played all the way up through Western provinces, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, even in Alaska. People say that maybe, it probably followed the train route, if you go back in time well past the Red River, it may have come from Quebec. They talk about a song called *les jig tu bache Canada* and sounding very close to the Red River Jig but I guess we will leave that to the academics hey. *Ha, ha.* About playing fiddles at the dances, say if you were to play a fiddle at a dance, on the radio, or any other special function, are there any special preparations you go through before you begin to play? Any little rituals or any special way you prepare to go and play?
- 37.0 Homer:** That is pretty hard to answer, but I will answer that the best way I know how right about now. I am a big believer in religion. I carry that with me all the time and I always do a little prayer, a small little prayer just before I do. Does not matter what I do. Because it is not easy to take and fiddle and go and play in front of people. That is very hard; even that is work itself, to go there and play that fiddle and to play it well, so I always ask the Creator to help me. "I didn't ask you for a few days, I need a little bit of help today, just a little bit. Just get me over that full five notes, that is all I want. Once I get over that full five notes, no looking back, I'm gone." A lot of times it is just how I feel that day. If I feel like I am ready to cut her loose, look out I will play and sometimes it is very hard just to get in there and do a thing because you made a commitment and you never want to back down when people ask you. Like I played in churches and I played in backup for singers and stuff like that. I always ask the Creator to give a little hand and it has been working well. I guess that is the only thing I have. I will say a little prayer before I do something. Lots of times when you see me when I am playing and I have my head down, just holding the bow I am meditating for a few minutes. Did I do it well? Not only for me but, for the people that asked me and for the dancers. Be with me when I am doing this thing. Let's be one rather than you doing your thing and I'm doing mine and the people on the side. Everybody don't care, everybody is talking but look out when you get the fiddler and dancers together. You've got all the people there, you've got them trapped and there is no way of getting away until you are done and that feeling is, you can't describe that. It is not written in the books anywhere and a lot of violin players will tell you that. It is a heck of a feeling when you get the whole crowd and you got the dancers with you, wherever it is and the guys, the people that are backing you up. I will speak of \_\_\_\_\_ look out when you get him

going boy, he is gone. When he starts yelping back there, look out. You are ready to go. *Ha, ha.*

**40.0 Herb:** Yeah, I can relate to that having played guitar and bass behind my dad and quite a few fiddle bands. I have an idea of that feeling. Is there one fiddle tune to that your way of thinking that would define the Métis style of fiddling? One fiddle tune, the Métis style of fiddling?

**40.6 Homer:** Métis style? It would be one of the old dances. To me everybody plays it different. I have my own style, other people have their own, is it the Duck Dance. Now that has to be it. For me that is the tune, is the Duck Dance, because once you start playing that boy. I played for the Cree Land Dancers, oh awesome we are together, look out, hang on to your hats because there is no stopping us right now. To me that is the tune for me, the Duck Dance, and then the next one is the Red River Jig. I think they are pretty close. When you start playing the Red River Jig people stand up and they are all over the place. People that come out of the woodwork you know they are all over because you are playing the Red River Jig and they want to go and see that, that is another one. I would say they are pretty, to me that is my own opinion, but I would say they are neck and neck. Because of the different sound, there is so much drive to it and there is so much feeling. If you have the right people playing that tune, look out, you will have people dancing on the side. To me that is it, there're no other tunes.

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### **Tape One: Side B**

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**02.6 Herb:** Can you recall any unusual stories or funny stories about Métis fiddling or dancing in your community? Anything really unusual that you might have seen or heard?

**03.2 Homer:** Well I guess I just like to, people like to talk about themselves. I have played for a lot of dances. I play for weddings, anniversaries, and you name it. This one time I had everything all loaded up and away we went. I got over there and I didn't have a violin. What do I do now? Never mind violin, I had my big work boots on. I left my cowboy boots, my violin by the door and that is where they stayed. Now what do I do? I was just lucky, it is nice to have a phone. Phone home and the wife says, "I was wondering when you were going to phone," and she said "Where are you at?" So I told her where we were at and we stopped and waited and she brought them over there. But I have a versatile band, which was great. They kind of carried me over for that half an hour to hour or whatever you know. They can do a lot of singing and a lot of whatever. But to me a violin is a violin. Like they say, you don't have a band until you have a fiddle in the band or something like that, the little saying they have. So there was a few people dancing, but once you start playing that fiddle,

the crowd jumps up. I don't know what it is, maybe it is that little devil they talk about, you never know.

