

Bob Holden Interview

Interview by Jeffrey Bruton

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Arguably a Northwest recording icon, Bob Holden helped build and operate the first eight and sixteen track studios north of San Francisco, had a colorful career as a rock drummer, has won numerous awards for his work on all types of recordings, and continues to be a forward thinker by allowing students access to DSD recording equipment at his current employer, Pacific Lutheran University. Enjoy this transcript of a 2 hour plus interview with Jeffrey Bruton's good friend and mentor.

You and I worked at PLU for a number of years together. You were the Director of Audio Services down there and I was your Assistant Director. I think right after I got the job, I was like oh Bob Holden, 'cause I've been in this town (Seattle) for a long time and had heard of you and had always heard of Holden Hamilton and Roberts. Was that your first studio?

No. Actually I came to Seattle in 1969 with a guy from Vancouver. Actually he was from Portland but he had a studio in Vancouver called Ripcord and

Vancouver Washington?

Vancouver Washington, right. He talked me into coming up with him and building Seattle West Recording which became Sea-West, probably the best known for the Dog and Butterfly album with Heart. Bell and James did a number of their recordings there that were hits and so I kind of cut my teeth uh... well I shouldn't say cut my teeth – I cut my teeth actually in the L.A....

We're going to get to that (both laughing)...

...but I got a lot of practical day to day experience working in the facility.

Now do I remember correctly that you were raised in Portland?

Yes, uh huh.

That's what I thought. And were you in the music thing back in school? In K-12?

I started playing drums in the fifth grade. Yeah and took drum lessons. You know learned how to read music and all of that.

I've got to assume that the drums are the last thing you want your son or daughter to take up. Was it effort to talk mom and dad into that instrument?

Uh...actually no. They were supportive. My dad was kind of a... he played at instruments if you know what I'm saying. He didn't play an instrument but he played at them. He played enough that he could make the harmonica sound kind of like he knew what he was doing. He could sit down at my drums and do the most unorthodox thing you ever heard, but it sounded good.

It was a Keith Moonish type of thing?

Yeah, it was so strange. He would sit down and it looked like he was tossing a salad or something, but it was in rhythm, and it went with the music, but any drummer would look at him and go "what in the world is he doing?"

So you had music in your home when you were a kid?

Yeah. My folks loved music and of course I grew up listening to their big band stuff which I still love today. In fact I've got a table in my house, I have since replaced the glass, but my folks would never replace the glass in the top of it because Artie Shaw sat on it and broke it and for them and they would never replace that glass because...

Did he come to the house?

He came to their home at one time yeah.

Wow. He was quite a "russin' frussin'". So you had music and its fifth grade and from then you basically did not stop playing drums.

No, I continued playing. I think the first combo that I played in was a little Dixie land band.

How old were you?

Actually the first combo was just me and the piano player, and then a little Dixie land band and this was actually in grade school... and then when I started high school I started playing with a rock group called the Invaders.

The Invaders. When you were in grade school playing with the pianist and playing with the combo, did you guys actually gig?

We didn't no; we didn't really get paid for doing that. I got my first paid job when I was fifteen.

You remember this?

I do. I ended up playing with a group at a nightclub, and I was...fifteen years old and so I would go on stage and I would play a set with them and then I would have to exit stage left and go into the kitchen and sit down until the break was over and then I could go back on stage, but I couldn't sit in the bar obviously, you know.

Now was that with the Invaders or who was that with?

No, this was with a combo of some sort and I don't even remember who it was. It was kind of a union gig, although I wasn't in the union at that time. I was shortly after that. I think I was sixteen when I joined the union.

Tell me more about the Invaders? What grade and what was the story there.

I was about a freshman in high school, I think. Possibly even in the eighth grade, when this guy called me, he says "I'm a guitar player", you know.

Wait wait! He just calls your house? 'Cause you're known around town I imagine...

Well, he had heard about me, of course I was nobody at the time, and I still am thank you very much (both laughing). But he called me up and said I understand you're a good little drummer. He says would you come audition? I said sure I'd do that so I went and auditioned and played my shtick you know, and he said you want to play with us on a regular basis and I said sure.

Now what, sixteen?

Yeah sixteen years old something like that, and these guys were all you know college age. But I had a great time with them and I learned a lot and we did a little traveling, played various places...

Covers or originals or both?

No originals, just all covers, yeah...

What type of stuff?

Mostly R&B type of things, you know Green Onions, Bobby Blubland, James Brown. We actually had at one time four or five guys, I forget, maybe it was five guys who sang, who were kind of a black doo-whop type group called the Montereys.

And had them play with you guys?

They would front our band because we just did instrumentals, and they were very, very good.

Portland as well?

Yeah. Out of Portland. They were very good. They put on a tremendous show.

Now I imagine, when it was this vocal group and you guys backing them up, you guys would bring the house down wouldn't you?

Oh yeah. Yeah, in fact I have in my high school yearbook for my senior year, my high school gave me and my band an entire assembly period! And we came in and we had one of the guys, the guy who fronted the Monterey's, and his name was Urall Thomas. He was really a fine singer and a tremendous showman, and given the right breaks he would have probably been as big as James Brown or...

So now when you started with the Invaders, I mean you're sixteen, what are we talking here, like early sixties, like late fifties? I don't want to give away Mr. Holden is "X" age but...

I would say it was '59 or '60. Right in there.

So complement of the Invaders was what, of course you on the kit, on drums...

Yeah. We had a bass player, Fender bass. Glenn was his name. Let's see. We had a keyboard player and his name is John Hubbard...

Now would be like a Fender Rhoads or a little Silvertone or what would it...

No. It was a Wurlitzer. Yeah, those dirty old things, you know, that distort like crazy. They're not very big. They're not 88 keys; they're 76 or whatever it is. It had little speakers in the front of it, and it also had a direct out so you could take that and put it into an amplifier. It was a real funky sound and then eventually we got an organist who played B3 and that was way cool. It was tremendous to haul that baby around. He had a Hammond and a Leslie and we would go out and play Green Onions and the kids would go Wow!

What is that? We've only heard that in church! (laughs)

Yeah, yeah. Will you don't hear *that* sound in church... (laughs)

No but I mean reminiscent of that be B3 sound. You know Randy Greco who's a Christian artist that I've done a record or two with, he still has his B3 and his Leslie and I of course have just harangued him saying "you can't ever sell this", and I know that our sample boxes are getting really really good, but still, golly, it's just a sound.

Well, plus the intermittent distortion that adds that character. You can't add that to a sample, you know.

Well, and if you try, I think it's going to sound mechanized because it is not random!

It's no longer random, that's right. We also had a rhythm guitar player too, and that guy was Dave Child, and he ended up being the bass player in Don and Good Times.

I assume all the instruments except you were electrified. Are we talking like 12 inch tall little amps?

Yeah, they were pretty small. Just loud enough. We didn't carry a P.A. so we just used whatever was provided. Could have been just an old Shure 55 and a Universal horn and a Bogen 10 watt amplifier! (both laughing)

That's right! And it probably ripped! Now those gigs, were those for high schools, were they like booze clubs, 21 type of stuff? What were those gigs like?

Most of it at that time were teen club types of things. Because we were doing R & B things we actually ended up playing a lot of the black clubs in the Portland area which was kind of unheard of, so we were crossing the racial barriers early which was good.

Did you as a young person get that you were doing that? Did you get that most bands don't do this?

I understood it. I understood it well.

Were there ever dicey times?

Yep. You know we'd have someone approach us and one of the guys from the black singers would come up and say "Hey, they're cool."

So when you played these gigs were you the only white guys in the club?

Yeah, that was it. But they loved us because we sounded black. I mean we played black.

You did!?!?

Yeah.

See now that's an interesting thing. Again, was that something that you guys, as white guys, as growing up white guys, did you consciously go hey, these type of rhythms, these type of sounds, are those sounds and we're going to try and do them. Was it that conscience?

The sounds yeah. Because they were black sounds didn't mean anything to us, because, you know they were just sounds. And we liked those sounds. They were cool sounds and that's what we did. It was great fun.

Now if you sometimes got hassled by the black patrons in those clubs, did you ever like, we're not going to stay on this for very long but I think it's really interesting because it's part of that musical thing, did you guys ever like from white people, either if you're going into those clubs, will heck there probably in black areas, or did guys hear about you're playing those clubs and did ever white people have slain for playing those?

No. They never cared about the music. We did have a couple of occasions when we traveled with the singers that there were some people who were...

Very racist.

Yes. Quite frankly there was racism on both sides of the aisle.

And I like to hear that because I don't think that's said very much.

Yeah.

Now listen to this, as far as traveling a bit, what I always try and tell students is you know, get a following locally, and what I tell them is drop a pebble in water and you know the rings that go out? Do *that* with the gigs you do. And sooner or later, if you stick with it, one of your rings is going to be in London! Now yours could have been in, what, Vancouver Washington out of Portland. Yours could have been in Eugene...but those rings, if you start doing them just keep getting bigger and bigger. How far were you guys traveling in that period? I mean it wasn't overnights was it?

In some cases yeah, yeah it was. We'd go down to the Oregon coast and play Newport, Seaside, or farther south on the coast and we would stay overnight. The Invaders and the Montereys, we had an old hearse (both laughing), and old black Cadillac hearse. And so we would actually sleep in the hearse...

As many as could fit! (both laughing)

... as many as could fit, and some of the other guys would stay in a motel or, or, other things... (laughing)

Because there was a limited amount of room, was there anyone that was creeped out by it so they would never even want to sleep in the hearse?

Yes. (both laughing) As a matter of fact the black guys wanted no part of it, no part of it at all. (more laughing)

What a deal. Now did you guys just get that used I'm sure, that hearse?

Oh yeah, yeah it was a...

And gas is cheap?

Back then it was very cheap.

Well that's just great fun.

Actually by comparison it's about the same as today. With cost of living and all.

When you guys did those gigs did you get out of there with 5, 10, or 20 bucks to take home? It wasn't all gas money was it?

Yeah. We didn't make much money.

But at least you could get out with something...

Yeah. We did it because it was fun. You know, if we got five bucks spending money we could buy a meal on the way home, that's great.

I remember in the little bands I was in around here, doing what we would call road gigs, and they always had a different buzz then going and playing a club in town. It's really difficult to explain but you know what I'm saying.

Yeah. There's something about traveling that is exciting.

It is. And just the adventures of well this happens, and then this happens, and we got there and we'd never seen the club before, and it was x, y, or z, you know those types of things.

Right.

When you were below twenty, right in that age, whether in high school or immediately after, were you, or was anyone recording the Invaders?

We did one recording. And it was recorded... you have to realize, back then, recording studios in the early sixties, you know, multitrack was unheard so you did everything pretty much live.

To acetate?

In this case we did acetate, right.

Right to lacquer?

