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Steve Carrasas: Dayton Music History Project

Steve Carrasas

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Dayton Music History Project
Interview with Steve Carrasas, March 14, 2018

Interview Information

Interview date: March 14, 2018

Interviewer: Chris Wydman (CW)
Special Collections & Archives

Interviewee: Steve Carrasas (SC)

Interview Transcript

Steve Carrasas: Will you be asking me questions?

Chris Wydman: Yeah, but we'll just kind of freeform it a bit. Again, I can come up with a bunch of dumb questions, but I brought you out here to listen to you. But thanks for coming back, and just to get this started, it's March 14, 2018, my name is Chris Wydman, archivist at Special Collections & Archives at Wright State, and as part of the Dayton Music Project and following up on our first story circle event that we had last November, it's my pleasure to have Steve Carrasas here, and he participated in the story circle and agreed to come in to spend a little one-on-one time with us to get a little bit more of his background and some more of his reflections. So, thanks for coming in, Steve.

SC: You're quite welcome.

CW: Again, we'll just kind of let it rip here, but kind of to get started, just a little bit about your own personal background. Were you born here in Dayton?

SC: I was actually born in Utica, New York. Now, there's a story behind that, and I think I told a little bit of the story when I was here the last time, but during World War II my mother joined WAC [Women's Army Corps], she wanted to serve her country, and she was home on leave from Texas- she worked at a hospital taking care of the wounded- and there was also a band in town performing at the Victory [Theatre], called the USS Helena Survivors Band with Alvino Rey, which was a famous guitar-slide player-

CW: Alvina Ray?

SC: Alvino Rey.

CW: Like, R-A-Y? Okay.

SC: I better go back on the story. My father was at Pearl Harbor when it got bombed. He had joined the military before the war broke out, and he was a musician. He went to school in Washington DC, got accepted, and the whole naval band on the ship all stays together, so he was on the USS Honolulu. He survived that, and actually it's kind of weird, there was a battle of the bands going on at Pearl Harbor, not a lot of people know that. All the bands were competing for this big trophy. The band to beat was the [USS] Arizona band, they were the best, and during all the nights down there all these bands were performing, [and] my father's band performed, the Honolulu band.

CW: So, these were the bands of the different-

SC: -of the different ships.

CW: Of the different ships, okay.

SC: And then of course they got bombed at Pearl Harbor, and the Arizona band was lost, all of the band members, every band member. They were back in their quarters. My father got transferred with his band to the USS Helena, and was in Solomon Islands when it got in a big battle and his ship was sunk. The survivors of the band, there were so many survivors of the band after the ship was bombed, they put them on a war bond tour. So my father was performing at Victory Theatre with Alvino Rey and the survivors of the Helena band, and he had some time to kill so he went down to the USO club down the road, I think it was down on St. Clair Street or somewhere in that area, and my mom just happened to be down there with her girlfriend at the time, and my mom caught his eye, and they carried on a long distance relationship for a long time. [..?.] So I guess my mom was a groupie, in short. [Laughs]

CW: Right! So their meeting, this was right after the war.

SC: Right after the war, yeah, and they got married, and I was born in '48. Unfortunately, my dad passed away from problems from the war when I was six months old. My mother moved back from Utica, New York, back to Dayton, where I grew up, and like I said, I played trombone in high school and grade school, I was always interested in music. I was in the church choir, you know, I was in the choir at school, I always had an interest in music, I always loved the drums, I didn't get to play those often, I didn't get to play those until 1970.

CW: So your dad, what did he play?

SC: He was a brass, he did trumpet, sousaphone, tuba.

CW: So, you knew... was there any other sort of music history in your family? You always knew about your dad.

SC: My uncle, which was his youngest brother, was also a musician, and he's in the Drum and Bugle Corps Hall of Fame, his name was Solon Carrasas. He got more into the trumpet.

CW: What was his first name again?

SC: Solon Carrasas.

CW: Solon? Okay.

SC: Greek, [laughs]. And my grandfather played violin. So, a little bit of musical background in my family. But I've got to put in another two cents worth. When they were building the Arizona Memorial, by the way, the trophy that all these bands were try to get during the battle of the bands, after the war they said, hey, the Arizona band was the best band anyway, let's give them the trophy. The trophy now is called the Arizona Trophy. The hall is still there, not too far, where all the bands were performing. They were trying to come up with money to build the Arizona Memorial, the government would not give them any money. They wanted the states to give them money. Kids were sending in pennies and nickels and dimes, whatever they could afford, they were still short. The committee, the Arizona committee got a call from Colonel Tom Parker, and Colonel Tom says, "I have a gentleman who is going to be in Hawaii doing some filming, and he will do a free concert, but every dime has to go towards the Arizona Memorial. And the person who came in, he was filming *Blue Hawaii*, was Elvis Presley. So Elvis Presley had a lot to do with- another musician [laughs], but then they had enough money to do the memorial, and actually, it's weird, because Elvis Presley played in the same hall where they had the battle of the bands. So it was kind of unique. So, I grew up in Dayton, like I said, I'm a young kid-

CW: Whereabouts did you grow up?

SC: I went to Wilbur Wright High School, east end. I went to Residence Park for a little while, then we moved to the east end of town. But I'm working in a car wash, I'm like 16, 15, and *Wipeout* comes on the radio, and I start playing *Wipeout* on the window, and a guy says, "Oh, man! Are you a drummer?" I said, "Man, I always like to play drums, I do it in the high school band, I'm always messing around, I've always wanted to play", and he goes, "Oh, I've got a set of drums at the house. We've got to start a band". I said, "Wow, cool, man". "Well, come on over!" I go over to his house, he's got a whole drum set in his basement, and he calls a couple of friends up. The guy, Greg Summers was his name, there was Jim Shaw-

CW: Greg Summers?

SC: Greg Summers was the guitar player, Jim Shaw was the rhythm guitar player, at the time Jim Shaw was the bass player, and Gary Shecklehoff was the drummer, ended up being the drummer. Anyway, we started working out some songs that Greg knew, some Beatles songs- this was 1964- and nobody wanted to sing. They kept saying, "Well, you

sing. You've got a good voice". I said, "I don't want to sing them all". "Oh, no, you sing, you sing".

CW: Nobody else wanted to do it.

SC: Nobody else wanted to sing, nobody wanted to get in front of people. So, we've got the mic stand back by the drums, I was playing drums. Six weeks later, Greg goes, "Any way your parents will buy you a drum set? Because Gary's parents want him to take his drum set home". He'd never shown up, at all. I begged my parents. Mom didn't work, dad worked in a factory, three brothers, okay? So I told Greg, "I don't know what to do. I can't find any used drum sets, I can't afford a new one, my parents won't buy me one", and he goes, "Well, you've got such a good voice. Why don't you just sing, and teach Gary how to play the drums? It's his drums anyway". "That'll work. That's work".

CW: But you didn't even know how to play drums.

SC: Well, I've always kind of had a knack. I've always liked them. But I never got a chance to.

CW: Some people just seem to take to it naturally, yeah.

SC: So, I ended up teaching him how to play drums, and I became the lead singer. We played YMCA's, teen centers- we played in Brookville, there was a lot of teen centers back then. There were a lot of things for kids to go. There's nowhere for them to go today.

CW: How old were you at the time?

SC: I'm thinking 15, 16 years old. I had to walk to band practice, which I lived on Burkhardt and Dabel Theatre was kind of a ways up, and I had to walk all way up there just for band practice. But sometimes I got a ride.

CW: Did you have a name for your band?

SC: I'm sorry?

CW: Did you have a name for your band at the time?

SC: The name of that band was called the Outcasts.

CW: The Outcasts. That was your-

SC: As a matter of fact, I have here that I found, [*holds up an old flyer*], "There is a battle of the bands, Mike and the Mustangs, The Dynamics, and The Outcasts, at the Burkhardt Center, 75 cents to get in". [*Laughs*] We won 8 bucks a piece, which was ungodly, you know?

CW: Right!

SC: I mean, it was a pretty packed place.

CW: You were doing business now.

SC: I was washing cars for 75 cents an hour. So how could this be? I'm having a good time, and I'm making money! At the time, my hair was greased back, but it was kind of long, and one day I was actually kind of making fun of The Beatles, and I said, "I'm just going to let it go down and go to school". Well, all of these girls were going, "Oh", "Oh", "Oh", you know, so-

CW: They liked it?