**04.1 Herb:** It is funny you say that because the next question is a devil question. Many old-timer fiddlers believe that when certain songs such as *The Devil's Reel* or *The Devil's Dream* are played that the devil will come to you. Do you believe this or any stories that associate the devil with Métis fiddle music?

**04.4 Homer:** I don't think I, I don't believe in that. Each to his own, whatever you hear, whatever you want to take, whatever you want to get. To me music is music that one could be called something else and people would not know anyway like the *Devil's Dream*, the same music but a different name, would you know? The name alone that is all, but the music itself describes itself and to me to make a myth out of that, I don't think so. Maybe there is no devil in me, I don't know.

**04.6 Herb:** Well, speaking of *The Devil's Reel* is it also known as *The Hangman's Reel*. Is that the same tune?

**04.6 Homer:** You know I can't really answer that question because I am not sure. I would be guessing if I said yes and I think to be fair to who ever is putting the two names together I would like to just leave it at that.

**04.7 Herb:** Okay, how about *The Hangman's Reel*. Do you play that?

**04.7 Homer:** No, I don't play that at all.

**04.7 Herb:** Oh, okay.

**04.7 Homer:** I am just a rookie in this.

**04.7 Herb:** Okay, we will leave that one alone.

**04.7 Homer:** I guess what I am trying to say is that I am kind of fussy on what I play. I will not play a tune that will not be enjoyed by all. I guess that is me. Like I say again, I guess music is music and you can play whatever you want, the sky is the limit, it is your choice and I love the word choice because that is what I go by.

**05.6 Herb:** Many of our old time fiddlers grew up without radios, tape recorders, and record players, so how did you learn fiddle tunes? Like you mention when cassette players came out and maybe even before that, record players, did you learn tunes off records, cassettes, and now we have CDs?

**06.1 Homer:** When I first started playing I think I, the way I learned my tunes was by going to house parties, dances, that is how I learned my tunes. I didn't really have, in my whole lifetime I can't really say I had someone who sat down and really showed me how to play a tune on the fiddle like note for note. The fiddle is the hardest instrument to play. We have nothing to go on, and all we have is that smooth piece of wood that is on top and four strings on top of that. Nobody tells you what is "a" or "e." That alone is a gift to be able to do that.

**07.0 Herb:** Do you recall, did you ever go out and buy those say 78-rpm records of fiddle tunes? You would have grown up in the era of the 78-rpm records.

**07.4 Homer:** At that time we could not really afford.

**08.0 Herb:** Do you play any original tunes or tunes that you created for your own repertoire? We were talking earlier about *Sunny Boy's Hawk*. How did that come about?

**08.2 Homer:** That came one came quite easily. One time I was just kind of sitting and just kind of working on tunes and it just came and it sounded really nice and I had no name for it so I put that on there. I have only made one tape in my career.

**09.1 Herb:** What types of fiddle tunes were popular in your community at fiddle dances?

**09.3 Homer:** All the old dances like *Drops of Brandy, Duck Dance, Red River Jig, Square Dances, First Change, and Second Change*. All the old time dances, that was the thing and if there was any singing to be done it was at the break, when they would have a little break, passed sandwiches around, that is the only time we had a little singing, a few songs then it was right back to fiddling. The fiddle was the ultimate, that was it.

**09.8 Herb:** Can you tell us memories of the first gig or fiddle dance you played for where you were actually paid to play?