Yeah. There was a fellow who had a recording studio in his home on the west side of Portland, so we went there one day and we recorded a whole album in twenty minutes or whatever it was, a couple hours or whatever.

Now you were so practiced, I mean you had been playing so you could just knock them out.

Yeah. And so the singers were in the dining room and we were in the living room with very little isolation between us, but we did recording and the fellow that was the engineer was blind for the most part, he had Coke bottle glasses. I remember him walking across the floor and he kind of bumped into our Wurlitzer electric piano, and of course he had a nice piano there that he used for...

A proper one?

...a proper one, yes (both laughing) a real one, and he said "What is this"? and we said that's our piano, and of course it's sitting on end so to him its like an accordion, right? (laughing)

Because he felt the keys and they're up and down! (both laughing)

They were up and down, and he goes "Very strange"! (more laughing) and then he plays the keys and he says "It's not very loud" (still more laughing), and we said that's because we have to amplify it, and he said "Very strange"!

Now is this what, 1961, 60, 59?

Yeah. Probably 61 I would guess. And so the Montereys from that point forward always referred to him as "Captain Eyes". (more laughing)

One of my most precious memories of being in the bands and all that, is the humor! It was non stop! It was like who can top this! Anything was fair game. Nothing was sacred and you could just make a joke about anything!

Yeah!

Now did that recording come out?

No. No it was just for fun. We did it and it sat on the shelf and I don't even know if I have a copy of it anymore. I probably wore out actually.

I was going to say, because it's a lacquer. Now was that your first time in a studio?

Yeah.

It was, point blank. And were you tripping on it or were you going, humm, yeah, this is interesting?

Yeah, I thought it was pretty cool.

I assume back then, was it one mic over the kit type of thing?

I don't even remember, but that probably is true, yeah.

And maybe the guys were singing around a mic, or something like that?

Yeah, the singers were singing around a big old, uh...

A 44, RCA?

I don't think it was even that high rent. I think it was the Electrovoice version of the Shure 55, that's bigger, like this. My memory says that's what it was.

Now at that session or after that session, was there anything that was sparking like "Hey, I might want to try that", or was it like, "no, were a band and this what we do, go in the studio".

Well of course being a musician you love sound. What really hooked me was for graduation from high school my parents bought me a Wollensak, I think a model 1600 mono tape recorder, which by today's standards is basically a doorstop. But I learned to do some magical things with that, just doing razorblade editing, and doing sound with sound, and various ways of cheating to record, and it really got my interest way, way up.

So that's what did it, that gift?

That gift really gave me the disease.

Now let's pin you again in date. Graduated from high school when?

1964.

So that's when the gift was? Of course I've used Wollensaks, but what did they make this model for, was it basically an office machine to do dictation on, or was it truly to record music on, or was it just no, we can make a recorder and just use it for whatever you want.

I think it was just record whatever you want, and I used record things off the radio, and then I would try to learn the songs or present them to the band that I was in at that time.

So you actually used the Wollensak for that purpose as well?

Yeah, right. Just like people would use an MP3 recorder or a little minidisk or whatever today.

Of course the band's knew that you have this. Were you still in the Invaders?

Actually at that point, it was when I was a senior in high school when we started Don and the Good Times, which is kind of an interesting story because there was a band in Portland in 1963, 64 that had a national hit record called Louie Louie. The band of course is the Kingsmen and they played a club in the Portland area called The Chase. So the Invaders and the Montereys were playing at The Chase, and so were the Kingsmen from time to time.

Not on the same bill, but from time to time.

Right. And so what happened, in fact the Kingsmen did their first album that was live was recorded at The Chase. So anyhow we were kind of a house fixture out there, and so were the Kingsmen, of course once they hit the big time they only came back I think once or twice and played a little gratuitous...

Here's our hometown place (both laughing)

... here we'll play this for you and go away. But the keyboard player in that band, Don Gallucci, happened to be fifteen years old at the time, and he would come out to the club because that's where he used to hang with the Kingsmen, and we'd have little jam sessions occasionally. So he came to me one day and said hey, I really like playing with you, and I said yeah you're a gas, and he said let's start a band together. And he said I've got contacts if we want to do any recording, I can get us a recording contract just like that.

Now it's like when the Kings men were at home that he would come to the club?

No he had to leave the band, because at fifteen years old there's no way that he could tour 365.

I did not get this. Don is young at the time, crazy young. And so he was just playing with the Kingsmen, he would probably have to do the same shtick you would have to do when you were young, where it's like go on stage and then get off either in a dressing room, outside, or in the kitchen...

If there was alcohol, but just the fact that he was what, a sophomore in high school? He couldn't say hey I'm going on the road. Legally back then you couldn't do it. Today you'd probably hire a tutor and hit the road anyhow, but back then it wasn't done that way.

What I was getting at was why could he come down to the club? Well it because the Kingsmen were home after getting back from tour, but no! He had to quit the band after they hit because he could not go on those tours!

That's right. So he'd come down to the club and we'd sit and we'd jam, and we kind of just enjoyed playing together, and he said hey lets start a band.

Did he say that just to you guys, the Invaders, or did he say that someone specific?

Yeah, me. Just me. He didn't ask any of the rest of the Invaders.

I guess he's thinking you're good.

Yeah. And as it turned out we ended up taking a couple of guys out of the Invaders...

The bassist you mentioned.

... yeah, and he was actually the rhythm guitar player, but we told him we needed a bass player and he said well let me learn how to play bass and I'll be the bass player. So he did that, and then Don McKinney, our second Don, played saxophone and also sang lead vocal. We went through kind of a mish mosh of guitar players over the years, and for some strange reason it just seemed like every single one of them had a tie to Paul Revere and the Raiders (both laughing)

Which was also a Portland band?

Actually they were out of Boise Idaho.

Because I hear them placed out of all sorts of places.

They started in Boise but kind of played out of Portland. Because the first guitar player, well, actually the very first guitar player was kind of a jazz guy but he was such a lush that it got to be real boring having him around and so we got rid of him quickly. Actually he and his brother used to buy these big gallon jugs of wine and bring them to the gig and drink them. A gallon each I add, so that was not enjoyable...

So they would just get crappier and crappier as the night when on.

Yeah, and of course they just wanted to play the blues and I can see why. (laughing)

We know that Don is a young guy at this time, are you senior man in the band, age wise, at this time?

Well when we added Don McKinney he became the oldest, or didn't become, he was the oldest. But the guitar players we had, we had Steve West and Steve had been with Paul Revere and the Raiders and he was a fabulous guitar player but he had some sort of a...

mental issue and occasionally he would be playing on stage, put his guitar down and go off in the corner and cry. But man he could sing and he could play and if he could have just gotten over that hurdle... I think it had something to do with being away from his mother, and that's a shame. And then we had Jim Valley who was with us, and he left our band to go play with Paul Revere. And then we got Charlie Koe who had been with Revere (both laughing) and came with us, and eventually left us to go be with Revere again! (more laughing) Joey Newman came with us, and I know Revere was trying to get him from us! Anyhow...

The Don in the Don and the Good Times name, is young Don Gallucci, right? If you could remember, its this really young guy in the band, how did the name come about? Was it instantly we're going to be Don and the Good Times, or like in my bands we're named this, and then we're going to morph a little bit personnel wise and be named this...What happened?

Well that's a funny story too! (both laughing) The name of the band that we selected, it was actually a girl in my social studies class who was just a live wire, I told her I'm starting this band with the keyboard player from the Kingsmen and we're looking for a name and she said tell me about the band. So I told her about the band and she said you guys are Good Times.

Just like that?!? So basically since the band started that was it.

So I came to Gallucci and I told him the story. He said that's great, we're the Good Times. So then one Saturday morning we got in the car and drove up to Seattle to Karney Barton's studio which was just a couple of blocks away from where we're sitting right now. Karney recorded Don and Good Times and we did a cover of another song that had been recorded by a local group here that was getting some notoriety called "The Turn On Song". It was an instrumental and so we recorded that and a throw away B side, and we drove home. Gallucci arranged the recording session and...

With Karney?

Not with Karney, actually with Jerry Dennon of Jerden Records at that time, and he was the one that had done the original Kingsmen recordings, or he was the producer and that sort of thing. So anyhow, I had a summer job and I remember sitting in my Mom's Cadillac because she worked at the...

I'm sitting in Mom's Cadillac... (laughing)

... I'm sitting in Mom's Cadillac at my summer job where I was doing machine shop work, and I'm sitting in there and all of a sudden on the radio, on KISN and in Portland is "The Turn On Song" by Don and Good Times and I about had a cow. I'm running outside and I'm grabbing people saying I'm on the radio!

You were about ready to pea your pants!

Yeah! And it just sounded awesome in that old Cadillac jukebox mono system!

Are you nineteen yet? You're not twenty yet?

No, I'm eighteen! This is the summer between high school and college.

And that was the side that you cut at Karney Barton's?

Yeah! And this was just like weeks later, you know?

So did you know Don was talking to the record guy?

Oh yeah! We knew all that and Don said I think we're going to have airplay. So that's why I'm going out eating my tuna fish sandwich...

Oh, you were hoping!

Yeah, I was hoping that I would hear it!

Got it! You're taking a break at your summer job and taking your break in the car hoping it might get on!

Exactly! And there was!

Did you go out for a few days, sitting in the Cadillac at lunch before you heard it?

Probably. I don't recall, but I heard it and I thought cool! All of a sudden here's Don and the Good Times playing this teen club and now we've got a little bit of notoriety... so now we're on the road backing up this record that's getting some local play! We were kind of interesting because we had sort of these R&B roots, but at the same time we realize that showed bands, like Paul Revere and the Raiders, kids liked that! So we kind of amalgamated the two.

And when you mean show band you mean putting on a show...

Putting on a show. So the guitar players they did steps, we had shtick, I was the MC and between songs, if a guitar player broke a string we got the patter out, I'd talk to the kids in the audience and we'd give away some prize, we'd have some sort of shtick going on kind of like a radio station does today. Never a dull moment! It's always going, there's laughter, there's jokes, there's whatever so we had a great time! So we're really fit the name of the Good Times. It really made sense. Oh, but anyhow when that first record came out it didn't come out as the Good Times, it said Don and Good Times!

I'm glad we're back to that because in this talk I am wondering how Don's name got on the front of the band!

Yeah! So that's it! What happened was, in Don's words anyhow, he said I was talking to them at the record company and they said we can't just have the Good Times because there's other groups out there probably called just the Good Times so we'll have to call it *somebody* and the Good Times... and since you're the leader of the band we'll call it Don and Good Times.

Because he's interfacing with the record people.

Right, right. (both laughing)

Now did that cause any funniness in the band?

A little ripple but everybody kind of sucked it up, especially because now we've got airplay! Things are going and everybody says I can live with that!

We know how the name came about now but you would be the MC at the shows so it's not really focused on Don...