SC: Oh, they loved it. My parents hated it, but they loved it. So I had to grease it back when I got home, and I had to let it out when I got to school. But it was a good time in school, I was in choir, I was still playing trombone in the high school band, and after school I was doing the band practice. We would play at a lot of teen centers, I remember New Year's Eve playing at the Kettering YMCA, the Lohrey Center downtown, it seemed like there were a lot more rec centers. There was one there by Stivers, across the street, there was the Burkhardt Center, Belmont had one, so there were quite a few places to play. I was in that band for about a year, then Greg set me down with Jim one time, Jim Neff, and said, "Steve, we're going to go I in a different direction, and we don't know whether we can use you or not. We don't want to hurt your feelings and you're a good singer, but we're wanting to do soul music", and I said, "That's fine".

CW: So what kind of songs were you playing?

SC: We were doing a lot of the Beatles, but in '64 there wasn't that much music out by The Beatles, so you had to do some other stuff. I even remember doing some... I'd walk off the stage and they'd do some instrumentals. As a matter of fact, [pulling out some copies], I've got some of the top hits of '64, there's a couple of Beatles songs, there's Roy Orbison, you've got Dean Martin, *Everybody Loves Somebody*, you've got Al Hirt and *Java*, *Hard Day's Night*, Manfred Mann, *Doo Way Diddy*, *Under the Boardwalk*. It was a time when things were changing. You had the beach music, the soul music was coming in, and then you had The Beatles. And there was a mixture of folk, from Peter, Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan was coming out, [so] you had the soul music, the beach music, and The Beatles, the English rock. There was a big conglomeration of music coming out, but in '64 there wasn't quite as much we could choose from. I mean, there was a couple, *Please Please Me*, The Dave Clark Five, *Glad All Over*, I remember that song. And the thing is some of these bands- and when we had the group talk we talked about this- a lot of these groups were our age.

CW: They were all very young.

SC: You know, Carlos Santana is 8 months older than I am.

CW: So, it was all young people being inspired by the new music.

SC: There was a lot of young people, and in '64 there wasn't a whole lot of bands. The Beatles had just kind of came out, we had just lost a president, you know, we lost Kennedy, there was a cultural change in civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, and all of a sudden, The Beatles came out, and it was like it's okay to be different. It's okay to be different. Being different is okay. I often wonder what society would have been like without the Beatles coming over. I've often wondered that. I think they changed our complete society.

CW: Before the Beatles, what was the popular music then?

SC: Well, the popular music was like... Oh, I would say Roy Orbison was good, the Supremes were good, there was a lot of soul music around, Martha and the Vandellas, the Chiffons. Of course, Elvis was kind of going out, and new stuff was coming in, so I'm in the beginning of all this change in music.

CW: Everything changing, right.

SC: I mean, when you've got Louis Armstrong, Hello Dolly, right up there underneath the Beatles, it's so opposite. The Beatles just made a big influence. The more I listened to the Beatles and the English music, the more I enjoyed the music. It was not super hard, although some of the Beatles chords were a little complicated, but it just had this music that was just-

CW: What was so different about it?

SC: Usually, your chords are three-chord progression songs, like a lot of country songs. The Beatles were not like that. Their endings were different, their music was different, they didn't copy anybody, they were all original with their music. It was just a different sound. We had the Vietnam War going on, like I said we had lost President Kennedy, we had the Vietnam War going on, we had a lot of civil rights issues going on with the blacks and the whites, the whole thing with the women's rights were the same way. But with these things, I got to watch the change, and I'm glad I was there for the change in people and music, and I just happen to get an early start in '64, of course some of the guys got an earlier start than that. Anyway, after I got replaced by a really nice black guy, Marvin Smith, and I think her name was Bev, and they had the best harmony of anybody I've ever heard. So, the group the Outcasts became Marv and Bev and the Triumphs.

CW: The Triumphs, playing more of a soul-

SC: Yeah, they did more of the soul music. I went and started another band-

CW: Did they still call themselves the Outcasts, or did they spin off completely?

SC: No, they changed it to Marv and Bev and the Triumphs.

CW: Were they playing with some of your other friends that you started with?

SC: Well, the Outcasts, my old group, became the Triumphs. And I actually started another group. It was a time when they think everyone that had long hair was a musician, for some reason. Downtown was really thriving, believe me. It was thriving.

CW: I remember at the circle, they were saying that everyone went down and kind of would hang out on the steps of Courthouse Square.

SC: Courthouse Square. You had Mayor's Records, if you wanted to go down and listen to records and play records and meet people, you had the arcade, McCrory's, the courthouse. Everything was safe, there were no problems, and I'll be darned if every time I didn't go down there, I'd meet some other guy that's got long hair. Of course, they called us beatniks before they called us hippies. But some were musicians, some weren't musicians. I met John Marshall, my new bass player for my second band, downtown. He was a bass player, and I said, "Do you know a guitar player as well?", and he said, "I know a couple", so we just started asking around. Of course, we started wearing the weird hippie clothes and the bellbottoms and the paisley and the madras shirts that bled.

CW: So, were people lugging their guitars downtown and playing on the courthouse steps?

SC: Yeah, lugging our guitars downtown. The thing about downtown Dayton is it was safe, and it was thriving. There was a place that was called The Alley Door, it was like a coffee shop, you could go in there and play folk music, and do your poetry that you wrote, you could sell your artwork. There was also a church-

CW: Yeah. The Down There.

SC: The Down There. There was a church, I can't remember the name of the church, where it was called The Down There. Let's see, there was the Alley Door, and the Down There. The Down There, I met musicians down there playing folk music. It was a church that had a big rec center, you could wander in there and they had refreshments, they had if you wanted to paint you could paint, they had a small stage where I met some folk musicians. It was like an open stage.

CW: So, the church just kind of opened their doors. And you keep coming back to that there were more kinds of places for kids to go, but this was more like creative outlets.

SC: And I found out that I was artistic in a different way. I was artistic, musically. I can't draw a person, but a lot of the musicians, the artists, and the poets all think alike. It's the way we're wired. So we had a lot in common, even though we didn't- this guy didn't play music, he was a poet, but we were all artists and we all thought alike, and the more I

went downtown, the more people I would meet. I was with this band for a while, this was called The Forbidden Figures, it was, let's see, there was John Marshall, Jim DeBord-

CW: DeBord?

SC: DeBord. I just saw him the other day. Phil Linville. Michael Holvoigt, who passed.

CW: What was that last name?

SC: Holvoigt.

CW: Holvoigt. The reason I keep asking about these names is that when we transcribe, that always gets to be the most difficult thing.

SC: Mike Holvoigt. He passed away, unfortunately. I was playing with them, we did two or three shows, we got in a couple of battles of the bands, I'll go over some of the places that we played. But unfortunately, we had a few of we called them the greasers, who didn't like the guys with the long hair. Jim got punched in the mouth while we were playing at my high school, and his mom had to take him and get stitches put in. Most of the time, you got bullied but not slapped or hit, so that was pretty uncommon. I was with that group for probably 8 months, I'm the one that actually got to form the group together, until I went out and heard these kids play. I was out one night when we were playing, and I heard these young group, and they were 14 years old, and this guitar player when it came to the lead, and I'm like, 'Oh, man, this kid is talented. What a talent'. The kid was Ira Stanley, and he was 14, the other guys were about the same age. There was Ira Stanley, Kenny Mirre, there was Mike Delaney on drums, and, let's see, there was Kenny Mirre on rhythm, Ira on lead, Steve Conley was the bass player, and Mike Delaney, the drummer. I was so impressed with the band, their music was so good, even though it was the same songs. It's the way it was performed by Ira, when it came to the parts.

CW: The guitar?

SC: The guitar. He was just talented. And so I asked them if they needed a lead singer, a front man, and said that I had played in bands before. And I was 18, I think, at the time, 17, maybe 18, and they were 14. So, that was the group, December's Children, we worked together for a couple of years, one of my favorite bands. We talked about why so many good musicians came from Dayton, I remember us bringing that up the last time. I think because of the Beatle craze, and because everyone and their brother was going out and getting guitars and amps and drums and basses, unlike today when you may have 50 kids playing music, you had 200 kids playing music. Every block, like they said, had a band playing in it. Some bands didn't last very long, some of the musicians they would practice the guitar for a couple months, figure 'I can't do this', and sell their guitar and amp. But it also brought out the naturals. So if you take a bunch of musicians, and all of a sudden this this guy's a natural drummer, and this guy's a natural bass player, and this guy's a natural singer, you're bringing out the best of the musicians, too. There was all

kinds of places to play, we had the Lohrey Center downtown, and the biggest place to play was Forest Park.