**10.0 Homer:** I guess I will have to go back again. When I was mentioning Lawrence Anderson, the first gig we did was at the Clover Bar, down the hill by the river in Edmonton. My first paycheck was \$8 for the whole night and I thought that was great. My first gig, I was a fairly young man, \$8 and I thought gee I have \$8. Back home you got nothing, not even a thank you sometimes and you played from 7 until 5 in the morning and here you played what, 3 and a half hours, 4 at the most and away you go home. I thought that was kind of odd you know. All of a sudden people are going home and it is like, "What is going on here? It is not 5 in the morning?"

**10.9 Herb:** What a coincidence because the first time I got paid to play, I made \$8 too and I thought boy I could buy a lot of chocolate bars with \$8. Do you remember old time Métis fiddlers accompanying themselves with their feet, as they call it now clogging, that before guitars, pianos and other instruments used to chord for the fiddle came along? So did a lot of old time fiddlers clog?

**11.5 Homer:** I guess they would call that traditional. There is the odd one that will do that and some people can't tell their right foot from their left foot, so they have a hard time trying to do that. For me, it just comes natural. For a lot of times, even now as a grandfather, I can sit down and I don't need a fiddle. I can just start humming a tune and kicking with my feet and the kids are dancing to the rhythm of my feet. So it is I guess it is just to fill in the empty spaces.

**12.1 Herb:** Do you ever call it clogging? Or do you have another name for it?

**12.2 Homer:** I guess that is about as close as you are going to get.

**12.4 Herb:** Is there a word in Cree for it?

**12.4 Homer:** Cree, I don't know, I don't think there is really. The only thing kicking I guess (*Cree*) that would be kicking like, that means the same you know, that is what you are doing with your feet, keeping rhythm.

**12.6 Herb:** Do you recall playing fiddle tunes with one or more fiddlers at the same time? Like maybe when you were growing up do you remember playing side by side with your uncle Peter the same tune?

**12.9 Homer:** I guess not really. I am kind of like, I like to do things by myself. If I make a mistake, that is my mistake and not anybody else's. But it is just lately where I had a chance to play with and sit beside some good violin players like today. Métis players like I had that chance in Saskatoon just a little while ago. It is a great feeling when you are sitting around the table and they have all these guys here that have made tapes, CDs, shows and everything and all of a sudden you start questioning yourself, "What am I doing here?" and after a while you forget. All of a sudden that Métis comes out of you and look out we are all on the same wavelength and away we go. A guy just hollers a tune and you just give her; you don't worry about making mistakes or nothing. As long as your fiddle is making that noise and away you go and I guess that is a good feeling too.

**14.0 Herb:** Have you ever seen someone tapping on the fiddle strings, looking like chop sticks or little small rhythm sticks as though they

were playing the melody while the fiddler is playing the tune? I don't know what you would call that.

- 15.6 Homer:** I saw that a few times but it was nothing to do with Métis players. I saw Ukrainians do that, and that is the first time I saw that you know but I have never seen, I shouldn't use that word, I have never looked at Métis players do that. It is you, you're the one that is playing that fiddle, that violin, whatever you want to call it and to me, I think it would be bothersome if somebody come along there and started pulling on, and the price of strings today, you know that would be hurting if they broke my first string. Then I would have to change everything. They would have to be either good or really careful before I let them do that. I think I saw it once in my lifetime and I can't recall where. I am not sure.
- 16.2 Herb:** Because there did not seem to be any pianos in the community hall, the fiddle for the most part was unaccompanied until guitars came along in the 1940s, from what we understand. Now most players do not want to play without the guitar or piano. Do you prefer guitar, piano accompaniment or both when you play the fiddle?
- 16.9 Homer:** I like the guitar, it's whole and okay the guitar. Yet on the other hand, I can play without either one. Depends on where you are at and what the situation is and how fat the other player is too. When I mentioned it before, I played in the church, I played the fiddle by itself and it gives it that nice, it doesn't take anything away from it. It depends on the circumstances.
- 17.1 Herb:** Whatever is available at the time?
- 17.2 Homer:** Whatever is there, it is okay by me.
- 17.2 Herb:** Before the age of fiddle pick-ups, microphones, amplifiers, did you do anything different to be heard above the sound of a lively dance crowd? You were probably playing at dances before amplifiers, pick-ups, and microphones.
- 17.6 Homer:** I guess back home we didn't really need those, because the house was not really big enough to have those, until I moved to the city. To be heard you had to have a little bit of help and all you had was your amp. Not like today, you are hooked up right to your mixer and everything. You have your power amps, you name it and you sound like national. But at that time you always wanted, you had the beat and people danced and it is a real shame now that if you play that way, people just sit around and look. Wondering what is going on, people are just spoiled and I keep telling that to people, you guys are just spoiled, that is all. If you don't hear the right thing, they are not going to dance. I said me, as long as I heard people stepping, I