No, no. It's just the name of the band. It's kind of like when I went to a teen club with the Invaders one night, we went to another teen club and we got there and there was a band playing called Terry and the Pirates! We said which one is Terry and they said Terry hasn't been with us about six years! (both laughing) But the band goes on!

It's the same old thing! Like which one's Pink for Pink Floyd! Now at Karney's, was it again acetate?

No, it was done two track analog.

Like on what, an Ampex 300?

Yes.

If you're saying two track analog, did you guys use that to multitrack or was it just a two track deck that you actually did in stereo, or what?

Actually Karney had 2 two track machines. I don't think he had his three track yet, that was a trip. That was a half inch machine. But he would record, because you know it was mono, we would record on one track, and it had Sel-Sync...

So in essence it was a two track, multitrack deck.

Yes. And then what he would do is he would transfer that over to another machine while he added another track.

So we're going to "live in" to those two tracks...

Right, as you're going to another machine mono to one track, and then you could Sel-Sync an additional track after that. And sometimes you would be bopping back and forth two or maybe three times, three was about the limit noise wise. And then he got a three track which was basically just a modified 300 and the idea of the three track originally was so you could to cinema Left Center Right. But the rock and rollers were using it as a place to put the lead vocal, guitar solos and that sort of thing.

Now isn't it true that a lot of the big boys were on the Ampex three tracks like Frank and all those people. Sinatra and all that stuff. So Karney was using pro gear at the time?

Oh yeah.

Was that your second trip into the studio?

Yeah. Actually probably the third. There was another recording we did at a place called Rex Recording in Portland.

I believe that is still in existence.

It is but I don't think it's in the same location. It was in a unique place. It was in the old Russian embassy which was a gorgeous building, you know with trapdoors that would take you here and there...

Now at Karney's in essence you bounced some things, you did some over dubs at that session.

Yeah, because "The Turn On Song", the original version had a trombone, trumpet, and saxophone on it but we only had one saxophone so he had to play his part or parts on three tracks.

On those different horns. Were you noticing while you were in Karney's, Wow this is a step up, this is a step up and studios, I mean you already had your Wollensak, you had already gotten the bug, you personally had done analog razor blade editing, you had done sound on sound stuff, were you now again going Wow?

Oh yeah, I was already thinking, potentially, thinking of a career in recording at that point. In fact I went out at one point, because Don and the Good Times were actually making a lot of money at one point, I went out and bought a Berlant Concertone.

I've got a mono...

You have a mono, I had a two track... and the guitar player in the band, Charlie Coe, bought one too, a stereo one. So between us we had the makings of a stereo recording setup, and I've got to tell you, we used to do demos, we rented a home in Hollywood

when we were doing Where The Action Is and we set up that room as a recording studio and we experimented recording and discovered some crazy things like...

With those Berlant machines?

Yeah, and we ended up... we used to do demos that actually sounded *better* than the final tapes that we ended up doing at Columbia studios.

Now I want people to know who were listening to this or reading this, the Berlant Concertone, first of all their tube, they're all tube electronics, and the transport and electronics are separate, they're rack mountable, and another interesting thing was, and I don't know if this was your first machine that did that, mine, or our corporation's, I've got to say that since the corporation owns it, goes up to fifteen IPS! It does 7½ and fifteen IPS. This thing is a pro deck!

Right! It's basically an AG 300, like an Ampex except it's the poor man's version I guess (laughing), not quite as stout, not quite as professional, but it's certainly professional.

I imagine that you guys were one of the if not the biggest band in Portland, right?

Well, in the northwest.

Talk to me about that. You know we had Pat O'Day up here doing KJR who was... I so long for Bob and I'm going to get all choked up about it if I talk about it too much, but I'm so chagrined at corporate ownership of radio right now, where in the days where you and I are talking about, an individual, an individual station, could in essence foster regional hits!

That's right.

And I'm so mad that that does not happen now! So at any rate, but you were playing the Northwest.

Yeah. You know anybody who was playing in the area, and to be honest with you Portland was the small market. It was very small. But you would still go there and play, but where we really made most of our money was in the Seattle area. We'd play Parker's, the Lake Hills roller rink, Pearls...

Did you ever play the Spanish Mansion out on Highway 99...?

The Spanish Castle, yeah. We played the Castle. That was an absolute thrill because we kind of grew up listening to The Wailers and to actually do a show there with The Wailers was pretty darn cool!

Wait! On the same bill?

Yeah, on the same bill! We were just stoked! You know to see these guys who to us were giants...

Rock stars!

Yeah, they were rock stars! You know we had their album and we listened... we dissected every note!

Little Sally Tease! (singing) Oh man that record, their first record that I think of is just like, Man! And they did that and Karney's?

Don and the Good Times?

No, the Wailers!

Well Little Sally Tease was Don and the Good Times!

That was you guys!?

Yeah! (laughing)

Well that shows you how much I don't know! That's why we're here! But the Wailers, what was it, Have Love Will Travel, all that stuff?

No, that's the Sonics! (laughing) And by the way I don't know if you know it but Land Rover is using that in the commercial right now!

Have Love Will Travel!?! You're joking!?

No I'm not joking! Just like Led Zeppelin's Rock and Roll it is being used for Cadillac! Very effective I might add! Being an old advertising guy...

We're hopefully going to get to that! So at any rate Karney's was a pro studio. Don booked you up here, or whoever book it up into Karney's, was that because that was the closest pro thing?

Right.

It was. I have so many people who I know who have told me stories about being at Karney's and it just sounds like a trip.

Oh yeah. It was.

I hope he is still around and going.

He is, I haven't seen Karney for years but I understand that he has... he moved to studio at one time from fifth avenue to his home, built a place there, but he started developing kind of a niche market and he does a lot of recordings for people who perform like skaters and that sort of thing.

Well this is tremendous. Don and the Good Times has a regional hit. Does the record company then go, oh, we've got to get you guys back in the studio?

Yeah, absolutely.

And how did that go?

Well at some point we realized that if we were going to be doing this seriously we had to sing, and none of us were singing.

Because you started as instrumentals! The Invaders were instrumentals, the whole 9 yards!

Yeah! We had these wonderful singers that were fronting the band, why did we need to sing? We would croak compared to them! So we started singing! And Don was a good lead singer, and then when we got Jim Valley he had a lot of experience singing so we just developed and what we would do quite frankly, we used to sit around and sing barbershop quartet music basically to hone our harmonies. A cappella. Like Down By The Old Mill Stream, something like that which actually came in handy from time to time because we'd have equipment failures on a show and we'd stand up in front of a couple thousand kids at some arena someplace and we'd say hey guys, can be real quiet? We're going to do something for you. And we would do barbershop quartet for them and they loved it!

And they were quiet?!

Yeah! 'Cause it sounded like... because of our immature voices we didn't sound like a bunch of old men, we sounded like the Beach Boys singing this wonderful music!

At that time, when you were going into vocals, did you take any vocal training?

No. At one time we had a vocal trainer come to our house because we said we want to be able to sing correctly, and he said well let me hear you sing and sang some stuff for him, and of course at that time you didn't have vocal trainers who were training Madonna or Bruce Springsteen, it was all classical, and he just basically said you know what, for what you guys are doing you're fine. He says you know for that style of music I don't understand it and I can't help you. I can teach you how to breathe maybe a little bit better but because of the way you're singing, you're not singing pure, your affecting, on purpose, he says I don't understand it and I can teach you.

Behind the kit, are you singing?

Yeah.

And did you find that, I know for a myriad of performers, myself included, when you first start doing that, playing and singing, Wow, especially if they're off time from each other. Was that the challenge for you?

Not really because I'd been playing drums so long that it's just a second nature.

Would Don step out from the keyboards to sing or would he sing right at the keyboard?

He didn't sing. Don Gallucci didn't sing, Don McKinney did.

Got it! The two Dons...

The two Dons. It gets confusing.

And he was saxophone and lead singer so he could just drop his sax and sing?

Yeah. He would sing lead, Jim Valley would sing lead, I would sing lead, and then we got a bass player at one time, Ron Overman, who also was a lead singer, in fact he sang on our biggest record "I Could Be So Good To You" which was on CBS/Epic.

The record company, they said yes, we have to get you back in the studio! What studio did you guys go into, back to Karney's?

We were signed with Jerden Records at that time out of Seattle, Jerry Dennon, and so we came up here and did a lot of recording up here, at the same studio, Audio Recording, Karney's studio. So we just did reams of stuff.

Point is, when it's like, hey a we have to get you guys back in the studio, it was back to Karney's, and you knew it, and it was comfortable for you...

Right. In fact all of those recordings are haunting me because when I go online and I type in the Google "Don and the Good Times" I see a myriad of these recordings that are out there of "The Best of Don and the Good Times", "Don and the Good Times Revisited", "Son of Don and Good Times"...

You're joking?

... all of these different things that have been released from those old recordings which were not that great quite frankly (laughing).

Now interesting point that you mentioned that because I know that on The Sonics, like Meet The Sonics, and it was done at Karney's, the energy, and you've know me

for a long time, I'm someone who's like OK so the recording is not perfect... if I've got that energy I don't really care! My point is on The Sonics there is a massive distortion...

Oh Yeah.

...I guess, probably, and I don't know if Karney had recorded anyone like that by then, but of course they're going ape crazy...

Yeah.

... and so did you experience the same stuff on those recordings? Not slamming him or anything but I'm interested!

Yeah, there was a certain level of distortion that was the hallmark of the studio...

That's what I thought!

And of course, you know, it's a well known fact that the British bands, you know like the Kinks, would listen to the Northwest recordings and would try to emulate them in their studios over there so they'd have to do some distortion things to accomplish that where it sort of seemed to come natural...

At Karney's! (both laughing)

... and I don't know if it was the Langevin console that he had, that was built up from parts, or if it was bad tubes in the Neumann microphones or... (laughing)

Now could he have just been slamming the deck?

... and it very well could be that too, yeah...

Because you listen to that Sonics record Bob, and I mean, I don't know, but Karney wasn't a young guy even then.

No.

I mean he was older than you guys...

Oh yeah.

My point is I can imagine him being in there with you guys, or the Sonics, or the Wailers or whoever, and he doesn't know what's coming up! And all of a sudden the most blood curdling scream at the top of someone's lungs comes up and it's just off the charts!

Right. Right. Well Gerry Roslie, you know, he's the lead singer on The Witch and like that, oh man! He has this blood curdling scream that he does...

That's the man that I'm talking about!

... and you can just hear everything in the audio chain is distorting!! (laughing)

It's so interesting because the first band I was in, I was fifteen, I had to be driven to rehearsal, for the first few rehearsals by my mom, that was fun! My point is I was fifteen and our lead guitarist, Ferrall Hall, was 31 at the time, so these were really older guys, and he of course was of that era and so was doing those screams, like really good, and I heard that and of course hadn't heard any of the Wailers or the Sonics records by then, and thought when my word!! That's the coolest! And then incorporated that into my thing too...