CW: Okay. What was the place downtown called?

SC: Lohrey. Lohrey Center.

CW: Okay. Forest Park?

SC: Forest Park was The Caverns. You'll hear me call it The She, Papaluski's, there was different names that went on there, but the main one was the Forest Park Caverns.

CW: Its funny, but since our story circle, and talking to other people about different things in growing up in Dayton, it keeps coming up.

SC: That was the big place. They were having battle of the bands, there was GBU Hall, teen centers it seemed they were popping up all over. The more the years went by, the more teen centers there were. But we were so fortunate, because Forest Park, Ted Nugent was playing there it seemed like every other week, Ted Nugent and the Amboy Dukes. Simon and Garfunkel was performing there. Terry Knight and the Pack, which became Grand Funk Railroad was performing there. There was a lot of groups that came through Dayton. I remember in the early battle of the bands, there was a band called- let's see, what was the name of that group, I'll think of it here in a minute. Anyway, it became the McCoy's. The Rick Z Combo, that's what it was. The Rick Z Combo, which was Rick Zehringer, he changed his name to Rick Derringer, from Union City, Indiana. They became the Rick Z Combo-

CW: These names keep popping up.

SC: Yeah. And then all of a sudden they became the McCoy's, and they actually recorded *Hang on Sloopy* when he was 17. So, these people, we got to know all of these musicians. Ted Nugent, like I said, was there all of the time. Mark Farnum, I remember changing clothes in the back room with them at the Blue Moon. I would say-

CW: Why were they all coming to Dayton to play?

SC: Well, a lot of them were from- the Amboy Dukes were from Ann Arbor, and Terry Knight and the Pack was from around the same area, and it was close to travel. But on the other hand, there was some groups that came through town to perform- I remember at the Kettering Skating Rink, the Sun Rays, that song, "sun, sun, sun, sun, I live for the sun", they performed, and I'm like, I'm telling Ira, "We're better than they are". So, it's who you knew, if you had the connections or whatever, but the people making it were just right here with us [*holds one hand just above the other*]. I remember The Ohio Players, there was a little bit of soul, there were tons of groups. We had a lot of backing from DJs. Gene "By Golly" Barry, Doc Holiday, there was a little... you could go down by where they were doing their station, right in front of the window, I remember going down there with the band one time with a poster, going, "Hi from December's Children". The whole

band was outside the window while he was talking, “Hey, I’ve got December’s Children here with me, looking at me”. You’d get that was free publicity. As time went along, more bands, there were some bands that folded, some that stayed. Of course, you got the good bands fighting for so many jobs, there were a lot of places to play, and all of a sudden it started going out. You had the Sugar Shack in Fairborn, there was a place in Miamisburg to play, we played at the Piqua 36 Skating Rink, we played at Xenia, we played in New Carlisle, so it started spreading out. Now, it was a funny story, I think I told you about the hearse. I had a ’50 Chevy Coupe that bit the bullet, so I found a ’50 Pontiac Hearse, and boy, did that fit our bill. You could haul the band equipment in it, all the members could sit in there, and we could all travel together, and I put “December’s Children” on the sides.

CW: So, everybody knew you were coming.

SC: Everybody knew we were coming, the guy with the long hair. But Max and Joyce Rogers, I think I said this on the other tape, I have to give them more credit. We didn’t have a booking agent, booking agents were kind of few and far between. He had a head shop down in downtown Dayton, and he decided to book bands. He had a secretary, her name was Penny Garnett, and I want to give her credit because she did all of the photo shoots, she got photographers, she did all of the envelopes, the printing, going out and getting jobs, booking the bands, doing the contracts-

CW: Yeah, I noticed, in this folder of materials that you sent, a lot of stuff like that. The business cards, and one thing I noticed-

SC: Yeah, the business cards.

CW: Yeah. December’s Children. And they misspelled your name. Steve Carusus.

[Laughing]

But they all say “Rogers Productions” on them.

SC: He really, really helped a lot of us groups. I remember Captain Crunch and the Crew, you know, I remember seeing them. He ended up buying a place that was an old garage, and at one end he had a stage, and at the other end he had another stage.

CW: Was that the Psychedelic...

SC: That was the Psychedelic Grape. It was first called Wing Island, then it was called Psychedelic Grape. But you’d walk from one end down to the other end, the people would, and you’d play here, and when you were done playing, the people would walk down to the stage on the other end. It was fantastic to play there, too. That was a nice place to play, I liked that.

CW: And this was all... Rogers bought that. He had a small business downtown, and-

SC: Rogers, yes, bought the building, and set all the bands up, and did the whole thing. A lot of production there, he started knowing a lot of people, getting to know a lot of people with WING, like I said, it was WING Island for a while. It was just- and the songs that were coming out! When I got into December's Children-

CW: Were you guys doing- were bands starting to do original material? Or was it mainly covers?

SC: There were a few bands doing original material, and I think that was where we kind of missed the boat. We didn't have anybody writing. We just were having such a good time being out playing and performing.

CW: That that was kind of your ceiling.

SC: We were always like, "Why did that band make it and we didn't?" Well, it's because we didn't write any songs, maybe. *[Laughs]*

CW: "Ding". Right.

SC: I remember McKinley Park, down by the Dayton Art Institute. Are you familiar with that? That little park? I remember sometimes playing for free, just to play, because we enjoyed playing so much. The old ice cream truck would pull up, and of course he's got a generator, and you could plug your amps into the generator, and if you didn't plug too many amps in you could set right out there and have a concert outside.

CW: So, was there pretty much music going on, like, every night of the week?

SC: Probably, yeah. Probably there was somebody playing somewhere.

CW: It's crazy to think, you know, from here looking back to then, it sounds like there was probably more live music going on back then.

SC: Oh, there was a lot of live music. Like I said, the ones who didn't stick with it long enough to learn guitar or whatever kind of fell by the wayside, but then the guys that were playing all the time would actually get better. I remember I was the old guy in the band, of course like I said, I'm 17 or 18, and they're 14, so I'm kind of like the King Tut of the group-

CW: Right, you're getting long in the tooth at 18.

SC: *[Laughs]* Right, I'm the senior. I remember telling the guys to go over and over, we might go over one song for a whole practice just make sure that was perfect, and the endings were right, and all of the right parts were there.

CW: So that's how you distinguished yourself.

SC: I think that made a lot of difference. I was never a great singer, I'm an okay singer, but I think the tightness of the band made the difference and made you sound more professional. And I remember the guys whining about, "Well, that's good enough", "that's good enough", "that's good enough". Well, how many bands do the song three times and go, "Well, that's good enough. Let's learn another song". The problem we had back in '65, I could go down this list of songs from '65-

CW: Not a lot of songs. Yeah.

SC: There were so many songs coming out in '66 and '67 that you couldn't learn them quick enough. And these songs, *Wooly Bully*, and some of these Righteous Brothers songs, all of these songs are still popular today. It's amazing that these songs-

CW: I remember Ira saying that one summer he took the summer off just to learn a whole new catalog of songs.

SC: Cream, and all of that.

CW: Yeah, exactly!

SC: We had new bands coming out, new groups coming out, it was a time when there was a change in... the whole world was changing. Like I said, we had the Vietnam War going on, and a lot of this stuff is protest music, of course, but when you're young, crank the amp up! Maybe we can yell at people, or even better, turn it up a little more! Even amplifiers, some of them went from 60 amp, which was the biggest you could get, to 100 amp. So, it was a time when the world was changing, society was changing, and I just happen to get caught right in the middle of it.

CW: Timing's everything, right.

SC: I was just lucky to be where I was at, at the time, and fortunate enough to play with a bunch of good musicians.

CW: It's interesting how music started to change when the Beatles dropped. We have an old picture of the Rolling Stones playing at Hara Arena-

SC: Yeah, they said they'd never play again. Did you hear that one?

CW: I mean, they showed the floor, and it's like half empty, if not more.

SC: They said that the story behind that was that they loved the blues, and they came to record at somewhere down south-

CW: Muscle Shoals?

SC: Somewhere, but they wouldn't let them in because they weren't black.

CW: Really? “You’re not a blues band”. Right!

SC: [*Laughs*] So, they came all the way from England to over here, and they got turned down.

CW: “You’re English. What are you doing here?”