didn't have to hear the music, as long as I hear the rumble I was okay, away I went. I followed the chord and had a good time. The only time you heard the fiddle was when you were dancing in front of the fiddle and guitar. When you were at the far end you didn't hear anything until you came back out. *Ha, ha.*

**19.2 Herb:** Where did Métis fiddlers in your area around Elk Point or Moose Mountain as it is known in your area, where did they purchase their fiddles in the earlier days?

**19.5 Homer:** I think from the old timers is what I have heard is that the fiddles were passed on from generation to generation and I was not that lucky. My grandfather bought that for me from the Eaton's catalogue and I was really proud of that fiddle and I have that fiddle at home. I think most of them were passed on from generation to generation. That is how they got theirs.

**20.0 Herb:** So if you were to go out shopping for a fiddle now, what qualities do you look for in a fiddle before you buy it?

**20.2 Homer:** To me the feel of the fiddle, the tone, and if I find it easy to handle. I would say I have never given my true honesty to any kind of sounding fiddle. Somebody will say, "This is a nice sounding fiddle," and I will say, "Yeah it sounds alright." I can't really say. I am not a master at the fiddle. I can't tell somebody whether it really sounds great or \_\_\_\_\_ somebody's fiddle to a higher height than it really sounds. I would have to play that thing a few times before I could really give my true comment on the sound and the fiddle and the action or whatever they want to call it. Like some fiddles, I can just pick up and I'm gone and some fiddles I am stuck. I have a problem right off the bat. I can't break that fiddle's sound, I can't bring justice to that tune. That is how I do my analyzing on my fiddle. I can't really say well, somebody will say well. Even the price, a fifty dollar fiddle might sound great to me rather than a six thousand dollar fiddle. You might give me one of those without telling me the price. That fifty dollar fiddle might sound a hell of a lot better than that \$6000 fiddle. That is my point, because that fiddle costs that much, you expect it to sound real good which is not fair. I have picked up some really expensive fiddles and they didn't sound no better than some other cheap fiddles that I picked up like that \$19.95 fiddle that I have at home. If I really worked on it, it still sounds great because of the wood, got older and it is the sound of the wood, and it still sounds great that old fiddle. It'll take no backseat to any \$6000 fiddle and it is not even twenty bucks this thing. But today I got it and I can't put a number on it. It still sounds great and it's like a lot of things, it is how you treat the thing.