Yeah!

... so it's interesting how it goes over this period! So fine, you're in there, you're back at Karney's, with those subsequent records are you guys back on the radio?

Right. Yeah. The next recording that we did after that, Jim Valley joined the group, he had been in The Viceroy's, and we did one of his compositions, if you want to call it that. (both laughing) I think of, well never mind (continued laughing)... Little Sally Tease. That was probably our second biggest hit and it made the top 100...

Now we're talking national now...

... national, yeah. And it was on... it was released on Wand which was the label the Kingsmen were on.

Interesting. So you had switched labels by then?

Right. Actually when we got the... "The Turn On Song" was originally released on Jerden records here locally, Wand picked it up at one point and started promoting it nationally, but it didn't...it may have hit the top 100... if it did it just bumped it.

Typically is it the same type of thing back then were Jerry is going to license that recording to Wand?

Right.

So did you guys efficiently say thank you Jerry and go to Wand?

No. We continued on with that arrangement. I don't think we ever had a contract with him...

Interesting!

... that I can think of. Maybe we did. You know...it's a blur.

So you do the recording, the record is put out, and you get paid what you get paid...

Yeah, and we got paid nothing!

There it is! And it's nice to have that come out because that's what happens!

Yeah, because you go out on the road and that's where you made your money. Which is really true today as well, unless you're a writer. You know if you're a writer you get royalties... if you...get the right contract.

But Jim then, if it was his quote/unquote composition, he was getting checks in the mail...

I don't think so. I don't think he ever got a penny.

You're joking?!?

No.

So at the time he was not a member of ASCAP or BMI? I mean they were going back then...

He was not. In fact a number of years ago, I think less than ten years ago, the Kingsmen had to go to court to get payment for Louie Louie and other recordings.

So now "Little Sally Tease", Jim wrote it and you guys did the original version and that's that. I mean it's your song, however many times it's been covered.

Yeah.

Wow! So now that's hitting, is there a point... at what point does it go boom, craziness! Of course you're up here in Seattle, gigging like mad, you're doing the records, you're getting more regional play, "Little Sally Tease" now cracks the national charts which means it's been played all over the nation! What's happening? Are you guys now thinking hey, we gotta go do something else, let's go to L.A., what's next?

Yeah, actually what happened was we were getting notoriety from that recording, and we were one of them top bands in the northwest, certainly one of the top draws when we'd go to different places, we'd pack a place basically...

And like I said bring the house down with the energy... because let's make people understand that, you guys were a high energy show band!

Yeah, right. We put on a good show, and that's why the kids came, because they had a good time, they had fun, and we made sure of that. But Jim valley was offered a sweet, sweet deal by Paul Revere to go with his band because now they were on this national daily TV show called "Where The Action Is". Now that's something you just don't pass up.

Now for those people who are too young to remember that, we're talking '64/'65, this was like a HUGE television show! This was it!

Yeah, this was a very big deal, so Jim left and was with them for, oh, less than a year doing the TV show and we were still playing around the northwest and doing very well! It's amazing how much money we may!

Its proper Bob, I mean you're putting on big shows, thousands of kids! This is serious stuff!

Well you know, you're making a thousand to 1500 dollars a night, that's a lot of money!! In the mid sixties that's a lot of money! There are national acts that are coming through and they're lucky if they are making that! And we're just a local band, a regional them. Anyhow, so Dick Clark says, actually I think Jim talked to Dick Clark, and said man you ought to have my old band on 'cause they're really good.

Now Bob, for those who don't know, Dick was doing "Where The Action Is"...

Dick was the producer of it...it's his show...

For everyone who thinks the other shows were the first ones, no no. This was it.

This was MTV. The beginning of MTV.

Was Paul's band, Paul Revere and the Raiders; were they in essence a house band?

Yes, they were the house band. So anyhow, Jim said to Dick Clark you ought to have my old band on. And he says a matter of fact they're going to be down here... I think that we were down doing some TV shows in Los Angeles. We did uh... not "Hullabaloo" but uh... yeah, maybe it was "Hullabaloo"... anyhow there was some quasi national shows that were popping up...

Basically I think imitating "Where The Action Is".

Sort of yeah. A little different format...

But you know, pop music shows.

Yes, right exactly... so we came down to do a couple of those, and he said you know they're going to be down here, why don't you put them on "Where The Action Is"? He said OK, so he put us on and we did one show and as soon as we got through shooting the show he came to us and said look you guys want to be on here regular?

Dick Clark walked up to the band? I mean to your management or whoever it was...the

Yeah, right. And we said ummmmm OK! So he signed us right there. Now this was a huge, huge cut in pay for us!

Because it's the work a day gig is what it is...

Yeah. Now we're getting, I think it was \$1,200.00... was it a week? Yeah, \$1,200.00 a week, but then we have to pay management, and all of that sort of thing so it's going from \$1,500.00 a night, and it could be if it's summertime you're playing every night, if its spring break you're playing every night, any kind of a break you're playing every night, and otherwise you're playing at least two, sometimes three times a week...

But that shows what a big deal "Where The Action Is" was because you guys jumped at this!

We did. And we got some proper management at that time and he went and got us a sweet recording contract with...

Dick did?

No not Dick, the management did. Bob Levinson was his name. Bob got us a deal with CBS/Epic; in fact our contract was for 5% which was unheard of...

That's horrifically high!!! That's huge!

... yeah. They gave us five points which he negotiated for us and that was a big deal!

At the time and even still Bob, 1%, one and a half, that's really common!!

So 5% was huge and the reason why they did it is because we're on "Where The Action Is", you know? So they had national promotion every day! So were immediately in the studio, Columbia studios recording when we weren't recording the show. And the way we did the show, the show was lip synced!

I wanted to touch on this! You've basically could tell with some artists and some you couldn't.

Right. And so what we would do is, we would... all the acts that were on the show, Paul Revere and the Raiders, there was a band called the Hard Times that was on there, Don and the Good Times, and then a whole bunch of single artists that were on there... we would go into the studio and Armin Steiner, I don't know if you know who Armin is...

One of my favorite engineers! He did a lot of the Bread records! I listen to those records and I'm just...

Yet he's amazing. Anyhow he was our engineer at his little studio there on Gower street in Hollywood. And so we would rehearse and then we would go in there and record. Well, after we had done this for a couple of weeks Dick Clark called us up and he said, now, when you guys record, you guys are only in there for about three or four hours, and you do maybe fifteen or sixteen songs. How do you do that?

Really Bob? He's asking you this?

Yeah, yeah. And we said well we rehearse well before we go in and we're prepared. We know what we're going to do. And of course these were all covers at this time, you know. So pretty soon he's saying to us, you know the other bands, they take forever to do everything and it's costing us a lot of money!

Now he's producing them, is that the deal, Dick is?

Yeah. And so he says, he says to us would you be willing to do the backing tracks for all the single artists that are on the show? And we said...sure! And he paid us a little extra money to do it, and so we went in and did that, and so we'd go in the evening and we might do twenty different songs, you know. Fifteen, sixteen for us...

With Armin still?

Yeah. And so we were in there constantly recording. And pretty soon we're recording stuff, and we'd be watching the show and here's Mark Lindsey singing and here's our playing (laughing)...

Tell people who he is! (both laughing)

Well, he's the lead singer for Paul Revere and the Raiders! (both laughing)

You're like wait a second that's my drum fill!

Yeah, yeah! All the sudden we're doing backing tracks for the other bands too! I thought that was hilarious!

You'd go into what, Columbia recording studios?

No. I can't remember the name of the studio but it was on Gower.

My point is, you got to do more and more things, OK would you back up this single artist, and you'd go in and you do all the sides, I mean song after song after song, did you initially know, oh, that's one that another band on the show is going to do?

We didn't know. They just said would you cut a track of this, in this key, and so we would do it. I don't know that that was real common but it did happen.

You guys are now, you're a fixture on "Where The Action Is", and again just to poke at people a little bit who haven't ever seen the show, a lot of times I remember seeing beach shots on there, and they would do all sorts of cool things like actually shoot on the beach! So it was a very interesting show, a very California show! You guys have now moved to L.A.! You have jobs...

Well, that is our job.

That's my point. You guys got hired to do this and now you're doing these backing things. You instantly jumped at Dick Clark's offer to be on the show, was it a big deal to move? Did you guys just jump in the hearse and go, did you have a place to stay first of all? What was that about?

Well the hearse was long gone because that was a different band...

You guys now had new cars?

Yes we did. We had Cadillacs and big vans for hauling our gear, and roadies...roadies with perfect pitch that could tune our guitars for us...

That's true?

That's true. It was a big deal to move because in some cases we had families, I had a wife and my oldest daughter, Erin who now lives in Bothell with her family...

But I mean, this was a big deal!

Yeah!

Did they set you up with anything? Did you guys just arrived in L.A. and have to fend for yourselves?

No. They just said show up on Monday, we start shooting. Then you had to find a time in between there to move your family. Actually, I think what we did is we didn't move them right away, we just started doing the show and then after a while we realized that this is going to stick, and then we moved them...

I think that's smart, because you don't know was going to happen. Now did you guys fly down there, because you'd go down there and shoot and family members were left in Portland? Did you guys fly down there and do that or did you drive?

I'd fly usually, unless we were hauling equipment. If we're hauling equipment... if we're doing dates while we're back home then we'd have to take our equipment with us.

Wait a second. You were still doing gigs back here? Those teen gigs? Those big gigs?

Yeah. We were doing some in L.A. too but they paid piddle compared to what we could get back home.

Now was it at that time, the same thing that's been for the decades the I've known, that there's so much competition in L.A. that they basically don't have to pay you a lot. Was that what it was back then even?

Yeah, I think in a way there is sort of the L.A. mafia you know, (both laughing) rock and roll mafia, where...

OK! That will be edited out! (both laughing)

... where they...yeah basically they have you over a barrel.

This is interesting! You guys, I imagine, are feeling like rock stars at this point.

Well, yes and no. Certainly it was difficult going to the grocery store because sometimes little girls would start following you around and stuff like that, but at the same time we weren't... it wasn't as big a deal as say Donny and Marie were back in the eighties or whatever it was that they were doing it.

Now do I remember that you guys got a big house in the hills...in the Hollywood hills?

Right. Yeah it was a nice house, it was on Iris Circle, which was nice because we had a built in track where we could get up in the morning and we could run...

On Iris Circle?

... on Iris Circle. We'd just run around in the circle. It was, I don't know what it was, it was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile around, something like that. A nice house in Hollywood hills. The house had a lot of history. The house directly across the street was a house that Charlie Chaplin had built for his family and lived there. The house that we lived in was owned by the estate of Alexander White, president of CBS records...