SC: “Oh, yeah, you like your blues, you go ahead and play your blues. But you’re not going to record here!” It might have been King Records. I’m wanting to think, because I recorded down with a group down in the same area, I can’t remember where it was it. Anyway, so the Stones didn’t have any money to get back, and they were hurting for money. They ended up somebody booked them at Hara Arena, and they didn’t go over very well. [*Laughs*] It didn’t pack the place, they didn’t go over very well, and they said, “We’ll never be back”.

CW: We have a news clipping, too.

SC: Oh, really? No one liked them.

CW: Yeah. It was awful, just panning them. It was funny.

SC: That is funny. But with society changing, and it’s okay to be different, and it’s okay to be artistic, and it’s okay to be folk music, and we also- I heard Jim say something about we were fortunate, because a lot of the parents worked in the factories here in town and could afford a guitar and amp for their kids.

CW: Oh, Jim, Jim Foreman?

SC: Yeah, Jim Foreman. Which was true, a lot of the parents had decent jobs and they could afford to buy their kids guitars and amps, which was good. But also, a lot of southern people came up from Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, to get these factory jobs at General Motors. When they came up, a lot of them played bluegrass, a lot of them played country, and they brought the music with them. So, grandpa could play that country guitar, you know, and dad could play that mandolin. So a lot of the kids that I know- like Fran Davis, whose dad played mandolin or banjo or whatever- the parents were teaching the kids, helping them learn to play. I don’t like their music, but it’s kind of cool how they learned how to play guitar. So, I don’t like the music, but “Hey, that’s kind of cool that you’re taking after your dad and playing a guitar”.

CW: Yeah, and it’s kind of a melding probably with the bluegrass and the Appalachian tradition that was in Dayton.

SC: Exactly. I remember... where did I meet him at? I met Question Mark, from Question Mark & the Mysterians. Somewhere, way back when. I was talking to him and I was kind of shocked, because he was Hispanic. And I was like, “Oh, wow, you’ve got a

good voice". They were kind of a one hit wonder, they did maybe a couple of songs, but they were a good group, nice guys, and they were all Hispanic. They moved up from Texas to Michigan. Their picture was never on any of their albums, because they were Hispanic. Which is sad.

CW: Yeah, I've heard of that before. We visited the Motown Museum, and they talked about the marketing and album covers, and how that was done.

SC: It's just sad that it was that way, and even in '65, I remember there was a guy that I worked with at the car wash, a black guy, and I wanted to take him to a diner to get something to eat, and he goes, "Steve, I can't go in there", and I said, "We're just getting a sandwich", and he said, "No, I can't go in there", and I said, "Why?", and he said, "They don't like black people in there, Steve". I felt so bad, I was going to buy his lunch. So, I still saw a lot of that, you know, riding on the back of the bus or crossing the street instead of walking by you, and I got to see a lot of that, and we all wanted to change that. It came... I don't know how it grew, it just kind of came along with all of this music, and with the 'No Vietnam', and 'let's have peace, not war'. It was a changing time that I got to go through, I'm glad I went through the '60s that way, and the music, people were listening to the music and liking it, and when they started listening to the words they'd go, "Oh, I get it now". But as the music progressed, you know, we got The Byrds, and a lot of Bob Dylan stuff, and there was a lot of protest music. Unfortunately, some of our friends were coming back in coffins from Vietnam, too. I remember a friend of mine who played guitar, he got drafted and unfortunately, he lost his life. Donnie Brewer. But, anyway, I was with December's Children for a while, Ira ended up leaving the group and going with Victorian Skiffles, which was a really well-known group started by Vondal Moore, and this band kind of disbanded, and I went with a different group in Miamisburg called the Dayton Sound, where I was the lead singer.

CW: The Dayton Sound.

SC: The Dayton Sound, they were from Miamisburg. I had a friend, Bill Caudill, who was with B.C. and the Cavemen, the bass player was a friend of mine called Mike Lazzara, and he was actually the old guitar player for a group that used to play at the Psychedelic Grape, called The Things, he was in a band called The Things. Well, we were all friends, and they were a three-piece group, and I get a call one night and I said- we didn't have cell phones [*laughs*]- so I get a call at the house, and Mike Lazzara says- this is in 1970- "We're in Fairborn right now and we need a drummer. Can you call Tommy Meyer or somebody?" And I said, "Where's Sonny Songer, your drummer?"

CW: We have a drummer emergency!

SC: He said, "He's AWOL from the service, AND the MPs just picked him up". I said, "What??" He said, "I'll call you back in five minutes". He was actually they were setting stuff up in Fairborn. So, I called Tommy Meyers, I can't get ahold of them, and I called a couple of drummers I know, I even called Mike Delaney, my old drummer. I can't get ahold of anybody. So, Mike Lazzara, a half-hour goes by and he calls me back, "Did you

get a drummer? We've got to play here in about forty-five minutes!" I said, "No, Mike, I can't find anyone". He says, "Well, get your ass down here. You know how to play drums". "I only know three or four beats, I'm not that good a drummer!" "You are playing drums tonight!" So, I end up showing up at Fairborn and played at the dance, and at the end of the night- I did pretty good, I didn't do anything fancy, I just kept a straight beat- and at the end of the night, Bill Caudill says, "Now, we're going to practice Tuesday, can you make it? Do you have anything planned for Tuesday at 6 o'clock?" And I said, "Okay, I'm fine", so I end up going and practicing with them, and after practice I go, "Bill, I have to ask you a question. Am I just filling in until something happens", and he goes, "No. I want you to play drums", and I go, "I'm not that good". He says, "Steve, in a three-piece group, I want a basic drummer and a basic bass. Because too many drummers I know put too much in there, and it gets garbled. You can't do that in a three-piece group. I want basic". He said, "With you and Mike"- the bass player, Mike Lazzara- "I should be able to walk off the stage and you guys should be able to keep the rhythm going", and I said, "Okay". Well, Bill was an absolute... he loved harmony. So, I stayed with the group. He said, "Yeah, I talked to Sonny Songer's mom and she said you could use Sonny's drums until you get your own set". So, I ended up playing Sonny's set until I saved up enough to buy my own set, from playing out. But what's kind of weird about it is Bill Caudill wanted harmony, I mean, he just wanted it squeaky clean. I remember being in his basement, and we're doing "*Find the Cost of Freedom*", three of us, and all of a sudden, the lights go out. I go, "Well, what did you turn the lights out for?", and he goes, "I want you to concentrate on the harmony. I want you to hear Mike, and I want you to hear me, and I want you to hear yourself". He says, "I want you to concentrate on that part, your part of the harmony". So, we practiced that song, I don't know, five or six times in the dark with just an acoustic guitar playing", and I'm like, "Well, yeah man, I can really hear Mike's part"-

CW: It was an education.

SC: "I can really hear Bill's part now", and I'm like, "That's the strangest thing I've ever heard of". But then when we Played at Wrightstock and we did that song, it was basically acapella, and the people were just silent. We're like, "Oh, did we screw up?", and all of a sudden, they cheered after we got done. There was like a pause when we quit, and then they cheered when we got done. So, it was a smart thing, and I really got into singing harmony, I just thought harmony was so cool. I love harmony, today I still help coach some kids, younger people, on harmony. I know some people that do duets and things, and I like to help them with their harmony and their expression, just to help them get the feeling of the song. And it's fun to do.

CW: And it speaks to what you were talking about with artists having this thing in common, and it sounds like that you really learned and kind of developed. You know, you started on drums, then you were singing and your guitar, and then learning how to listen and hear the music and develop harmony-

SC: Yeah, I was about the dynamics, too. I still see young people today, of course you say something- there's a girl I know that's a young girl that has a good voice, but she has

no dynamics in her voice. She sounds like she's just singing one note, you know? And I mentioned to her one time that I'd work with her on her voice, and, well... [*makes a face*]

CW: Did you help?

SC: No. She didn't like-

CW: She didn't like being coached? Didn't like being told how to sing?

SC: Yeah. She didn't like being criticized, I guess.

CW: Who is this guy, judging me?

SC: Yeah. "Criticizing". Oh god, it was so funny, I was at a club, for some reason I can always pick out a natural. There's three young kids today that I picked out, one that I've been following for eight years, Scotty Bratcher. First time I heard that kid, I said, "He's a natural".

CW: Scotty Bratcher?

SC: Bratcher.

CW: Local musician?

SC: Lead guitar player. Some just got that natural talent. As a matter of fact, Ira's got him under his wing right now. Bonner Chaffin [*sp?*] is another kid, the first time I heard him was at open mic night at Taffy's in Eaton, I said, "That kid's got talent". Even the owner said, "That kid?" and I said, "Yeah. That kid's gonna be something". Anyway, I'm at Taffy's one night and there's this young group, and I was sitting at this table, it was pretty packed, and there was this couple, they were probably in their 40's, and I'm in my 60's-

CW: So, this was not too long ago?