- 23.1 Herb:** Many fiddlers experience tuning problems with a tuning peg slipping. Do you have any way of preventing your fiddle from going out of tune?
- 23.3 Homer:** I have to kind of chuckle on this one. I just do the Métis way or Half-breed way and spit on the peg and just let her go. That is the only way. Why should I spend money? But that is me.
- 23.8 Herb:** I recall hearing of some old time Métis fiddlers using spruce gum when they ran out of store bought fiddle bow rosin. Do you recall any times where fiddlers used spruce gum in place of rosin?
- 24.0 Homer:** Back home at house parties, that was not unusual to go find a spruce tree and bring that up because we ran out of. That is all they used and it sounded just as good. Who has time to run to town in the middle of the night to get some, when it is right there and it worked. As long as it worked, use it, and it was cheap. *Ha, ha*. The price was right.
- 24.6 Herb:** Do you have any preference to the type of fiddle strings you use?
- 24.7 Homer:** I guess I have. At home I have the Dr. Domastic. I use those. I have used those for a long time. I have tried others and they are just not there.
- 25.1 Herb:** We hear of old time Métis fiddlers, we are talking about Métis fiddlers here, and they would use different things, whatever they could find to replace broken strings. Did you ever find yourself in a position where you had a broken string where you had to use something other than a fiddle string to finish the dance?
- 25.7 Homer:** It is funny you should ask that you know. We used to just borrow from the guitar, take the string off of the guitar and put it on the fiddle and away we would go to finish the dance and if we didn't have that, then we could use a snare wire, that worked. It didn't sound perfect but it was better than nothing, better than lip synching if that is what you want to call it, and then a lot of times we could have the old cat gut string laying around. It seemed like somebody had one in their case that they would never use and out it would come to finish.
- 26.2 Herb:** Talking about playing strategies, do you have any personal playing strategies when you use, when playing for old time fiddle dances? Like you were mentioning how when you walk into a dance how you read the crowd. Tell us more about that.

**26.6 Homer:** I guess I was kind of an athlete to start with and I always like to size up my opponent. It does not matter what it is, whether it is golf, pool, whatever, hockey, ball, baseball. I will size up my opponent. I use that same thing in playing. I will walk into a hall and have a quick look and the age group will tell me right away. This is where we are going boys and I tell them it is old time tonight and if they are middle aged and a real mixture I said guys this is going to be easy because wow the old time people are having a rest and we have the other generation giving her in country rock. I guess I can say we are kind of gifted in that way. Most of us that have played for so many years can pretty well read the crowd and go that way.

**27.9 Herb:** Where have you performed and what special memories do you have of some of these performances that meant a lot to you?

**28.0 Homer:** I have a few, I have a few that I guess will stay with me for the rest of my life. We had a mass in St. Paul which was nation wide and I was asked to play the fiddle and play the Red River Jig in a slower tempo. They gave me my little area there and I had my Sash and that day I was really proud to be a Métis. They let me do my thing. I was part of the mass and this mass was across Canada. The bishops were all there and it was like a dream when you get into situations when you figure well, when are they going to wake me up because this seems like a dream. I guess that is one of them and the other one is playing for the Governor General, Mr. Leblanc, when they sang the proclamation that time. I was there and I played for him that time. He was Acadian and he really enjoyed what I did for him and I guess the biggest feeling I ever got from a man that height was, being he is the big boss of Canada at that time, he says the last thing, he is our number one man at that time when he was Governor General. He got up and he gave me a hug and said, "Thank you. You took me home you know," and then at that time I didn't really, really understand what he meant but when somebody told me he was an Acadian, I said oh, okay because they are all fiddle players, like that is what they grew up with. Acadia was fiddles and violins you know and that was a good feeling. Another like in St. Paul, they had the senior games where they participated in golfing, ball, pool, all those things with seniors, you had to be 55 and older and we were asked to perform for these people. It was really nice. It was done in the arena and to start with it was really dark and I had this friend of mine and he was sitting way in the back and he was talking about clogging and that is what he was doing in the dark, no lights or nothing, it was so dark you couldn't even see your nose and that is what he was doing, really quietly and then he got louder and louder. When the lights came on I started playing the Red River Jig and the people kind of got into it and my grandson was kind of a young whipper snapper at the time and then the spotlight hit him and he come and dance the Red River Jig and the roof came down. He had some impact in the people that were

there, you know. They seen this little guy come out and he was good, he was just smiling away like he had done it all of his life and stuff like that will stay with me forever. Another one in the city, I was asked to come and perform and kind of be their backup band for singers right here in the festival of \_\_\_\_\_ right here in the city, not too long ago and it was a great feeling to be asked to do something like that. I always say, "Why me?" you know. There are other violin players that could do the job and to get the call I said, well it is quite an honour and stuff like that and doing the odd little stuff like being asked to go and play at a funeral in the church. To stand there and play the fiddle, it takes a lot of a person to do that you know. You are grieving to start with and then people ask you to come and do that. I think if anybody can do that, he can perform just about anything after that.