And you happen to be on CBS...

Right, yeah I never thought about that but that's true.

So was this before family members came down? I mean it was basically the band in the house, right? That must have been quite a riot!

Yeah, it was a lot of fun and we would have some interesting things happen there (both laughing). I remember one Saturday morning we got a knock at the front door and there was this guy who says Hi, I want to play some of my songs for you guys. And we said why, we write our own songs. And he says well can I play these for you? So we let him in and he's got this little mini keyboard thing and he plays these songs for us...

Live!? There's no tapes?

Live! No, no there's no tapes. Nothing you can sit down and review or anything. He said would you be interested in recording any of these? (laughing) And of course being the ego maniacs that you are at that point in your life, we kind of said thanks for coming by, we'll see you later you know...

So you were at least kind to him?

We were kind to him, yes, but every Saturday morning we'd get a knock on the front door...

Oh wait! This was now a fixture!

Yeah! He would show up and try and get us to do his songs... and I remember some of the songs, you know because I thought they were kind of cutsie, little bubbly gum types things, so finely we had to tell Harry Nilsson not to come back anymore.

Wait a second! (both laughing) That's who it was!?

It was!

And of course he just saw you guys on the show?!

Yeah right! He was trying to get us to do his songs, and probably, had we recorded some of his songs we'd probably still be in the business! (both laughing)

But I mean you were not ever jerks to him or anything. He obviously would come back.

No, no. We were kind to him but we were in the process of writing our own material at that time and it wasn't anything we were interested in, doing other people's music you

know. But some of the songs that he played for us ended up being the big hits for The Monkeys, and other people, and eventually he started doing his own material.

Now speaking of that, we've talked about that you were doing backing stuff for people on "Where The Action Is", did you ever do backing stuff for people who weren't on "Where The Action Is", for other artists that you guys... on this gig, on the studio session, yes we know we're going in to back up X, Y, and Z artist who isn't on the show, was that ever happening? Because we know of the Wrecking Crew, we know of like Hal Blaine, Carol Kaye, and all those guys...

Right. I don't think we were of that caliber to be honest with you (laughing) after Hal Blaine played on some of our recordings too, so... (laughing)

Is that a fact?

Yeah, that's a fact. He was a monster. Actually our big record "I Could Be So Good To You", he played and I played, we both played. We had two drum sets going at the same time.

In the same session, at the same time?!

Side by side, playing and we would be, you know, trying to get everything going. It was that wall of sound, you know that...

Right! The Phil Spector thing!

Phil Spector. The producer was Jack Nitzsche who was a protégé of Spector's, and so he was really into that wall of sound, so on that session we had five guitar players. We had Charlie, we had James Burton, Glen Campbell, Ry Cooder, and the other guy was... it wasn't Duane Eddy but a guy who had done a lot of tracking with Duane Eddy, a big studio guy at the time, I can't remember his name now... but Larry Knechtel playing keyboards, and Don was playing keyboards, so we had two keyboard players, five guitar players, two drummers, and then Hal and I overdubbed percussion afterwards...

You played kit together but you also overdubbed stuff...

... we also overdubbed, yeah he played claves and I did maracas I think.

What the deal! And the name of this hit again was what?

"I Could Be So Good To You"

And was it proper multitrack, four or eight or something...

That was on eight track, yeah!

One inch?

Yeah. One inch eight track, yeah.

And what studio?

This was Columbia studios A, studio A, which was a HUGE studio and I'd been in there... now by this time you know, I knew Armin Steiner, we recorded at Goldstar which was a big thing, and so by this time I knew the security people at all the studios and I could just walk in and go around to the studios and I used to go and just hang out with the engineers.

You did?

I did! Because I told them I really want to learn how to do this!

I'd love that we get back to this! You were still... that was in your mind!

It was! Yeah! I really wanted to do that!

So now, is this what, time off that you had, and you'd just go hang out at the studios?

Yeah! Because you know, you can't be Don and the Good Times 24/7! You have a lot of down time. You've got rehearsal time, you've got the time that you're doing the show, you're in the studio, and the rest of the time is your own! We would have days where we had nothing going on and so I would just drive over to somebody's studio to see if someone was recording and see if I could hang out.

Now was there any person in that period, that you said, you know, of those visits that I would do at studios, boy X, W, and Z, this person, was really super nice to me, or that I really learned the most from. Do you see what I'm trying to get at? Was there more than not, one person, or a couple people who really were a focus of those visits? You know what I'm trying to say?

Yeah. I think for the most part they were all pretty generous and willing to... you have to understand the culture at that time within the recording industry was totally different than it is today. It was a unionized group of people. So you'd go to Columbia studios and you would have a guy that did nothing but Tape Op.

That's what he did?

That's all he did...

Sat by the machine?

He sat by the machine, and he...

Which is, that's Europe, that's here, so that was happening...

No remote controls. No autolocators.

He would do all the punches, he would do all this, he would follow along and if he screwed it up, he screwed up.

Right, yeah. And then you had one guy who was Board Op, he just did the mixing, and you had a guy who did setup. And they could not do each other's jobs! So if a mic had to be moved they had to call the mic guy and he'd go in and move the microphone around.

And we're talking still mid sixties?

Yeah! And so you've got three people on payroll that are doing the job of basically one person today. And so it was an expensive proposition!

And as you said, the physicality of the room, at least at CBS which they owned... of course back then many record labels owned their own studios, it was a big place! It was physically a large place!

It was huge, huge, yeah. And these were in many cases old converted radio studios that had been like you know, studio D they used to do, I think, the Jack Benny show or something like that, in fact they still had a lot of the old foley stuff there in a side room and that was just a trip to go in and play with! (both laughing) Play with all of these doors, and springs. It was quite a trip.

I want to hear before we move on from this time when you were visiting these people and basically could just walk in because you knew the security people... who again was it? It was Armin Steiner of course... who other of those engineers would you go in and hang out with? Do you remember?

You know, a lot of them I don't really remember their names, they were pretty nice, almost every one of them. They would give you tips and say you know we're doing this and here's why we're doing it...

And they knew who you were of course?

Yeah, because I'd been in the sessions.

You've still got this in your mind that you want to do the recording business, but Don and the Good Times is still going...was there a time when Don and the Good Times started waning and you thought wow, I'd better do something else to make a living? Is there a period where you remember that cross fade was happening?

Yeah, I think it was in '68, Don and the Good Times... it had been our plan to basically keep the band going as long as we could, and then eventually do like Vegas, and become a Vegas fixture. That was our thought anyhow.

Because just like everyone does it now, you could live there! Your families can be there and you can make your money...

Yeah, right. And since we all were pretty much legitimate musicians, and pretty good for the time you know, could have done that, we could have broadened the scope of material because we can all play jazz, we could all play other types of music. But some of the band members were kind of going through this experimental drug time...

Well '68, you know...

... and along with that came the idea of different kinds of experimental music. The outcome of that was Don and the Good Times evaporated and became a group called Touch...and Touch was probably the beginnings of what I would say...heavy metal.

So they were a hard rock band?

Yeah. But very progressive...and so I worked with the band for some time on this new material, not knowing that this was going to take place, helped write some of the music that was on the album, and at one point... it just didn't feel right for me, they weren't happy with what I was doing, and one of the roadies was actually a drummer and so unbeknownst to me they were rehearsing with him and decided that he had more of the raw...

Whatever they were looking for...

... because I was legitimately trained, that sort of thing, and I played a more legitimate style, although I could play the rock and roll, but he was more of an animal (laughing) you know...

Which was what was fitting...

Yeah, which was more fitting, and so basically they said we want to go with him and I said well that's fine because I'm not real keen about being around the drug culture and all this sort of thing so I had to make a decision at that point. I was living in Los Angeles with my family. What did I want to do? OK, I could probably go to one of the studios and get a job but I'd have to start at the beginning, I could probably... you know there was a bunch of different things I can do, but I ended up moving back to Portland. I decided I had had enough of L.A.; I didn't like it, too much weirdness going on.

Because it's always been what it's always been...and I don't think anyone's going to deny that so...

Exactly...and I didn't want a raise a family there. So I packed up, and actually a band in the Portland area called The Red Coats had asked me to join their band when they found out that I was available so I said I would do that. They actually came down and help me move. So we moved back, got an apartment and I was with them for a short time... but that didn't work out either... for whatever reason. And so I went back and started working at the machine shop.

I remember this! Let's stop right there for a second because before we leave the Don and the Good Times era...of course I heard many of the stories and I promised myself before we started this interview that we would keep it very aboveboard as far as...horribly colorful antics which I knew took place... they took place in every band, we know that, but at any rate on tour there was an awful lot of goofing around with you guys...

Oh boy!

... and you would tour with other national acts, wouldn't you?

Yes.

Just pick any of those stories and tell one... I mean they're interesting stories!

I think probably the most interesting one... we were on tour for like 32 days with...the biggest artist on that tour of course was Neil Diamond. He was not big at the time but became huge! We had P.J. Proby, a singer named Keith... a whole bunch of different acts on this tour traveling all over the South and East. So we traveled everywhere from Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Virginia, all like that. So for 32 days we're stuck on this Greyhound bus together, the charter, and we're having a great time! I forget exactly how it started, but something always starts something? Along this tour...oh I remember exactly how it started now! Don and the Good Times, we were doing are set... and Neil Diamond had been riding on the bus with us for about the first three or four days and decided that he wanted to have a little more flexibility with his schedule and he bought himself a Cadillac limo.

So he's now got his own horse?

He's got his own horse, and his keyboard player who accompanies him, along with one of the bands, is driving, he's his chauffeur.

Oh, so he doesn't only have a brand new Caddy, he has a driver?

Yeah...well it wasn't a brand new, but you know (both laughing)

It might as well have been! (laughing)

... it might as well have been, yeah. So anyhow, he's coming later than we are, because you know everybody else gets there and we set up and everything and he's on the show towards the end anyhow, so we're up there, and I don't know where we are at this time, it could have been Cincinnati, it could've been whatever, but we're up there playing and we're doing our show and of course we put on a show! We're just going for it, and all of a sudden out of the corner of my eye I see Neil Diamond, with his guitar case, dressed in black as he always was, starting to walk across the stage right in front of us as if the place was empty!

So completely oblivious to everything?!?

Just totally oblivious! I mean he knew!! But no expression on his face, like he was just walking down the alley way, and he walked right across in front of us (laughing) and were looking at this guy going what in the world is he doing!? And of course the kids they're not screaming because...they're screaming at us because they know who we are and they don't totally get the connection with him but their kind of going like what?? What is this guy doing?? Anyhow to was pretty funny! So he's doing his act a little bit later, same night, and he does this one song where the spotlight comes on him, the band leaves the stage, and he plays Solitary Man. Him and his guitar, it's very tender. So I decided I'm going to close the curtain on him! (both laughing)

Now for those who don't know you, you're kind of a joker guy by heart anyway! You have a good sense of humor! All just put it that way.

