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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Copy of Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History interview with Norm Lambert

Date: March 18, 1975

Recording number: copy of na863, mfc_na0863_t0823_01

Length of recording: 56:34

[transcript begins]

NORTHEAST ARCHIVES staff member: Oral history accession number 863, a series of interviews with Norm Lambert of Hamden, Maine, concerning Country Western music and early radio, done as part of a project to study Country Western music in the Bangor area in the '30s and '40s. Done as part of AY123, Folklore Fieldwork. Tape number 863.1, an interview with Norm Lambert at his home in Hamden, Maine, on March 17, 1975. The interviewer is Mark Lafond.

LAFOND: This is Mark Lafond. I'm at Norm Lambert's house in Hampden, Maine. Today is March 18th, 1975. I'll be talking to him about the country-western music scene in Maine. Okay, I guess that's about it for that. I suppose the best way to start is with this list that Sandy gave you. Which ones of these do you recognize?

LAMBERT: I recognized this first one, Waity Akins and his Orchestra.

LAFOND: Waity Akins?

LAMBERT: Yeah.

LAFOND: How about the Bangor Hydro Rangers?

LAMBERT: Them I can't remember, [much of them ?]

LAFOND: The Bar L Orchestra?

LAMBERT: The Bar L Orchestra I remember.

LAFOND: Paul Barrows and his Oldtimers?

LAMBERT: Paul Barrows, I do, yeah.

LAFOND: Blaisdell Orchestra?

LAMBERT: I remember the Blaisdell name, but I didn't know her at all. Of course, that was in '25, she started. I only came here in '25 anyway, myself. [?] Blaisdell was a piano player, she does, she did play with all kinds of orchestras, you know, and she had her own orchestra, also.

LAFOND: Oh, that's why, that's why it says here it may have been more than one group?

LAMBERT: Right. She was a Bangor piano player that played everywhere.

LAFOND: So kind of like whoever she was playing with got the name Blaisdell?

LAMBERT: Right.

LAFOND: Okay how about Bolger and...

LAMBERT: I have no knowledge of them at all

LAFOND: Earl "Shorty" Born?

LAMBERT: Shorty Born, I knew him personally, yes.

LAFOND: Brewer Seasideers?

LAMBERT: No. Nothing on that.

LAFOND: The Buckeye Four.

LAMBERT: The Buckeye Four, I don't remember them, either.

LAFOND: Fred Carlton?

LAMBERT: Fred Carlton's Orchestra, yes, he did, I knew him.

LAFOND: Did you know him personally?

LAMBERT: A little bit

LAFOND: Let's see here, Pat Clancy?

LAMBERT: No, not a thing on that.

LAFOND: The Country Boys?

LAMBERT: The County Boys, nothing.

LAFOND: Deep River Boys?

LAMBERT: Deep River Boys, I just remember the title of them, that's all. That was on ABI, anyway, you see. I wasn't with ABI, so ...

LAFOND: That's right, you were with LBZ, weren't you?

LAMBERT: I had 28 years

LAFOND: 28 years? From when to when?

LAMBERT: From the beginning when they went on the air, the first day.

LAFOND: When was that?

LAMBERT: Uh, 1926.

LAFOND: 1926

LAMBERT: Yeah, and I stayed with him for twenty-eight years

LAFOND: That would put it up to '74? No...

LAMBERT: Ah, '54

LAFOND: that's right 54

LAMBERT: Yeah then I went to I went to W2 television, that's what happened. And I stayed with them for a while. Then I went with ABI TV for 10 years after that.

LAFOND: Hmm. What capacity did you...

LAMBERT: Musical director.

LAFOND: You were the Musical Director?

LAMBERT: Ayuh.

LAFOND: What did a musical director do?

LAMBERT: Oh, he takes care of all the musical programs and I also had an all-day office for traffic control, you know. Networked and local traffic, all the ads sponsored by the station, I used to log them there, make a file of them, and the announcers would use that file in for the daily log, you see, for all the stuff they [have to?] on the air.

LAFOND: I see. So you were, you were the man who set up, like who would sing when? And what people would come on the air?

LAMBERT: Yes. I'd program everything.

LAFOND: Did people come to you, or did you?