- 32.6 Herb:** What is the most requested song that a fiddler would be asked to play at a funeral?
- 32.7 Homer:** *Amazing Grace* is what they always ask and they will ask for a few hymns that I have learned over the years growing up as a young man.
- 33.0 Herb:** In the Red River Jig, many players will retune their fiddle. Do you prefer to play the Red River Jig in standard pitch or that high tune where they turn the G-string up to A?
- 33.3 Homer:** To me I just as soon leave it the way it is, but I guess I will say that in competition, that I will tune that into a high, in fairness because they expect to hear that. The other way people don't really listen to it. At a dance you might have 2, 3, maybe 4 at the most that will dance to the Red River Jig. It is over, it is done with, it is finished, but in competition it is a little different story. You must tune that, it is part of, that is Red River Jig. They have to hear that.
- 34.1 Herb:** You were talking about down east, there is the down east style of fiddling that has been referred to as playing one string at a time, whereas the Métis style of fiddling is where a fiddler is playing on many strings at once. I even heard of fiddlers playing on four strings at once. What style do you like to play?
- 34.5 Homer:** I like our own Métis playing. Maybe if I grew up in the east and heard this kind of music all the time it would be instilled in me, but my opinion, my honest opinion, I would say that I still love our Métis playing. There is a lot of feeling in our music and it is a lot of life and I find it smooth and it is not choppy. You are not going to find too many Métis tunes that are going to be choppy. I am not running down the east music, they have their own style, everybody has their own, but I wouldn't change it, I wouldn't change my style for nobody. This is me and that is the way it is going to be.

- 35.5 Herb:** Do you think it is important to play a fiddle tune note for note or by the book as they say?
- 35.7 Homer:** I play mine the way I feel that I am comfortable with. I am not going to worry about going note for note because that is not me. I have my own way of playing and people enjoy it and they don't complain. I am alright with that. If I play by note then I am not playing my own music. I am playing for the person that wrote that music and that is to me reading notes. You can't really get the feel of the music; there is no flow and to me the music is perfect and you don't get away from that. The music is right on; it sounds good. Being a Métis I am waiting for that guy that is going to get me off of that seat that is going to make me start tapping like this, and if it's not there, I don't care. You can play all day it's just not going to get me off of my chair.
- 36.8 Herb:** There is a certain amount of superstition surrounding playing fiddle tunes and open key tuning, as some players would refuse to play these open key tuning tunes at dances because they hear how fiddlers and dancers in the past have become possessed by the devil while playing them. Have you heard any such superstition or superstitious type stories about playing fiddle tunes in open key?
- 37.6 Homer:** I have, no, it does not matter to me. I just play music. I am not going to be bothered by something like that. If it did then maybe I would be scared to play the fiddle if that was the case. People tell me if you leave your fiddle in the middle of the road in the crossroads and you know, you are going to be a terrific player. But if you don't practice, I don't care how many crossroads you leave your fiddle in, you are not going to be a good fiddle player anyway. You must practice if you are going to be good at something. You have got to work on it; it is not going to come to you. Some people are gifted but how long will they keep...they will learn that tune and then forget it the next week, you know what I am saying? I don't believe in any myths of any kind.
- 38.5 Herb:** What does the Métis style of fiddling mean to you?
- 38.6 Homer:** To me, to be honest, I think that Métis style fiddling is that is me. You are not going to take that away from me because that is me. I am Métis and this is what you are listening to. This is our music. You have taken away everything else from us, but don't take away the Red River Jig from me because you will never take it from me. This is mine and it is mine and I am going to play it. My first tape I say fiddling my way and I am going to play the Red River Jig my way and that is just the way it is going to be and you are not going to change that. I am pretty stubborn when it comes to when somebody says something

about Métis you know. That is me and you are not going to change my music or whatever I do and that is it.