Oh yeah! So he's on stage, this is a real stage, and I shot the curtain on him! So he's still singing and everything but nobody can see him! (both laughing) And then I open it back up, I leave it shut for twenty seconds are something!!

Now does he bat an eye that this has happened? Does he make it obvious to the audience that I knew this happened, or does he just play the song?

He's looking like what in the world is going on here! (both laughing) So we got him!! So the next night we are up playing and he gets hold of the lighting system and starts lowering all of the lighting grids! The grids are coming down and of course the guys are up there singing and I'm playing drums, and they're coming down, and I'm singing and the grid is down within a foot of my head and of course it's just blazing hot...to the point of do I quit, do I dash, or what!! And about the time you're just drenched with sweat, then he lifts it back up again!

Did you know at the time it was Neil doing this?!

Of course I knew it!! (laughing) Actually I could see him doing it! I could look over and I could see him because it was done on rope pulleys at that time! So we kind of cooled it. But the next night he was doing Solitary Man again, so I get a rope and I take it from one side of the auditorium and put it over on the other, or the stage, and he's doing Solitary

Man, and I swing across just right about a foot or two behind him giving my best Tarzan yell!! (both laughing)

Now he obviously make some reaction to that!?

Yeah! That got him! He kind of stopped a little bit and then kept going. So I forget what he did, and then finally he's doing Solitary Man another night and we got Don Gallucci, who is real tall in stature, and we got him inside of the case for the Leslie organ which was kind of this square box, put him inside of it, and had him move on stage just a little bit, just a couple feet at a time (both laughing) kind of looking like R2D2! He would do a little twirl, and he'd stop, and people are laughing!

Now does Neil see this?

I don't think he can see this! And now people are laughing and he's going why are people laughing! But the final thing that we did that I recall, and I don't remember all the antics that took place, but we had one guy who had the hit record (singing) I knew you when you were only a fool all along without love...

Was on the tour?! Whoever it was...

I don't remember his name right now, I should. Oh, Billy Joe Royal. He had three girls singers who would always sing (singing) "I knew you when", just like that. So the backup band would sing (singing) "I knew you when", they would sound like girls like that. Actually the PA system we were using on tour was our bands PA because we had a Sunn...we were signed with Sunn, we had endorsement, so we had their Coliseum PA system which was amazing for that time. In fact Neil Diamond was so impressed with it that he ran out and bought one for himself. Anyhow, so I was controlling the sound which I knew because it was my gear, so I took a microphone and got everybody on the crew backstage and Billy Joe Royal is singing (singing) I knew you when you were only a girl all alone without love, and then here's 50 people going (husky men's choir sound) I KNEW YOU WHEN!! (both laughing hard)

So now Billy Joe Royal is brought into this fiasco!

Right! And so just, he stops singing!! But the band keeps going and he's going what was that!?! (both laughing hard) and then he starts singing again!

Obviously it wasn't just kept to Neil Diamond! Basically anyone became fair game!

Yeah! And we did a similar thing to P.J. Proby but this time with trumpets!

Now, during the day and on the bus, was any of this mentioned it? Or was it no, no one mentions it and it just continues on?!

Nobody talked about it, but you knew there was a lot of plotting going on!! (both laughing) On that tour were we were also in Alabama where fireworks were legal and you could buy them at the grocery store basically, at that time, and big things like M80s and that type of thing. So one morning we were getting up and there's a knock at the door, and we open the door and a guy throws in a whole raft of lady fingers! And they start exploding all over inside the room! I knew who was! So I thought man I've got to figure out a way to get back at this guy so what I did was I took the strainer part of the sink which goes down inside which had a little bit of weight to it, and I wrapped that up in a piece of newspaper with...I don't think it was quite an M80 but it was a big, red firecracker with a lot oomph to it, and one with a green fuse on it...and you know what the green fuse means...

I don't. Quick?

Underwater! You can throw them in water. So we went to the door and knocked on the door and as soon as we heard them coming I lit that thing and dropped it in this bucket of water! Actually it was a waste paper basket full of water... and they came to the door (laughing) and opened the door and BOOM! The water blew all over!! (both laughing hard)

Not only was it loud, and it was wet! (both laughing)

It was loud! It was wet! It was a shock!

But that's the type of thing that would go on! So now let's get back to coming back up to Portland with the family, you are in this band for a while who helped you move, it fizzled out. When did Bob Holden get into being a recording engineer or a studio owner or what?

I went back and I started working for this machine shop again and I started working toward becoming a journeyman a machinist. But when you've got music in your blood and recording in your blood and you've got the "recording disease" as you and I have talked about, you've got to scratch that itch! So I started hanging around in a Studio in Vancouver called Ripcord with Rick Keefer, and started doing some recordings there. Did a little studio drumming and hanging out with him, and he said look I'm going to build a studio in Seattle because there's really very little up in Seattle, would you be willing to go in with me on this? I said I have no money to offer but I could give my time or whatever. And so that was my part.

Is he saying hey, be in business with me?

Yeah. So that's what I did and eventually went up there and built Seattle West Recording on the 85th and Greenwood.

85th and Greenwood...has that become Ironwood?

No. Ironwood is out in Bothell or somewhere I think.

No, Ironwood's up there...Ironwood's on 80th! Sorry Bob! But anyway you guys were at the 85th and Greenwood.

85th and Greenwood, between a hardware store and a pharmacy I think.

Now I assume it was a leased building, or a rented building?

Yeah, right. So we went in there and I did everything from building walls to installing the glass, I even put the air conditioning unit on the roof!

Now did you guys start making a living off the studio?

Sort of. Actually I went into business with some other guys and we collectively bought shares in Sea-West and the name of the production company was Crans Martokian Productions, which is a long story. It was the nick name actually of a guy, of a doctor in Portland who had a recording studio in his home who became a friend of mine. So when we moved we thought that was such a cool name, why not? Anyhow, that eventually became Holden, Hamilton, and Roberts.

Sounds like it started as a production company, not as a studio owner, working out of Sea-West.

Right, working out of Sea-West, which we were part owners of. We'd do all of our production work at Sea-West and so I was engineering. I have learned a lot in L.A., I'd learned a lot on my own, but now I'm working with real, quality equipment. It was the first eight track recorder, recording studio in Seattle. Eight track Ampex 300...

And what are we talking? I think you said '69?

Yeah, right around 69, right in there. So we were busy doing that kind of work and Rick Keefer was busy doing other groups, records from the area, and we did some records out of our production company as well.

But now the production company, ads? What were you guys doing?

Yeah, we were doing radio commercials... which was a lot of fun. You know, go visit the client, write the music, everything...

It sounds Bob, to me, and I don't know if it was common back then... how neat for the production company owners to actually have shares in the facility! I assume you guys got a great rate?

Will we did and we also had an arrangement to where let's say we said look, we have a client here that we want to pitch a recording thing on. We could go into the studio, do all

the recording, to the demo on the whole thing. There would be no billing on it, or no cost in doing that unless we sold it.

There would be no cost on that demo, and you would walk in there basically with a massively fleshed out thing! You don't have to use your imagination. Here's our quality, and here's what were envisioning for shot! So that would probably get you a lot of work...

And it did. Because we were able to provide demos, working demos, usable demos, in other words we would go to a client and we would say here! Here's something we put together for you and they would listen to it and go that's great! We'll buy it! And they'd buy it on the spot. They didn't ask for it, we'd just show up with it! We had a real problem initially trying to get work because there were companies in Dallas and Nashville and other parts of the country where the account executives here locally really liked doing business with them. Number one, they could put it on their expense account to go to L.A. or to Dallas or wherever it was and number two, they had been doing its so long that way that they didn't want to break the mold. And so we had to be re-educate them. So we started doing things where we were using people from the Seattle symphony, we did a series of commercials for different people where we would go out and find particular artists that would really represent the product well. So it was a really good educational time, not only for us, but we're really educated the Seattle market that it could be done locally. And then Joe Hadlock started working, I don't know if you know Joe...

He owns Bear Creek.

Bear Creek. Joe started working out of Sea-West as well, and he started doing the same thing.

I.E. making his own production company?

Right! And of course he has been very successful.

Oh yes. I think he has rolled it back, I think Ryan his son, is doing most of the stuff out there now. Can you please mention who was initially involved in your production company?

Myself, Herb Hamilton, Larry Roberts, Chuck Jamison, a guitar player from Portland who had moved up here and has since moved back to Portland, and then we had another guy named Gary Thompson who went by the stage name of Billy Scream.

Now are these guys all players?

They're all players.

So these guys, they are creative people.

They are creative people but for the most part we all had kind of a business sense about us and wanted to do business, and make some money.

Now when you got the production company going and ads would be bought basically without them even asking, the customer, were you starting to make a living off this?

We were making pretty good money. I still played in a band. I played in a band with Gordy Kjellberg...

Gordon is a nice man and a good player...

A very nice man. Gordy had a band called... The Feelies. So I started playing with them. We changed the name right after that to Cherry Fizz, who knows why, so anyhow we played together for a number of years and eventually we put together a trio of Herb Hamilton, Larry Roberts, and myself called the Holden Hamilton Roberts Trio. Eventually we had the production company, and we had an office right near the studios and Greenwood, within walking distance. We used an old technique that we tried in Don and the Good Times which worked very very well and it's called make them believe you've got lots of money and you're doing well. It's a brilliant technique that works very well. So what we did is we rented in the Tower 801 building, on the 28th floor, we rented this suite and got all this brand new furniture, put a grand piano in the foyer... and so we put all that there and started bringing clients over to listen to our productions and to talk about doing work with them. And now they are smelling success, and because of that we started getting lots of work! Don and the Good Times did the same thing in that at one point we said look if we're going to make more money we have to make it look like we're already making more money and so we went out and bought a brand new Cadillac and started showing up two gigs in this Cadillac. As soon as we did that we went from making \$200.00 a night to making \$500.00 a night. Just instantly... because they said the yeah, they're worth it, they're driving Cadillacs.

So that technique worked again?

Money begets money! In fact to be honest with you I used that same technique when I built the recording console at Sea-West. Because the recording console itself was about the size of a Mackie 1604, the actual console itself. And actually I built a lot of the knobs and that sort of thing in the machine shop that I was working at! (both laughing) I had one of my colleagues their make the face plate for the console and we built everything with Spectra Sonics electronics, but it was a very big. But we wanted to put this big show on so I ended up building this console out of eight foot, eight by four sheets of plywood. What I did is... the only magazine that was available to me that showed consoles was the AES journal.

The Audio Engineering Society Journal, which will get into in a minute.