LAMBERT: They'd come to me, or I'd call them up

LAFOND: How would

LAMBERT: To [inaudible] some local programs also

LAFOND: So an example might be that you hear of a man that you think might be a good person

LAMBERT: I'd see them perform outside somewheres and I call them and see if he wanted to go on the air. Most of the stuff then was and the old days was gratis, anyways. Just the idea of getting on the radio. They didn't expect pay, really at the beginning. Of course, after a while it go so they wanted their rates, you know.

LAFOND: [Laughing] It got a little harder, huh?

LAMBERT: Yeah

LAFOND: Well, I suppose we can finish up this list and then

LAMBERT: Roland Dube, I didn't know anything about. Nellie Dunham, I don't remember him, is a champion fiddler. I think Nellie Dunham also, well [inaudible] by Henry Ford. He also played for the president at one time, I think. Fiddles contest and so forth. George Emerson I knew, also. Of course, he played everywhere. George Emerson played old-time stuff, you know, jigs and reels and quadrilles. It mentions here the [Oregon?] Center Fridays. That was his main place to play, and but he played all around also, you know, different Grange Halls and so forth. Tex Fletcher, I just remember the name, only. [Inaudible Art?] Goodie, 1925. He lived in Veazie, that's why it says here that he played for dances in Veazie, but he played all round also. He was a violinist. Green Valley Boys, I just remember the name, although, as I said, it's been so long ago that I can't remember much about them.

LAFOND: Yeah, I could see why.

LAMBERT: Reid Hand used to play Carmel Auto Rest, sort of a carnival affair they used to have over there.

LAFOND: It was called the Carmel Auto Rest?

LAMBERT: Auto Rest Park, and they used to run dances there and he used to play for those. country dances. Reid Hands. Of course in those days, you know, we used to put a line, a telephone line through to all these old places, you know, and broadcast the program from the halls, and things like that.

LAFOND: A telephone line?

LAMBERT: Yeah, well, yeah to get the radio broadcast, we used to put a, order a telephone line in to the hall. Then our man would go over there and broadcast the different orchestras in the Grange Halls or any place that it might be playing. To further the programs there.

LAFOND: So it would be ...

LAMBERT: Just like network. Big dance bands used to have all the time, you know.

LAFOND: Right, kind of a remote recording

LAMBERT: Remote. Remote broadcast

LAFOND: And you did it through the telephone lines?

LAMBERT: Oh, yes. We had to. We had to have a line, see? See, FM doesn't use lines there, but radio uses lines. Telephone lines.

LAFOND: Oh, I never knew that.

LAMBERT: And like they have, you can have, you can order a first class line or a second class or third class line. Of course, the third class line would be cheaper to buy, so that's frankly the line that we will buy all the time, see, because we'd been doing a broadcast free of charge. That would also advertise their halls where they're having their dances and also that would fill us out some time on our programming.

LAFOND: So it worked out kind of even

LAMBERT: To stay on the air all day long and all evening.

LAFOND: Did you, was it hard to find enough entertainment so that you could be on?

LAMBERT: Well, there was all kinds of things going on all the time. It didn't have to be too good, either, you know. Just so it would fill the time, that's all. That's why we took these, I don't know, Hillbilly bands, and contra dance bands and so forth. Fill in a 15 or half hour period.

LAFOND: So were the, was the main portion of your broadcasting, though, was that was that non country-western music?

LAMBERT: At that time, we had everything. Modern jazz bands, you know, and everything like that. The old Chateau Ballroom there, where Sears-Roebuck is now, that used to be a big ballroom there, Chateau, and there was a big thing for bands, you know, to play in there. It would give them a big name, you see. We used to do a lot of broadcasting from there. Sometimes a whole hour or an hour and a half of so, during the dancing. Pick it up, pick up the bands, you know.

LAFOND: Oh. Was there much demand for Country-Western or Hillbilly music in the area?

LAMBERT: Yes, there was. Had a lot of it around here.

LAFOND: Did you ever, were there any particular shows on ABI when you were on that were they were like just country-western, like they have

LAMBERT: On LBZ?

LAFOND: Yes

LAMBERT: Oh yeah, we had a lot of local stuff, you know, and of course like the Lone Pine Mountaineer, I think LBZ Radio was the first, started him in. Then he had his name up all over the state, and Canada. He kept traveling after that. [Jan Bye, you know] He's noted here as Lone Pine Mountaineer '35. That's probably when LBZ radio started him in.

LAFOND: LBZ then was the first to hear Lone Pine Mountaineer

LAMBERT: Well, LBZ was the first one on the air, anyway. First radio station there.

LAFOND: When did the others come in?