**39.6 Herb:** What has fiddling drawn to your life and what does fiddle playing mean to you?

**39.7 Homer:** To me fiddle playing means patience, putting food on the table, opportunity to show my talent that I can play this. It is one of the hardest instruments to play, and I guess I can just plainly say I am not afraid to take a risk. I have this to showcase anywhere and I get called for it and it is a good feeling to say, "Bring your fiddle, we have something for you to do for us, okay?" "I will be there." "What time do you want me to be there?" I guess being gifted I can, my timing is fairly good. I can keep, timing is very important and I guess it is a lot of stuff, the fiddle. Some day I am going to write a book on the fiddle alone. I have learned so much from this thing. It might not be a big book, but a small one on how I see the fiddle and what it means to me and what it can do. I will tell you one thing, I used to play in old age homes and we could be doing a lot of singing and I pick up that fiddle and start playing the Red River Jig and those people that were sitting, they are moving and I just look at their feet and their feet are just going and they are supposed to be sitting. It is music and it is a healer. It just brings the people up like that. I started playing this thing and start kicking my feet and the next thing you know the guy who is in a wheel chair who can't hardly talk or move and he is sitting their looking at me and his tears are coming and that is just, you know, nice. I have done something for him, he is so happy, he can't talk, move or nothing but he can't stop the tears, tears of happiness and that is a good feeling. And he said to those guys, "How can you do that, you know how can you make this guy do that?" He never says nothing and look, I said, "You know that fiddle, you have to watch it. You know it does wonders," so I am always called to do something. If something happened in that place they will give me a call and say, "Can you come over?" and I say, "Sure, I will be there." It is funny, this fiddle is something. I have seen that.

**42.8 Herb:** That is probably why I like being around the fiddle myself.

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### **Tape Two: Side A**

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**00.1 Herb:** What would be your advice to any beginner or novice fiddler?

**00.2 Homer:** The biggest one I guess for me is making that commitment and make sure you love your music. It is not saying well don't listen to somebody. You take that fiddle and start playing. You have got to love, make that commitment and say, "I want to be a fiddle player," and pick that up even if it takes you forever to learn one tune then, so be it, don't quit. Just keep going. You can only get better. You can't

get worse .I don't believe in that. The more you practice, the more you play, the more you enjoy your music to understand you can only get better. The sky is the limit. There are some fiddlers that are great but there is always somebody better. I don't care what anybody says, I don't care how great you are going to be, there is always somebody come along and aw I can't do that, how did you do that. I guess that is the story of the fiddle. There is always something new to learn and I have my fiddle is, this might seem kind of odd to some people but my fiddle is right underneath me, right under my bed and that is where it stays. That is me, it has to be there. Sometimes I get up in the morning some weekend and I feel like oh this tune and I just reach underneath pull out the fiddle and start playing before I even wash my face. *Ha, ha.*

**02.2 Herb:** That is good. As a traditional old time Métis fiddler how would you like your grandchildren to remember you?

**02.3 Homer:** In a good way, where I didn't abuse my music. I don't really want to force my grandchildren to take it up because like I say, there will be somebody anyway. Somebody, maybe not this generation but somebody will pick it up from my family and away they go. Why I am saying that is because my uncle Pete, not one of his kids play music and my dad played a little bit and I am just the opposite you know. I took over that but who knows who will take over when the girls' kids, when the kids of somebody's kids is going to take over, but it is there, they are all musical and not only that I will kind of brag a little bit while we are on TV. In my family alone there is a, well-educated. The wife has two degrees and she has her Masters, and my oldest daughter has two degrees and she has her Masters. My second daughter has two degrees and she is talking about getting her Masters. My third daughter has her certificate and she has a diploma and she is working for Indian Affairs today. My fourth daughter is working on her education right now, my boy is having a little rough time but he will get there. He is starting to see the light now and I am really happy about that, and my other boy well he is a genius. He wants to be a doctor. So all those little things you know, I can't explain it. I guess I am in God's hands. The Creator took good care of me and I can't really...Like some people ask me, "If you were going to make a change in your life, what would it be?" and I said, "I don't know." I think I would ask him if I could be better looking. There is just nothing else. *Ha, ha.*

**04.8 Herb:** One more question Homer. How do you feel about participating in the Gabriel Dumont Institute's *Drops of Brandy* and other traditional Métis fiddle tunes CD and book project?