SC: Not too long ago, a couple years ago, and there was this girl bass player, she was unbelievable. She was like 16, 15, playing bass and she was on it. I mean, she was on it! I'm like, "Man!" So, I'm watching this girl, and this couple- I'm sitting at their table, I didn't know them- they're kind of looking back at me and I'm checking this girl out. After they got done playing, the young girl comes over, and it was her parents [*laughs*]. And I told her, "You are fantastic", and she goes, "Well, I've only been playing bass for about 6 months. I've been a keyboard player", and I go, "Some people are just natural, and you've got the talent. Keep doing what you're doing". The parents turned around to me and go, "Well, we were wondering what you were doing, you kept staring at our daughter" [*laughs*], and I go, "I'm sorry. She has talent!", and he said, "I understand now". I said, "I'm sorry I was staring. I was staring at her talent". But it's funny, the people, I mean, Jerry Lee Lewis, and just some of the people I've met over the years, you know, and you perform-

CW: You met Jerry Lee Lewis in town here?

SC: Jerry Lee Lewis, the *Great Balls of Fire*. I met him once before. We opened for the Coasters one time, you know? The people you meet. It's funny, I got a call from Taffy's one night, from the owner, he said, "I have somebody coming to town, and I need a place to hide him out". I had a Victorian house, a big old Victorian house at the time. He says, "He's a very private person", and he says, "Could he stay at your house for an evening while he performs here?" I said, "Yeah, that's fine". He said, "He'll be calling you here, I gave him your number and he's in town", I said, "Yeah, that's fine". He comes in, rings on the doorbell, I open up the door, he brings the suitcases in, and I kept asking, "Well, who is it?" and he says, "Don't worry about it". Well, here it was Paul McCartney's guitar player from Wings.

CW: Really?

SC: Yeah [*starts laughing*]. And it was so funny, I didn't know whether to be starstruck or not, and I'm like- Laurence Juber.

CW: Laurence Juber?

SC: Laurence Juber was his name.

CW: And when was this?

SC: This was only about five years ago.

CW: Really?

SC: Yeah, and he was tired from the road, and he was performing at Taffy's, and he comes in, and "Do you want anything to drink", "No, I'm kind of tired", and I said, "Well that's fine". Anyway, that night he performed, one of the best acoustic guitar players I've ever heard. The next morning, I said, "Do you want to go out for breakfast?", and he said, "No, I'd rather just have donuts or something", and I said, "Okay, that's fine, 've got some donuts here and some coffee", and we were sitting there just talking about music, and it was just two musicians. It wasn't a star and some guy, we were just talking about playing music and our families, and his daughter writes, and being on the road, and playing here and playing there, and all of a sudden- I didn't realize how famous the guy was until he left. It was two musicians just carrying on a conversation, just having a good time talking about music. And you'll find that common bond with any of that group that was here, they'll talk about music, and the one girl, Janet Orr, she's well known, believe me.

CW: Oh, the drummer? Ogg?

SC: Ogg, yes. Very well known, very well known. I didn't know that she was roommates with Ron Riddle, who was Blue Oyster Cult's drummer.

CW: He was the drummer, is that right? And he played with Blue Oyster Cult? They named another band, also.

SC: Yeah, he was in a different group, but he writes for all of the Discovery Channel, all of the background music-

CW: Yeah, he came up several times. The Cars. I think they said the Cars, that maybe he played drums with the Cars.

SC: No, Blue Oyster Cult was the name of the group. But they were roommates, when they went to Berklee, the school. I didn't know that until we talked to her. But unfortunately, I got to play... I played from '64 up to about 2007 before I quit playing in groups.

CW: I was going to ask you that. When did it... what was your career? What was your job? Was it-

SC: Well, I never did go on the road. There were times that I wanted to, but I didn't. I got married, and had responsibilities, but-

CW: I mean, did the music sustain you?

SC: Yes, and it's funny, the last group I was in was called the Studillacs-

CW: The Studillacs?

SC: The Studillacs. We ended up doing '50s and '60s music, just the same music we did as before.

CW: Like Studebaker and Cadillac?

SC: Yeah. I actually had a car like that. We had a good time playing, it's just that I worked a lot of hours, and it was taking a toll on playing Friday and Saturday night, and then working some Saturdays. And it got to the point where, I've done this enough.

CW: What, from '64 to '07? Is that what you said?

SC: Yeah. 2007.

CW: [Laughs] Yeah.

SC: I still do blues jams occasionally. They usually have got a drum set set up, and I go out and do blues jams.

CW: So, you played a lot. Did you travel? Or did you play locally most of the time?

SC: Yeah, I worked most of the time. There was one time that I got a call from- I was in the musicians union, and I got a call from a group that was needing a drummer, and they were getting ready to do a cruise ship, and I was like, "Oh, man". I had just gotten married, and I'm like, "I can't do it". [*Laughs*] A cruise ship tour. I enjoyed every minute of playing. Like I said, at the end it just got to be where I was tired.

CW: Well, those hours aren't ideal.

SC: Well, I was in sales, and I worked 50-60 hours a week, and then you're playing Friday night and Saturday night, and sometimes Sunday-

CW: So, you did have another job.

SC: Yeah. I had another job, yeah. But as far as the peak period, from '64 to '68, '69. That was probably the most fun, I had a lot of energy-

CW: So, those were your high school years, pretty much.

SC: Yeah. I got to watch the world change a little bit. Like I said, beside the music, society was changing at the same pace. Are you following me on that? Along with the music, the society was changing.

CW: The music was kind of mirroring the changing society.

SC: Yeah. The music was changing styles a little bit, but we had a great time. There was... things were different. We were into peace, and share with your brother, and, you know, it wasn't like the times are today. Even though there were bullies back then, like I said, you know, if you got off on music, you played music, you played guitar, you know? We didn't have video games to play, we didn't have... a lot of things were different, we didn't have parents who- I know we had to get on parents' nerves when we were practicing in garages. Never once was there a phone call, calling the police because the music was too loud.

CW: No neighbors complaining?

SC: No, no problem there.

CW: Good luck with that today.

SC: And we had neighborhoods where if I acted up three blocks away, before I got home my mom knew about it. You know, the woman from parents-teacher would call and tell my mom.

CW: I think that's the difference, neighborhoods where everybody kind of knew the families in the neighborhood-

SC: -and everybody in the family. It was a great time. Like I said, there were some moments- like I said, when I took the black friend of mine out to eat and he couldn't go into the restaurant, you know, it bothered me.

CW: But real change is slow.

SC: Yeah, there were real changes, and I got to see a lot of the changes, and the music got mixed up. All of a sudden, it's not an all-white band or an all-black band, sometimes you'd see a black bass player and a white guitar player, and a Hispanic conga player. So, the bands- when Santana came out, I'm like, "Oh man, Carlos Santana!" So, we got to flavor the folk music, the soul music, the Hispanic music, and it was a big influence on all of us. We were like eating different flavored ice creams, and we'd do some of the music, also.

CW: So, you played primarily rock, but you were influenced also by-

SC: Yeah, because a lot of times, like the first year that I played and most of the second year, not until about '66 was the chart full of the British beat. You still had, I mean I'd go down there, and *You've Lost That Loving Feeling*, I remember doing that song, the Righteous Brothers. *Shotgun*, by Junior Walker and the All-Stars, I remember doing that. The Supremes, I never did any Supremes songs, but there were a lot of soul songs that we would do. We would do '50s songs, too, some of the '50s. We had to fill in, you had to have about 45 to 50 songs a night to perform. So, you couldn't do 45 or 50 Beatles songs, so you had to fill in with something, and some of those songs, they really enjoyed the new stuff coming out, some of the soul music, some of the different sounds, Peter, Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan, just different stuff.

CW: So, there were different clubs that kind of catered to different kinds of music? I mean, were there like-

SC: It was kind of open. It was kind of open. It really was.

CW: Like at Forest Park, one night you might have a folk act playing there?

SC: Sometimes. It depends.

CW: I'm sure it depended on the venue, but-

SC: I don't remember which group, but I remember- what's their names- there was different groups playing there all the time. Simon and Garfunkel played there and look at the type of music they did. I mean, you might go from Ted Nugent to Simon and Garfunkel.

CW: What were like the big blues clubs?