LAMBERT: Oh just a few years after that. [sound of page turning] That's Reanne. Hillbilly girl, nothing. Probably the other boys, Irving Hunter and Ed Guernsey might remember those.

LAFOND: Maybe, you never know.

LAMBERT: 'Course Ed Guernsey and Irving Hunter came in a little after I did. It might be that those dates are too far back for them, too.

LAFOND: It might be.

LAMBERT: Cy Hopkins, I remember the name. Ray Jordan and the Mountaineers, I don't know anything about them. Lancaster's band I remember. Bar L. Ranch. But I don't think... I don't know if we ever picked them up there from the Bar L or not. At Newport. I don't remember them playing in the studio. Rhythm Boys, nothing. Then comes the Lone Pine Mountaineer, which I told you about, anyway, right?

LAFOND: Right.

LAMBERT: Lone Star Ranger, nothing. Smiling Ed McConnell, that says ABI, so I won't know anything about that. Garfield Cowboy McKey, nothing. Maine Central Melodiers, I don't know if that was the one I was on or not. I had Maine Central time on the air for 18 years, you know. At the [inaudible] I was playing. I had an orchestra on their forum, dance band. And the Melodiers, is that the, that was the name of it. Could have been. [Bernie Meyer?] I don't remember. Mountain Boy, nothing. [Inaudible] Oakland Boys, nothing on them. [Inaudible] I remember. He was another one who liked to read hands over here. Overlock was more or less jazz, more than, Reid [Hamlin?] was county. Overlark was more of a jazz band.

LAFOND: But he did play some country-western or was he

LAMBERT: Oh, yeah, he used to play most anything that was needed, because he played the Hayseeders Ball. He would have to play, round dances, you know. Also.

LAFOND: Yeah. Was there any difference then between Country-Western and Hillbilly? Do people make a distinction between the two?

LAMBERT: No.

LAFOND: No? They were both

LAMBERT: They were all one then. Pinto Pete, nothing. Now this [Chaply Railton?] is a Hillbilly boy. Chaply Railton came here from Rockport, Mass. Used to play with an orchestra that used to play at the Chateau. He was a banjo player and he started all kinds of his own after he got through with that band. Rustlers, nothing. [Severance?], nothing. Bar Rangers. I just remember that name. Singing Sam, I don't know anything about. Singing Sam almost sounds to me like it used to be network, you know, we used to pick it up on network. Somebody who

could have been local, but I don't remember it. George Smith, nothing. Southernaires, that name's familiar. [Inaudible] Savior used to play the Chateau here also. Southernaires weren't country music.

LAFOND: They weren't?

LAMBERT: No.

LAFOND: Uh-huh. We thought with a name like that they must be.

LAMBERT: No, they were straight jazz. Ralph Spencer, I remember the name, very well. He'd do a lot of work around here, general work. Texas Cowboy, nothing. Tex [inaudible], I remember the name, although he was ABI also. Uncle Ezra was very popular here. He did all kinds of different programs on radio. He used to have make-up, a beard, a goatee, and everything, you know.

LAFOND: Oh yeah?

LAMBERT: He used to go all around the countryside here doing performances and he had his own band, a country band.

LAFOND: But he didn't really ever have a beard?

LAMBERT: Not a real one, no. It was makeup, all made up. And he went, let's see, Pennsylvania to work. Came back to Portland radio station which is the same company as LBZ here, the Maine Broadcasting System. He had all kinds of, he brought all kinds of talent into the studio there, had his own program there, as Uncle Ezra.

LAFOND: Oh, he had his own regular program?

LAMBERT: Yeah, talent programs, anything like that, yeah.

LAFOND: Oh, and he'd just bring people in?

LAMBERT: He was the emcee. He'd emcee the shows.

LAFOND: So it could almost be considered like an Amateur Hour type situation?

LAMBERT: Yes. That's what it was. That's what it was.

LAFOND: Oh and he emceed this?

LAMBERT: Emceed the shows, yeah. He was very popular around here. Had a big name around here.

LAFOND: When was he on, do you remember?

LAMBERT: Well it says the 1975 [inaudible] but it was a lot longer than that.

LAFOND: Well, I mean like you don't remember times or days?

LAMBERT: No, I remember his amateur show used to have was on Sundays and I used to have to play for all these things, you know, when I was musical director. I used to have to accompany all the talent and everything. Because I was the only one there then playing.