**05.0 Homer:** I was honoured when I got the call and said hey how would you like to participate in this? I said you know I am person that would

like to try anything. I am not scared to try anything. I said, "When would you like this to happen?" They said, "We'll work on it and we will give you a call." So when they did call me I went and I walked in there and I had never seen these other people before. The only one I knew was John and with this great feeling. I knew John from Emma Lake and I walked in there and these guys started introducing me to these guys. Like I said again, I said what am I doing here you know but that was not it. When we all got around and started playing the violin, fiddle you know it seems like I just fit in the situation and I didn't worry about nothing and we went to town and it was a good feeling, and I thought it was about time we did something like this and when it is just frustrating is that when we go to a fiddle contest the minute they know and they see that we are Aboriginal, our chances of winning are pretty grim. I hate to say this but I have seen that done. I have heard it and I have heard the people play the music okay and thought when are we going to wake up and have our own? There is enough of us that can do just as good or better and I thought this was great. Let's show our stuff and you guys can compare and listen to the CD or whatever has to be done and you guys compare. I don't want to say who is better or what it is, just that there are different styles so if somebody is looking for a certain style of fiddler, well look at that CD and oh that is the one we want to come and do our show or whatever, wherever you fit, and I think initially that was the idea behind all of this, is someday, maybe somebody, will hear this and say they are looking for a certain kind of violin player and they will say, "Can you get into contact with this person?" I think that is what they kind of come up with and I was game for that.

**07.8 Herb:** Well, that was very nice and on a personal note I thank you very much for spending the time with this interview and it was sure a pleasure to meet you and hear you play this afternoon at Métis festival 2001 here in Edmonton, and I look forward to when the project is all done and put on CDs. I am sure it will make a lot of people happy. It sure made me happy and I just want to say on behalf of Gabriel Dumont Institute, thank you very much.

**08.6 Homer:** It was an honour. Thanks for asking. I appreciate it.

**16.2 Herb:** What make of a fiddle is that?

**16.2 Homer:** I can't even tell you. There is a little story on this fiddle, this one here. We used to have parties at home when I was just a young man, a teenager, and this Whitford, Cy Whitford, he owned this fiddle and that is the party fiddle, and it sounded good and I got home and back and just to make a story short, I got home and I mentioned this fiddle to the wife one time and I said, "I sure knew where that fiddle went," and that was it. Never said nothing after that. Then all of sudden at Christmas, this fiddle she has wrapped it nice and she said,

"Is this what you are looking for?" And I looked at it and just started to cry. I said, "Where did you get it?" I recognized it but what somebody had done was revarnished the whole thing and just made a mess and when I picked it up and did this, it was there before and I said to the wife, "I am going to redo this thing and I'll take things off." So I did. It took five years. I took my time because I had the other one and I took it to Helen \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ Don't fix it up. It took him three years, with all this on here. It is a trade mark already. When he was done he said, "Come and see it," you know, "Come and play," and when I picked it up and started to play I said, "Holy shit," cause I had played so much on it already before and now when somebody, which you call it there Mel Bedard said, "Let's see your fiddle," he said "Let me try it," and I did, but it is not too often that I let somebody play my fiddle, and he picked it up and started playing and holy shit he said, "It's easy to play," and he said, "I don't suppose you want to sell it?" I said, "That is just like you are swearing at me." "Oh okay then. I am sorry," he says. There is no price on this. There are little marks on the inside and I don't know what it is. I thought at first it was one of those \$19.95 fiddles that they had ordered one time, but look at the back and the sides, the grain is too nice and it has a solid back so it is not \$19.00. Here is my trademark. If somebody tries to take it away, there is an eagle. I like it. Nice and light.

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**Tape Ends at 27.3**

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