SC: I don't think there was any blues clubs, it was just that blues became popular. The Rolling Stones, actually, started out blues. And there was a couple of others acts, Lonnie Mack, he was a blues guitar player, and he played in Dayton a lot. Some of the acoustic clubs, there was the Lemon Tree.

CW: The Lemon Tree. That was an acoustic club you say?

SC: It was more of an acoustic club, and there was a couple of other clubs around that were mainly acoustic. But like I said, we were lucky to get to meet a lot of these people. It was so funny, Vickie was talking about Mark Lindsey wanted her phone number [*laughs*]. Did you hear that story? He kept calling! [*Laughs*] She says, "I'm only 16!"

CW: She's funny. She just contacted me a few days ago. She's going to be coming in, too.

SC: Oh, Vickie. I met her at the battle of the bands. I just had left the Outcasts, and I met her at the battle of the bands, and we just hit it off, and we've just been friends ever since.

CW: You were both in high school, right?

SC: We went to different high schools.

CW: Right. She was at Fairmont?

SC: I was 16, I was older, so she didn't have a driver's license, so I would take her and her boyfriend out and we'd go hear bands. That was my date. Sometimes I would get lucky and she'd fix me up with a blind date. Which was funny, because one time she fixed me up with Brenda Bishop, which was in the GT's, the lead singer from the GT's, and Brenda was cute and everything, but not my style. But I fixed her up with the guy, "Thing", that was in Bill Caudill's band. Mike Lazzara- we called him "Thing" because he was in The Things- but he ended up marrying her. Husband and wife [*laughs*], so everybody kind of knew everybody. The group. I don't know if you called them the musicians and the hippies kind of hung together, and then things grew and grew and grew through the years. I was just... it was a great time in my life, because I got to go through all of this, all the changes and all of the music, and like I said, it's so funny because a lot of us are trying to pass the buck, like Ira trying to take some of these people under his wing, and they're doing the same songs. I mean, they're still doing Jimmy Hendrix songs, and they're still doing Stevie Ray Vaughn songs, and these young kids are learning them.

CW: I was in a band in the late '80s, and a lot of the songs we were playing, half our set was Beatles songs. And Louie Louie, and all those songs.

SC: You know, it's amazing. The *Wooly Bully*, I played that in the last band I was in, and how many times have I played *Wooly Bully*? 1000 times, maybe. Was Sam the Sham, by the way, from Dayton?

CW: I'm not sure.

SC: I think he might be originally from- I think he was born in Dayton. But even after all the times that I've played *Wooly Bully*, when you're up there performing, and you start that beat, and the people come off their seats onto the dance floor, and you always learn that. The more you make them have fun, the more it comes back at you, and it's like this aura going on.

CW: And sometimes it could be the most simple beat, you know, the simplest song.

SC: I'm on a Facebook website, and it's called Cover Central, and its got a lot of young groups on there, and I try to answer their questions for them. Of course, they don't know me from Adam, it's all internet people, and they're talking about the songs that they learned, and I said, "It could be a three-chord song, it could be *Louie Louie*. Some of these songs are not that hard to do". I think *Shotgun* has got one chord in it maybe, or two chords. I said, "Those are the songs that you want to get the people up on the floor. You want to get them up on the floor and dancing and entertain them. That's what you're getting paid for; you're getting paid for them to get sweaty and drunk". So that they'll drink more beer, you know? "Well, we don't like that song, I would never do *Hang On, Sloopy*". "Well, then you'll never work. You'll be in the basement". [Laughs]

CW: Right! [Laughs] That's your choice!

SC: How many times have I done *Hang On, Sloopy*? Quite a few times, but people like it. Like I said, these songs here, I printed them off because I'm thinking, "Whereabouts did I start? Was it '64? '65?" And I'm like right in there, because I remember learning this song, this song, this song. I didn't have an iPod.

CW: Right. Because like you said, there wasn't much of a catalog to draw from.

SC: I told them, I said, "We had Hit Parade Magazine, which not always had the right words in them".

CW: Right. You can date yourself by the songs.

SC: They were talking about having their iPods right there with the words on them, and I said, "Learn the words!"

CW: Right! It's not that hard!

SC: I said, "Learn the words! Do you know how amateur you look when you've got this thing on your stand?" I said, "I probably know a thousand songs, and I can still remember

the words today”. It was just a great time to- I would never have thought to be in an archives talking about this. You wouldn’t know anything about that when you’re a young person, enjoying life and enjoying the music. I am fortunate to be able to play it, I really am, and I’ve been fortunate to be play with different bands and enjoy people, meet people. But Dayton was a really good place. Like I said, you didn’t get the musicians, the super musicians, in smaller towns, because they didn’t have the jobs and stuff, and I don’t think they had the support. They didn’t have the teen centers to go to or the folk places to go into. You know, like I said, it was nice that the parents had halfway decent jobs. My mother never worked, like a lot of parents the mothers didn’t work back then, because Dad did okay. But we were fortunate to have enough DJ’s, booking agents, and places to play. These poor kids today, I feel sorry for them, they have nowhere to go.

CW: Well, I think part of it is, a lot of these clubs, these clubs aren’t around. I mean, anywhere live music is anymore, they’re in bars and stuff. You can’t have a band of 15 year olds playing in a bar.

SC: It’s sad today because they wonder why the kids get bored, you know, and get in trouble, it’s because they’ve got nothing to do and nowhere to go. There’s no place for them to go. See, I’m from the baby boomers, which was a big generation. As the baby boomers came up, it seemed like the businesses supported the baby boomers. “Hey, look how many teenagers there are! We just need to open up a place and sell cokes for a buck!” When you think about it, they probably couldn’t do that today. How did these places stay open selling cokes for 50 cents?

CW: Well, then you talk about later generations, like Generation X and millennials, where nobody seems to care much about them.

SC: But there are a few of these musicians coming out of that, just like the ‘60s.

CW: Oh, yeah. There are some things that seem to be kind of-

SC: It’s almost making a comeback, slowly. I know some artists- quite a few artists, young artists- that are good. And they remind me of ... I call them my hippie friends. It’s what I call them, my hippie friends, because they remind me of that, that they’re thinking and everything about peace.

CW: Well, and you see some 14 year old kid, stands up and is just killing Hendrix or something, just playing like some kind of- and knowing that music, knowing that whole catalog of music.

SC: I know, and like I said, these young artists and musicians, they remind me so much of me or the old hippie days. They’re into peace, they’re into art, they’re into the same things we were into. Human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, gay rights. They’re into the same thing. Kids not getting bullied, you know, and I see the select few that are coming up. I’m glad to see it, I hope things change.

CW: Kind of developing that community of music again.

SC: Mick Montgomery, the first time I met Mick, it was funny, he was living in a commune on a farm in Fairborn. Then he had Canal Street. He was such a nice... he was also a guitar player.

CW: Well, it's funny, because we had this great event in November, then it wasn't too long after that it was just one after another, with Gilly's, and then Mick, and I know that, my brother-in-law, he plays in a band, and he's in his early '60s and he's been playing forever, and just casually talking with him, and he said there are just so many of these local guys that everybody loved, that have been playing for years, and were just ingrained in the music community here, that have passed away just recently.

SC: Yeah, it's sad to see that. And if you're young, practice. Enjoy life. Write. Play. Perform.

CW: The one place where some of this music history is being preserved, oddly enough, is YouTube. Before the story circle, we got the names of some of the bands, and it was amazing how much stuff we could find up there, like Vondal Moore, and Lenny Davis, and, yeah, Vondal, he's great. He's like, "When I come back from Florida", he's real excited.

SC: I think his sister was- is his sister Cherry Diamond?

CW: I'm not sure.

SC: I think his sister was Cherry Diamond, if I'm remembering correctly, and she was a great entertainer.

CW: But, yeah, I'd just start typing in some band names and performers. That's also where I've been able to, when I've been trying to transcribe, and somebody would start riffing off different musicians and who they played with, and I couldn't get it. But I knew the band name, and it would come up in YouTube, and it would show the names of the band members.

SC: I wish we could get Rick Derringer down to talk to you. He wrote *Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo*.

CW: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

SC: The song was about playing at the bar in Greenville, called The Triangle.

CW: Really?

SC: Yes. The song *Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo* was talking about playing... he was kind of thinking back when he was young and performing, and in the lyrics there was a part of

the lyric that says, “There was a band named the Jokers, they were laying it down”. There was a band named the Jokers, an actual band, and guess who the guitar player was? One of the Allman Brothers.

CW: Really? Really?