LAFOND: So you used to play

LAMBERT: All his programs, too. And we'd rehearse all afternoon Sundays and put the program on, probably 6:30 to 8:00, 7:30 at night, you know, an hour show. And it was a very popular program. People would write in, you know, their votes.

LAFOND: Oh, it was a voting

LAMBERT: Voted for the talent, yeah, by mail and there was a winner, and a second winner, and third winner, and so forth.

LAFOND: Were prizes awarded or

LAMBERT: Yes, yeah, they'd be given something. So much money, I guess it was. And then, and they'd have the, you know, finals, semi-finals, and so forth. It's like a basketball tournament.

LAFOND: Do you remember who won the

LAMBERT: No, no, too many of them, you see. Too many of them. Uncle Hiram, nothing. I think Uncle Hiram here, that was that was the Uncle Ezra thing, too, I think. That was probably, just changed his name and had another kind of a show. I see here where it was the Opera House stage show, and I think that was the same Uncle Ezra, only changed his name.

LAFOND: Why would he have done that? Different type of show?

LAMBERT: Different type show. Different makeup.

LAFOND: That's interesting

LAMBERT: And it says here, Uncle Harriman, his partner. He probably had his, he had a daughter, a little daughter, that sang very good, too, and that was probably the partner who would go on with him.

LAFOND: How old was this daughter when she

LAMBERT: Oh, she was 11, 11 to 14 years old when she started, you know. Very small. Uncle [inaudible]. The only way I can place this one is Lanky Lancaster, who used to play saxophone. It must have been him because he lives in Veazie, and I see he played the Veazie Town Hall, and that's the only way I can place that one. Uncle Seth was very popular here. I think he came out of Old Town. Uncle Zeb, nothing. Sam Viner was the, is the owner of Viner's Music store here. And he used to be on, it says here LBZ, 6:15 to 6:30 and it wasn't Country Western, because he was a banjo player.

LAFOND: He played a what, a banjo?

LAMBERT: Banjo.

LAFOND: Isn't a banjo, a country, you know,

LAMBERT: Well, they did use them a lot, but he was playing things like [inaudible] Rag, things like that on the banjo, solo.

LAFOND: Oh, I see.

LAMBERT: There's another one I used to have to accompany all the time. Westerners, nothing. That's ABI. Ray Little was very popular around here. He had his own country band. And he was a banjo player also. And he went all over the state and Canada also, and played. He's now in Milbridge, I think, running a movie theater. Was, the last I heard of him, anyway. And that's it.

LAFOND: Now, a couple times through here you said that, let's see, who were some of, well, like the Westerners were ABI, and you don't know anything about them. Did certain bands only play on certain radio stations?

LAMBERT: They played anywhere they could, you know, if they were invited to play. But these particular ones that I mentioned at ABI, they must have played just ABI at the time

LAFOND: I see. So consequently you don't know anything about them?

LAMBERT: I don't know anything about them, no.

LAFOND: Now I have a few questions here that I had written down. I'll see if I can find any that you haven't already answered. Now, you said that you used to accompany bands

LAMBERT: I used to accompany all the programs

LAFOND: All the programs

LAMBERT: On the air, on the radio

LAFOND: Every time there was a

LAMBERT: Something that needed accompanying, I would be the one doing it.

LAFOND: Do you remember any particular bands that you played with

LAMBERT: Well, of course, I used to have my own orchestra, or like Maine Central Hour, you know. Maine Central Railroad Hour, used to have my own band, you see. Had a 16-piece orchestra in the studio every, I think that was on Sunday, also, and I'd get these men around town here, musicians, from the Union and I formed this orchestra and we had every Sunday for a series of program like thirteen programs in a series. Contract. And after that, after the band year was over with, then I took it out on the organ alone, broadcast with the organ. Three times, three, 6:15 or 6:30 at night, three times a week.

LAFOND: What year was that?

LAMBERT: I don't know. I stopped that about 13 years ago and I was on for 18 years, Maine Central. 62? Ending in '62. And then 18 years back from '62, I had the Maine Central Hour. '44?

LAFOND: '44. Oh arithmetic isn't my strong point.

LAMBERT: It isn't mine, either.

LAFOND: Okay, so whenever a band needed accompaniment

LAMBERT: Or any talent whatsoever

LAFOND: You were it?

LAMBERT: Yeah, vocals or anything.