And so I took one of those and looked and this was a Rupert Neve console that I was looking at, and I looked at the lines of that and I said you know out of wood I can cut this up, I can cover it with Formica which will make it look just like that wood, trim it in wood, and trim it in vinyl with a nice armrest and all that, and this thing looked like a million bucks by the time I was all done and we ended up putting phony knobs and meters all over the thing to make it look huge like a big console but really this little tiny and...

But you did drop in your little tiny thing into it so that you would sit at it and yes really engineer but your engineering on what, 12in. by 18in. or something of this huge mockup!

Right! It was very small!

Oh my word! You may have been one of the first to do this! I so a laugh now when I look at the... you know what our Corporation has, the gargantuan TS-12 Soundcrafts which are eight, nine, or 10ft. long, and I look now and a company which I think a lot of people know of is Argosy right, well they make giant consoles! Oh you want your Mackie DB8 in a giant console? Great!

And I do! My DXB is in an Omniracks. Which is the same thing.

My point is I always had to laugh, just get a big console if you want a big console! (laughing) but you mocked this up?

We mocked it up, and people would come in and they would go Wow! I want to record here! Because if we would have had that dinky little mixer sitting there, stand alone, people would have come in and go these guys are kidding! It's flash! And it still is today!!

I'm glad that you hit on that console, you built that console, you used the Spectra Sonics for the guts, you had the Ampex, I think the 300 1 inch eight track, and you guys had what, normal nice mics and that kind of stuff?

Yeah! Rick and I actually flew to Europe in the summer of '69, we went over there and we purchased microphones. The Deutschmark was very weak at the time. It was like the dollar could buy you five Deutschmark or something like that. So things that were selling for \$1,000.00 here were selling for \$200.00 or something like that over there! We bought Revox/Studer machines, 2 tracks. We bought two of those and shipped them home. We bought Klein + Hummel monitors, shipped those home. AKG microphones. The only thing that we couldn't get was Neumann microphones.

Because of the exclusive with Gotham?

Right. We just couldn't find a way to do that. What we probably should have done was looked at the Little Nickel ads while we were there, or the equivalent... but we weren't that smart at the time!

But you guys were obviously way savvy to do that, to fly over to Europe!

We saved a ton! We were there for a month and had a great time too!

So basically you guys have a serious serious studio in Seattle, you're saying it's the first eight track in Seattle, I remember all the rumors when I was a kid, before I even knew you, all the rumors said it was the first eight track north of San Francisco, it's the first sixteen track north of San Francisco, on and on. Was that the case?

Right. The chronology I can't really put together but I think that maybe that the HH&R (Holden Hamilton and Roberts) may have been the first sixteen track. It was not HH&R at that time, but that's another story too! Neil Rush, the husband then of Merrilee Rush who had had that big hit record...

(singing) just call me angel of the morning...

That's the one. A local woman. They had built the studio, he decided he didn't like being in the studio business...

He built what studio now?

I don't even remember what the name of it was, it was audio something or other...

But after she hit or before she hit?

After. Had this building over there near Green Lake, 56th and Kirkwood place, right on the corner, and he came to me and he said look, I can't do this, here's some scenarios: number one would you like to come work for me and just run the thing, or number two would you just like to buy part of it. I said well if I buy it I'd want controlling interest. And he said you can do that, he was willing...

Bob, what are we talking here year wise?

This was, ummm, '72. And so we worked it out that we purchased controlling interest from him in the studio and negotiated a lease from him because he owned the building. So we started doing that and he went off doing other things with the band. So we started running the business and as you know HH&R was fairly successful over about a ten year period of time.

Now this was Holden Hamilton and Roberts production company in essence moving out of Sea-West and over to this new studio, which was called Holden Hamilton and Roberts.

Right. In fact when we...the Krans Martokian Productions, at the point that we moved, when we sold our stock to someone else in Sea-West, we decided to make a name change at that point and instead of being Krans Martokian Productions now that we had a studio, we just called it Holden Hamilton and Roberts period. We didn't call it studio, we didn't call it anything because we were doing a number of different things quite frankly. I mean we eventually got into tape duplication, we were in advertising, and an outpouring of that was we ended up being a major shareholders in a bread company believe it or not. Many things. Very diverse business workings that we were doing.

Now when you guys got this opportunity, you talked to Neil Rush, I hope that it was a fine thing to say so long to Rick Keefer at Sea-West and go do your own thing. Was that a happy thing, an unhappy thing?

It was just a thing! We didn't thumb our nose at him, we just said this is what we're doing, we sold the stock and he was aware of what was going on. I still consider him a friend, although he won't return my e-mails but that's another issue...

We all have people like that. Even nice guys like us Bob! (both laughing) So HH&R, Holden, Hamilton and Roberts basically walked in to Neil Rush's studio, Merrilee Rush's studio, and was it all equipped?

It was however it had some issues.

Like installation issues, or acoustic issues...

Both. So initially we went in and I made some installation changes to get rid of some noise that was in there, and then eventually we redesigned the whole thing, physically, and it ended up being nice eye candy.

And by now you're someone who can go into an existing facility and isolate those issues whether they're acoustic issues, whether they're electronic issues, and actually remedy them. My point is that basically the only reference, the only of resource for you at this time, within reason, was the flipping AES journal! Is that basically the facts?

Yeah. I think by that time there was one other journal out there called DB. It was a very good magazine and is now defunct... I think, or did they bring it back?

I think maybe it morphed. Because I know Recording Engineer/Producer morphed into XYZ, but at any rate in the earlier times you were pouring through a technical, scientific journal...

That's right. Because there was no way to learn this. You couldn't go to Full Sail, you couldn't go to you know the Audio Workshop or any other place. You went to The Evergreen State College and NYU, and of course now I teach this at PLU, but there were no schools!

Now for those who have not actually picked up and AES journal (journal of the Audio Engineering society) which we are both members of, it can be and typically is a horrifically scientific thing!

It is. Which makes for interesting reading but you know if you're like I was, here I was a machinist, it was the only thing I had to read and I'd be on my lunch break or breaks while I'm working or at home, I'm sitting there reading through the stuff and I'm going man! This is greek to me! But you know what, after a while you keep reading it, and you read it and after a while it starts becoming clearer to you...

And you would have to re-read things?

Over and over and over! Yeah! You'd read one copy through twenty times until all of a sudden you'd say I understand what that means now!

Oh capacitance! OK got it! You get little pieces after you're reading it so that it finally fits together into a whole and you're like Oh I get it! What was in the new studio gear wise?

Actually some pretty nice equipment for the time. He had a 25 input Langevin console with four buses, no panning, no pan pots...

We'll wait a second, '72, so no panning in '72, we were clearly into stereo by that point, way into stereo...

Yeah, right, but no pan pots on the console, so if you wanted to do anything stereo it was hard left or right, OK, or mono. Then the recorders, the heart of the system was a sixteen track Scully, 288, which was a behemoth, a 2 inch. It also had a 1 inch stack and tape guides so you could do eight track. The nice thing is you didn't have to be re-calibrated the electronics because it was the same track width.

Of course it was! Now what were you guys using back then, 406/407, or what were you using?

Probably initially 206/406 and then initially 456 and I don't think we went beyond that. And of course we used some BASF...

But basically Scotch with the 206 and Ampex with the 406 and subsequently the 456... Now that studio go on for a long time?

Yeah it was around. We went there in '72 and I left there, I think in '79, and it continued for four or five years after that.

Now you did everything there like always, records, ads, the whole nine yards...

Yeah. You're there to make money so you do whatever comes in the door. We did ads, we did a lot of records for various artists...

And were you one of the main, if not the main studio in town? You're the first sixteen track in town so if you want to make a pro record you're probably going to go to HH&R.

Right. And we would get people who were in town that would come and record. I had sessions booked with Bread. They canceled on me...

As I've mentioned to you many times that when I was a kid, I'm from opposite poles, I had the whole Bread collection, which Armin Steiner did some of for Electra and then on the other hand I had the whole Black Sabbath records. So you're talking about an eight, nine, or ten year old kid, so that's my basis. But at any rate you would have national people...

Yeah, who would want to record in this facility. A lot of people who were traveling that we're doing voicing commercials, so it really ran the gamut.

Now do I remember that in that period of HH&R, because basically that was the seventies for you, did you have a mobile rig? Or was that after the HH&R period?

Right. Actually Rick Keefer built the first mobile rig in the area. In fact I rented from him one time and I did James Brown live at the Trojan Horse, 'member the old Trojan Horse?

Was that a knockout sitting in that truck or whatever it was listening to James Brown come out of the speakers?

It was cool! Until we played it back and discovered that track one didn't record! And that was the bass track! But fortunately they could overdub that, but that was a bummer.

So he actually had the first mobile rig...

He had the first mobile rig. I left HH&R and '79 and started working for another studio and that's a long story which I don't want to bore anybody with...

By now, of course, you're thinking I am a professional recording engineer.

Yeah, this is what I do. Actually what I did was I helped this, well Gordy Kjellberg, who wanted to build a studio. He had some inheritance money and so I helped him find some

equipment down in Dallas. He and I drove down there, had a road trip, a lot of good stories there! We went down there and bought this studio lock, stock, and barrel and I was able to negotiate a good price for him on it. We paid about half what the guy was asking for it. Moved it up here and it was some nice equipment.

Now did he have a physical place to put it or was it and other mobile rig?

He did. He had a place to put it and it was in West Seattle...

Oh, was it in Ed Doyle's shop, Friar Tuck's?

Yeah! Right next to it!

Well of course that's where I met Gordy. Ed Doyle who taught at Denny Junior High where I went to Junior High in West Seattle, he taught guitar there, and basically Bob if you flunk out of your audition to get into choir, or you just seemed like to rough of a kid, you were sent to guitar! I'm not joking! Everyone who is reading or listening to this who was in that group will know! We loved Ed Doyle! He was our hero! So at any rate Gordy hooked up with Ed, and by that time Ed's shop was in what, the third incarnation. It got bigger and bigger and bigger and in essence what was another side of that guitar shop, which was huge by then, I think it was in an old furniture store, but that's where Gordy set up the studio?

It was actually next door, it wasn't part of... same building but walls between them. So this worked out pretty good. We got a 24 channel Audiotronics console out of the deal, a 3M M79 16 track, a nice machine, and the best part was we got an ATR 100 two track that was just gorgeous! In fact we got it dirt cheap because it didn't work. I told Gordy head stack is kaput and I said I have no idea what its going to cost... so I called up and Ampex after we got back and said I've got this and Ampex machine and the head stack does work. The guy says what's your address? He said you'll have it by tomorrow morning! These are the old days! He says just throw the other one in the box and send it back. I popped that thing in there and walah! A fabulous machine, oh man!

Would you guys spin at fifteen, or did it go up to 30?

It went to 30.

And is that where you typically mastered stuff?

It would depend. It would depend on the project... but it was a gorgeous machine!