SC: Yes. [*Laughing*]

CW: Playing up in, what did you say, Greenville?

SC: Greenville, yeah.

CW: Yeah, these anecdotes just kill me, you know?

SC: So, a lot of these songs, you know, that’s what that song was all about, but Rick played every other weekend, with the Rick Z Combo, or the Rick Derringer Band, or the McCoy’s, in Dayton is where he got his start. A nice guy.

CW: Is he from Dayton?

SC: He’s from Union City, Indiana, which it was close enough that they played at Forest Park a lot. And Sonny Flaherty is another one you’ve got to talk to. We can Skype him or something. Like I said, and the thing is we are all still friends over all these years. We all knew one another.

CW: So, you mention some of these guys, Sonny Flaherty, any other folks that you can think of, local musicians that are still around, who would be good for us to talk to?

SC: A lot of them have moved, a lot of them are deceased, have passed on. I’m trying to think, there’s probably a few I could come up with for you.

CW: Yeah, and really, any time that something pops into your head, just email me or give me a call. Because that’s what we’re looking for. The hardest thing is kind of making those connections and getting in touch with some of these folks. My brother-in-law has been giving me some ideas, too. He played in a band with Jim, and I didn’t even realize it.

SC: With who?

CW: With Jim Foreman.

SC: Oh, he did?

CW: Yeah, the Elderly Brothers. Don Snapp is my brother-in-law’s name.

SC: Are they still together?

CW: Yeah. They play at the Trolley Stop-

SC: And they played out there at the-

CW: They played at the Dog's Breath, the Dog's Breath Tavern-

SC: The place out this way. W.O. Wright's?

CW: I think they may have, yeah. They don't play too much, and it's the same story. It's getting harder... they can still really play-

SC: They're good. There's two guys, two older guys now, right?

CW: Yeah, and they've had some different members, you know, over the years, they do a lot of Allman Brothers, a lot of American roots music. But they're like, Sunday morning after a gig don't be calling. They're sore, and it's the lugging the equipment around and set up-

SC: Well, that's- that's where I was at in I can't remember if it was 2000 or 2005. By the time I got done working all the hours during the week, and then playing music, guess what I did Sunday all day? Slept. My only day off, all I did was sleep.

CW: Yeah. They still love it, but they've scaled it back.

SC: So, when you see Mick Jagger, and their drummer, boy, you've got to give those guys a whole lot of credit. [*Laughs*] A whole lot of credit.

CW: Right. Yeah, they just showed something on PBS. It was *Sticky Fingers*, where the Stones did a concert out in LA where they played *Sticky Fingers* from start to finish.

SC: Oh, man.

CW: And I was just marveling at him, the energy he had.

SC: He's 73?

CW: Yeah, at least. And the energy he has onstage to this day is crazy. They started joking about somebody coming out and trying to tell Keith that he couldn't smoke onstage.

SC: Keith Richards [*laughing*]. I wish, though, that they would bring back Memorial Hall. Hara Arena is gone, but-

CW: Yeah. Hara was, you know-

SC: Hara is gone, but the first concert that I ever went to was the Traveling something of Stars, and it was at Memorial Hall, and it was a great place for a concert. Now, it's just kind of-

CW: What are they doing with it?

SC: They don't do anything with Memorial Hall. It's a great place for a concert and stuff.

CW: Yeah. There's so many beautiful... I mean even Victoria Theatre is limited in what they bring in. They bring in comedians. [*Laughs*]

SC: Well, I think I'm probably about- do you have any other questions? I think that I'm about done.

CW: Yeah, let me see, from the beginning I could tell that we were just going to kind of-

SC: Rattle on.

CW: Yeah, in five minutes you killed about, it was like, "Well, he's hitting them all". So, let me see if there was anything else that I wanted to ask you. So, who were some of the guys that you played with right from the beginning that you're still close with today?

SC: Well, I just spoke with Greg Summers this morning, from my first band. He's a retired, atomic engineer [*laughs*], in California.

CW: Really? Ira?

SC: Ira, yeah, of course. Ira's back and forth from Florida.

CW: Is he?

SC: Yeah, he's got a place in Florida and a place up here. It's good to be Ira. Jim Debord, from the band that I left, my second band, I was just over at his house this past week.

CW: That was DEBORD?

SC: Debord, d-e-b-o-r-d. And Kenny Mirre from December's Children was m-i-r-r-e.

CW: m-i-r-r-e, okay.

SC: He's deceased, and Delaney is d-e-l-a-n-e-y. But yeah, I still talk to them online. I still visit them. It is funny how you can know someone for three or four short years, it's like forever when you're young. You know, those years are like this long [*holds hands wide apart*].

CW: Yeah, three or four years seemed like a lifetime, then the next three decades... yeah.

SC: Arthur Van Winkle, who was also in December's Children, Steve Conley called up-

CW: Who else was- somebody else is a Van Winkle.

SC: Vickie. It's Vickie's brother.

CW: Oh. Okay.

SC: [Laughs] Another story, I go over to Vickie's house, Steve Conley had left the group, I don't know why, I think it was girlfriend problems, but he was a good guy, Steve Conley. So, now we're short as bass player, Ira's still in the band, I'm over at Vickie's house picking her up, her and her boyfriend, to take them out, and I hear this kid playing bass. I go, "I haven't heard that before, Vickie".

CW: "Whose that killing the bass?"

SC: "Who is the bass player?" "Oh, that's my little brother". "You never told me you had a brother that played bass?" "Well, he hasn't been playing that long". "Well, can I come in?" He was about the same age as Ira, and I go, "Do you want to play in a band? We need a bass player".

CW: Right! "What are you doing Saturday?"

SC: [Laughing] That's how he got in the band. He was in another little band, I guess, and he quit that band and joined our band. But he was the last bass player, Arthur Van Winkle, in December's Children. Thank you, forgot about that. Arthur, he doesn't live too far from me, I get to see him occasionally. Cliff Mussleman, who I played in the Studillac's with, he's in Florida. I talk to him occasionally. I try to keep in touch with a lot of them.

CW: Studillacs. Yeah. It sounds like the key is the name. Coming up with the name of the band. [Laughs] The band we played in, we ended up calling ourselves "The Name".

SC: The Name? [Laughs]

CW: Because we argued about it for a month, and that seemed to work.

SC: That's like I was playing with Eric Soler, the one that I'd like you to interview his wife, because he's been around for years before he passed. We were arguing about- we were trying to come up with the name of the band one night, and somehow we got off the name thing, trying to name the band, and we start talking about guitar players. "Who do you think is one the best guitar players in town?" One guy says, "Well, Ira Stanley. I like

Ira”. The bass player goes, “I think Gary Hill is better than Ira”. “I don’t know, there’s a lot of guitar players around”. So we start talking about Ira and Gary Hill, Ira and Gary Hill, and somehow we got off the track of doing names, band names.

CW: Right, right.

SC: I said, “Come on, guys. Let’s get back to coming up with a name”. I says, “If you want to know who the best guitar player is, Ira Hill is”.

CW: Ira Hill?

SC: That ended up being the name of my band.

CW: Really?

SC: Yes [*laughing*]. “Hey, I like that name”, and they were laughing, and I go, “Yeah, Ira Hill”.

CW: “I think we’re done”. Right!

SC: From Gary Hill, who was out there when we had the gathering, and [next to him] Ira Stanley! And we were arguing about guitar players! [*Laughing*]

CW: I was very excited, because last week Gary sent me an email, too, and everybody kept saying, “Come on, Gary, tell some of your stories!” But we’d been there so long, that he-

SC: Gary’s more laid back, but he is such a talented person.

CW: You could tell that he was very-

SC: He is such a talented person. I remember when he- he kind of grunted when I said Captain Crunch and the Crew, he forgot that I remembered when he was in that band. That was his first band. But he was a gifted guitar player, too, back in the day. Sometimes you just get those people that are just stand-out. He was gifted, and he’s kind of laid back, but if you get him talking he’ll open up a little bit.

CW: Did you ever play with Gary?

SC: No, I never played in the same band with him. Nice guy. All of them guys are nice guys, they’re all nice people.

CW: He’s got his own recording studio. He’s got an email that I think it’s like, “garyhillrecording”, or something like that.

SC: Mark Frazee, I don't know if he's still got his recording studio or not. He played music, too.

CW: Mark Frazee?

SC: Frazee, like the Frazee Pavilion.

CW: Oh, really?

SC: That was named after his dad.

CW: Yeah! We have the Ermal Frazee Collection. We have his dad's papers here.