I assume with Gordy's situation there, you guys physically built out the space? Maybe the control room and whatever?

Yeah. right.

Were you doing records there?

Yeah! We did some records and various things. I did last there very long. I ended up going into business with Dan Rupert. He is an arranger and producer kind of guy who's worked here locally on a lot of movies that have been done here like the Die Hard movies. Dan and is a superb writer, orchestration, and does a lot of copying for these people. But at that point he and I had been working in the studio together at HH&R, and I think we worked a little bit together at Sea-West too. We just had a great working relationship. We decided it would be cool to go into business and an opportunity came up where a guy had built a mobile truck that lived down in Oregon and he wasn't making a living on it and had to move it. So we made arrangements to buy it from him and went into business doing mobile recording.

Now we're talking the real early eighties, '80 or '81? Is this the one that was a big converted mobile home?

Yeah right about that time. It was a 27ft. Winnebago. It was really cool because we would go places, we had clients who would like to record and they lived in homes that acoustically were acceptable, and were isolated enough that they were off the traffic grid so we could do some good recordings. We had clients who lived like in Clyde Hill and had a beautiful view of the city. We would just pull up, pull the umbilicus out, plop it down and had communication back and forth and we would record, and then Dan and I would get ready to mix... Dan and I are both avid fisherman, we love to fish so quite often we would drive up to Mt. Baker (both laughing)...

OK wait a second. You would take the Winnebago, which in essence was a mobile recording truck up to Mt. Baker which is a gorgeous area up close to the Canadian border...

Right! So we'd drive up there and we'd go to this campground, rent ourselves a boat because I had an outboard motor that I would take the long, and we'd get up early in the morning and go fishing, early early in the morning, and then we would come back in the midday when it was warm and we didn't want to be out in the hot sun and we'd go in and we'd mix for about four to six hours in the Winnebago! As the sun was starting to head down the other way we'd have a little bit of dinner and go out and fish a little more and then maybe come in and mix a little more...

Was there a AC? Did you get power?

Yeah, that particular campground had AC from... I have to remember... they turned it on at 6:00am, it was a generator, and it went off at 10:00 at night!

Are they not tripping on you guys sucking down the juice, because I imagine it was a little juice you guys were sucking down!

I don't think it was drawing that much to be honest with you. The amplifiers were probably doing the most but we didn't get any flak. They thought it was kind of cool actually! They would stick us off so we were bothering anybody because you could hear it. That was a kick!

Was that truck purchased with the gear that was in it initially? What was the compliment?

Right. It had a 24 channel Auditronics console, I think...

Auditronics again?

Again yeah! Which is funny because we had that same console... we replaced the Langevin console at HH&R with this Auditronics, and then I got the same console for Gordy over at... Studio One, that was the name of the studio, and then we ended up getting this one from the guy out of Oregon. And it came with a 3M sixteen track M56. It had an Ampex 440. I don't remember if it was a B or a C but it was a decent mix down deck, and I think there was a Revox in there too just for making dubs, and a little bit of nice outboard gear...

Was that mobile truck basically ready to go when you got it? Like snakes and the whole 9yds.?

Everything, yeah. Although there were some things with it that were, were not right and I ended up kind of going through it. I didn't care for the monitors. He had L100s, two of them on each side. In fact I have a pair of them at home in my family room that we run our TV through and it sounds great! For monitoring, and I'm a big JBL guy as you know, and had been using 4411s and 4413s and were very accustomed to those. These just didn't sound right.

Now I'm right aren't I? Those L100s are consumer speakers?

They were! But they were a version of, basically, the 4411. A lot of the same components, not identical but similar. I never felt I was getting a really clear image so we ended up buying some different monitors and changing things around little bit.

And that lasted for a period, where you guys were using that truck?

Yeah! Actually we were going gangbusters for probably about a year and a half, something like that, and all of a sudden... things really got tight for us and it got the point where we just couldn't continue that way and so we had to...

Did you sell it?

Actually, we ended up going bankrupt in the process. Chapter eleven or whatever it is...

And that was early eighties, right? My point is after that mobile truck, did you basically take the job at PLU?

Yeah, right. After that I ended up doing a lot of freelancing of different types, doing some sound system design and recording and whatever...

We'll Bob, because by now, you know a lot of people in the industry! First of all our circle of industry up in the Seattle area, heck in the northwest, it's not a giant and you get to know people, and you get to have a name...

...and so I did that for a while and decided, you know what, I don't want to work for myself anymore (laughing), I want to work for somebody else and so I started looking around and the PLU job came up...and it stuck!

I started working for you in '85, so you got yours what, in '84 or '83?

'82.

I just want to say thanks for hiring me! I worked for you for six years and learned of the most I have learned anywhere in audio! I am thankful for that and for all of your teachings! We had great fun there!

Yeah we did.

Let's jump decades forward...what are you using now? Tell me what you are using now in typical production stuff.

We got rid of most of the analog stuff this last summer and I've been waiting and waiting and waiting for the technology to get to a point where I felt I could make that jump and I really felt comfortable doing that the summer. We purchased one of the very first Mackie DXB 200 consoles, 72 inputs on three layers, with sample rates from sixteen bit 44.1 all the way up to 24 bit 192k.

With every channel?

Well you lose channels, but with 72 (both laughing) you can kind of afford to lose a few in the process! Actually we have it setup now at standard Redbook, 44.1 16 bit. However we do have the capability with the digital workstation that we have of expanding it all the way up to the same sample rates and beyond. It's capable of DSD... it's the Merging Technologies Pyramix. Along with that I also purchased a Genex... what is it, a 9048, and it is capable of 48 tracks of DSD.

So it's a hardware multitrack recorder and it can do DSD or PCM. And of course I led you down that path in my dealings with Genex and Mr. Kevin Brown, which we won't go into here, but hopefully they ended much better for you than they did for us.

Finally got it all resolved and things are doing well. We still do not have the machine implemented into our system because we are still trying to get the heart of the system, which is the workstation, running and in tip top shape then getting the Mackie board and the Pyramix to talk to each other. We've got most of the issues resolved. Once we get that straightened out we will probably expand the Genex to 24 tracks and probably leave it there. The nice thing about that is that we can do recordings on the Genex, and pull the drives, and put them into the Pyramix directly and with very minimal manipulation of the data, be able to just continue working.

That is just over the top! And of course Kevin Brown and Genex cultivated that relationship with Merging...

And the other thing about the Pyramix, and I did a lot of soul searching when I bought this. As you know we had the Spectral systems which we love but we needed something that was going to expand with our needs. Pro Tools for us is just to doggone expensive! So probably for what I would have paid for a minimalist Pro Tools system, I have five of the Pyramix systems!

And people need to understand that we are talking about five systems that can do DSD!

That are capable of doing DSD. Now here's the interesting thing, you know how Pro Tools works, if you buy the LE, the light version, I think they have maybe two or three iterations of it, they don't necessarily work with each other (laughing) and that's problematic! The nice thing about Pyramix is you can start at the bottom! For 500 and some dollars you buy a disk with basically everything on it, including DSD, but for \$500.00 you are buying a key that allows you to open up certain things. Many many very powerful things! You can put it on a laptop which I have one set of like that, very very capable for doing all kinds of recording, and then you can expand it all the way up to, I think 128 tracks, real time tracks not including virtual tracks. So it's a very flexible system, has a lot of powerful DSP with it...and someone can walk into my studio with a Pro Tools session they are working on and we can load it up! We just tell Pyramix this is a Pro Tools project and the guy can sit down and continue working on it with all the same macros that he would in Pro Tools...or Sonic Solutions or whatever it happens to be. I don't know that it emulates all of them but it has DAW emulation for many of the different major systems.

As you know, when I left you at PLU in '91 I went to do my masters at NYU because I wanted to teach university in audio stuff, and came back and got on with Spectral Synthesis, which became Spectral, Inc. after Euphonix bought us. I got you guys some systems for some good prices and got the KPLU systems for big prices, in really struck me however when you and I were talking when you were thinking about the Pyramix purchase, it sounds like it has a really steep learning curve which the Spectral system had. But it has that steep learning curve because of the insane power that it affords you! I think that is what you have found...

Exactly. You know me well enough to know I researched things probably way too much. I look at things and I look at things and at some point you jump in! you remember when I bought that first DAT machine you thought I was a knucklehead!

Yeah! In 1987 we bought the first gray market DAT machine I think in this state!

Yet we did! And you thought I was nuts!

**That isn't coming to my mind but I'm sure Mr. Holden is remembering it correctly!
(both laughing)**

Oh yeah! You thought it was a mistake! Fortunately for me it wasn't! (both laughing)
But it could've been! As you and I know it was welcomed!

The only thing I will say is that it was a tiny mistake because, of course we're both at PLU which has a very serious music department and up until that point we recorded everything analog, so now we start recording on DAT and we would record these concerts and then play them back for Professor X, Y, and Z of the music faculty and we won't mention any names... They would be like what's this noise in here! You think I was skeptical! They were horrifically skeptical of all this as it was only four years after CDs came out! So any rate they would say what's this noise, and you and I would say that is your tongue against the reed!!! They simply had not heard recordings of that resolution! And that fight went on for a while! Well thank goodness you prevailed in that decision because now it has been proven that that was a good decision. You kept us, and you continue to keep PLU on the cutting edge which I think he's just brilliant! I don't think there is any other school in this state where you can go to even be exposed to DSD equipment! Most people haven't even heard of it! We are talking about Direct Stream Digital which is a new recording... in essence it's a new language for recording digital audio. That's as simple as I can put it.

The one thing I have to be careful with is that we have a limited budget... to be able to do much with little. I think that we do that. Fortunately we were at a point this year where I really had a lot of support from my superiors to make our control room all digital. It is our hope that within the next couple of years we build new studios so we designed all of the equipment in a fashion that it looks like a hard install but its actually soft. Over a couple of days we should be able to pull everything out, move it, and be up and running against the new facility. Plus if we ever want to use that in our concert hall its easily moved as well.

Now remind me, don't you guys record straight to the Pyramix?

In the concert hall yeah, right! We have five systems, two of them are workstations where the students who are taking classes from me, or students who work for me, can use to do productions. One is in our recording studio and it is the "el primo" system that is loaded

with probably 90% of everything it can do including 24 tracts of I/O which is plenty for us. The rest are eight I/O. And then I have one, believe it or not, on my desktop So that if a student comes in and says I'm having trouble with this or that I can just pull it up and say OK here's what you do... And also if someone comes in and says I need a CD of such and such and I need it quick... sometimes it's difficult to get a student to do it, so I can load in, chop it up, and spit it out to a CD while at the same time looking at a spread sheet budget!

This has been so much fun! I thank you so much for coming in! Thanks to pay KPLU for letting us use the studio. Hopefully there will just be another chapter of this and we'll be talking about Lord knows what the next time we get together!

Great!