SC: His dad's the one that invented the pop-top.

CW: He invented all kinds of stuff.

SC: But Mark Frazee had a studio for a while. By the way, you might want to talk to the guys, Mehaffey, down at the recording studio. Phil Mehaffey, Cybertekniks.

CW: What's Cybertekniks? Is that the name of a studio?

SC: Mm hmm. I forgot about Phil. They've had all kinds of groups and people. They even had my son's band record there.

CW: How long has that been around?

SC: Oh, the '80s.

CW: Where is that, is that in Kettering?

SC: No, it's in Dayton. Do you know where the Egyptian is? Is that East 4th St.?

CW: Yeah, I'm not sure.

SC: East 4th, East 5th, it's down in there. Cybertekniks, Phil Mehaffey. He could tell you some good stories, because a lot of people did recording there and he knows a lot of musicians.

CW: A funny story that I heard is we interviewed somebody who- we were doing a Dayton Airport project, on the history of the Dayton Airport, and it was a guy who worked for one of the airlines that you could rent, or charter flights, and they would do charter flights for a lot of these bands when these bands would come to play Hara Arena and stuff, or like when Led Zeppelin came into town. And they'd go off, and he'd go and just be hanging out in their plane, and he'd be talking about some of these guys, you know. That would be another interesting interview, in terms of some of the folks.

SC: Yeah, like I said, we were all fortunate to play at the... I guess it's being at the right place at the right time and growing with the music. We were right there, but we were that close.

CW: I think anytime when there's some sort of fundamental change going on, I mean, that was such a-

SC: That was a pretty large change, though.

CW: Yeah. A pretty fundamental shift in American society, as you were growing up.

SC: And had the Beatles not... came over here and made it, I'm not sure where we would be now, I really don't. It just got the people out the woodwork. Like, I've always been kind of the odd duck, which is okay. I found out that it's okay to be the odd duck, you know? Especially with this. It's okay to be the smart nerd in school. It's okay to be the black kid, it's okay to be Hispanic, it's okay to be female.

CW: It is, and it's an interesting time right now, too. For a lot of those same reasons. I think there is a lot of that going on right now, where it's cool to be a nerd, and it's cool to be- you know, but then there's this other side of the coin right now, too, which seems to be a backlash against a lot of that, kind of going on at the same time.

SC: I wish kids would calm down, and slow down and enjoy life, instead of getting angry and throwing a temper tantrum. We learned to lose, you know? We learned to lose.

CW: Right. We got disciplined.

SC: And not every performance was perfect, you know? We had some boo-boos every once in awhile. PA's break down, singing with a black eye. One time I was playing at the GBU Hall, and I guess I was asking the wrong girl to dance, and I got hit with my sunglasses on.

CW: That never ends well. Right.

SC: So, not every time is good. That was another thing, I learned early- like in the 7th or 8th grade- go to a sock hop, and all these girls are dancing with each other, and there's only one guy. He wasn't a charming guy, and he's dancing with all the girls, and I'm like, "All these good looking girls want to dance with him? I'm going to learn how to dance."

CW: Right, it's because he knew how to dance.

SC: Now I really enjoy dancing. Another thing. I'm going to say in '67, '68- I wish I could get some archives from Channel 2, they came out with like a version of American Bandstand. But it was called, *Disco 2*.

CW: Disco Tube?

SC: Disco 2.

CW: Disco 2, for Channel 2, yeah.

SC: The first episode the first summer was called *Swim and Swing*. They had it at the pool next to Channel 2.

CW: Okay, so it was a locally produced-

SC: Yeah, locally produced. In the winter, they came out with Disco 2, which was like American Bandstand, and some of the local groups were on that show.

CW: To have some of that footage would be-

SC: Yeah, it was performed live on the show. But because I was a good dancer, I got chosen to be a regular.

CW: Really?

SC: So, every Wednesday night we'd go out there to tape the show and then they'd play it on Saturday, like American Bandstand. And some of the local groups, I think the Pictorian Skiffuls got to be on there.

CW: I remember that came up, when we got together before, and a few of them were saying how this band and that band got to perform there.

SC: But, boy, did I have fun at school, man.

CW: Oh, I bet! You were probably a superstar.

SC: I'd get all these girls like, "Are you going to take somebody to dance with you on TV? Do you have a date for the TV?" It is funny, because it was always about the hair back then. I remember dating girls that had hair down to their rear end, and you'd meet these people, you know, and they be like, "Oh, he's got long hair!" I remember guys getting invited to be in a band just because they had long hair. "Hey, do you want to be a singer? Can you play guitar?"

CW: "You look like a musician, so stand there and hold this"

SC: "You *look* like a musician" [*laughs*]

CW: Yeah, we've looked and there doesn't seem to be much archival footage put there.

SC: For Channel 2?

CW: Yeah. I mean, because we got- I don't remember which station, one of the local TV stations sent us some of their old tapes, but it was mainly from I think the late '70s to early '80s. It was just a confined time period.

SC: This would have been about '67. Late '60s.

CW: Yeah, and a lot of times these old tapes don't survive that well, you know, and sometimes they are these old u-matics, and a lot of times also that they weren't preserved is they got taped over, and they got used over and over. Yeah, but that would be fantastic for sure. I know Jim said that he asked around and was trying to track it down. We'd love to be able to do something with- he claims he has all of these reel-to-reels with all of these interviews he did.

SC: As a matter of fact, I was so nervous during the first night that I played with the Outcasts that we were doing some songs and I was nervous, so I was just dancing around and dancing across the stage like a James Brown type of thing [*laughing*]. Oh, it was funny. Michael Jackson came out, and I'm going, "I've seen that before!"

CW: Right. "He's stealing my moves!"

SC: My son's like, "Well where have you seen that before?" "James Brown has been doing that forever. He's copying James Brown!" "Ohhh, no way, no way". Finally, there was James Brown on TV, and I snagged him and said, "Look!" "Well, he ain't doing the moonwalk." "He might not be doing the moonwalk, but he's doing everything else." James Brown was another great entertainer. What a great entertainer. I saw him quite a few times.

CW: Did he ever come to town?

SC: No, but there was a guy called Wayne Cochran that played at the Diamond Club all the time, and he was the "white" James Brown. Have you ever heard of Wayne Cochran?

CW: The name sounds familiar, but I'm not really familiar.

SC: Wayne Cochran and the CC Riders, and boy would he put on a show at the Diamond Club. He was something else. He had the big pompadour, and with the cape. [*Laughing*]

CW: Well, Steve, thank you very much for coming back out here. It's been really nice talking to you.

SC: Well, nice talking to you, thanks for having me out. I think I've remembered everything, I was trying to anyway.

CW: Well, I think we've got the timeline and stuff like that, but what we're still interested in is some of these anecdotes and stories, those are always interesting.

SC: I think you'll hear, though, a lot of the answers about those changes in the music, where everything was getting all gobbled together, mixed and blended.

CW: It will be interesting to get kind of a... to interview a diverse set of musicians and get some different perspectives, and I think along the way, we'll get the answers to the questions we asked before.

SC: You know, you talked to Vondal [Moore]. He still knows Marvin Smith, you might want to give Marvin Smith a call.

CW: And who was Marvin?

SC: Marvin Smith? He's the one who played with Marv and Betty, when I left the Outcasts.

CW: Oh, yeah. The one who replaced you.

SC: Great voice. Great voice. Him and... Marv and Bev, yeah. They both had great harmonies and great voices. He could probably tell you things that I couldn't tell you, because he played soul type music. Maybe some of the bootleg bars in Dayton, there were quite a few of them, too.

CW: Yeah. And we're also hoping to talk to Canal Street and Mick's family. I know that Gino had actually talked to him quite a bit, before. And he was working with an author on a book, and he didn't want to donate any materials until they were done with that project. So, yeah, we'd love to get with them, and maybe with the Gillotti's a little bit, but you start piece by piece by piece.

SC: I wish Roger Troutman was still around so you could talk with him, because I met him in probably '69 or '70, and he was a gifted guitar player. But Marvin may be able to help you out. The Ohio Players, I don't know if there's any of them left or not. Is there any of them still living?

CW: I'm not sure.

SC: I don't think so.

CW: I know quite a few of them have passed away.

SC: But there was always a Battle of the Bands at Forest Park and GBU Hall. It kind of just made you better, even if you lost.

CW: Yeah. It sounds like that was the scene. Alright, thanks again, Steve.

SC: Thank you so much. Appreciate it.