LAFOND: Was there any one band that you were especially remembered that you liked playing with or enjoyed working with when, you know, when they came on

LAMBERT: Is it radio, or outside or anything

LAFOND: Let's stick with the radio, I suppose

LAMBERT: Radio. That's the only one, the only big band that I've had on there

LAFOND: Which was that?

LAMBERT: The Maine Central.

LAFOND: The Maine Central. Any Country Western stars that the stick in your mind?

LAMBERT: Lone Pine and Ray Little. Of course, Ray Little had his own outfit. I didn't have to play for them. They went off on their own. Lone Pine I used to have to accompany once in a while.

LAFOND: Was he, can you tell me something about him that, you know

LAMBERT: Well he was quite young. Harold Breau was his name.

LAFOND: Harold Breau?

LAMBERT: Yeah, B-r-e-a-u. He's from Old Town. And he came down here as a kid and he started on the air. We put him on. And [inaudible] had letters coming in, you know, so it kept on going and going and he got better, and finally got some a other people with him. Found this little group and that's the way he got going.

LAFOND: Would he still be alive? He must.

LAMBERT: I think he is.

LAFOND: If he was a kid when he first

LAMBERT: His last residence, I think, was Lewiston.

LAFOND: Lewiston?

LAMBERT: Yeah

LAFOND: O, so it's moved.

LAMBERT: Oh yeah. He went to Lewiston from Canada, I believe. He went up to Canada first. These Hillbilly outfits, you know, they used to Canada and make a lot of money. And then they'd have to get out there, after a while. Come back and made his home in Lewiston. I don't know what's happened since then. I haven't seen him for years. He made quite a name for himself as, well, he was like Dick Curless is now, you know. Who's the other fellow? Well several groups around here have, you know, done well, with it. Have done very well with it.

LAFOND: You said that you knew Waity Atkins quite well.

LAMBERT: Oh, yeah. I still know him.

LAFOND: You still know him?

LAMBERT: Oh, yeah. He doesn't play very much now, though, I guess. I guess he's still a volunteer in the Eastern Maine General Hospital here.

LAFOND: Is that is that his real name, Woody Atkins?

LAMBERT: Aikens. A-i-k-e-n-s.

LAFOND: e-n-s. Oh.

LAMBERT: I don't know. Maybe it's A-k-i-n-s. I guess that's right, A-k-i-n-s. I don't know how he spelled his name, really, to tell you the truth. [Laughter] Somehow I think it's A-i-k_A-i-k-e-n-s. I think that's what it is. [Long silence, and sounds of looking through pages to check] A-i-k-e-n.

LAFOND: A-i-k-e-n. Uh, huh.

LAMBERT: Waity was quite an arranger also. Played all the instruments, piano, saxophone, clarinet. Arranged music, you know, orchestration, in [inaudible], I guess. There used to be a electric car service from Old Town to Bangor which I used to play with all the big bands around, and he did also. We used to play the Chateau. He'd take an electric car from Old Town and by the time he got to Bangor to play that night, he had a whole arrangement made for 16 men. Special arrangement. Riding down from Old Town. He'd make a whole arrangement for 16 men.

LAFOND: That's amazing.

LAMBERT: Yeah, he was a very good musician.

LAFOND: You said that you also know Earl "Shorty" Bowen.

LAMBERT: Yeah.

LAFOND: [Merry Makers?]

LAMBERT: He used to do all kinds of, American Legion dances and things like that, because he was a legionnaire himself. When he retired in Florida and went to Florida, and that's where he died. You know, several years ago. He was quite an old fellow.

LAFOND: Do you remember who is the first Country-Western star that you had on LBZ?

LAMBERT: I'd say the Lone Pine.

LAFOND: He was the first star?

LAMBERT: I think so, yeah. That I can remember, anyway. I remember he only had three chords on the guitar

LAFOND: He only knew three chords?

LAMBERT: Three chords, yeah. He sang with those three chords and went on the air with them. [Both laugh]

LAFOND: Uh, it might have been Irving Hunter, I'm not sure, but someone told us you might have a scrapbook of Country-Western stars.

LAMBERT: I told Mr. Ives that. But it's all about myself. It wouldn't be any good, you know.

LAFOND: Oh, sure it would. Every little bit helps. Would, would you mind if we took a look at it, or copied it, or...

LAMBERT: It's mostly all loose stuff, and it's that thick.

LAFOND: It's that thick.

LAMBERT: Yeah. You want to turn that off, and I'll go get it.

LAFOND: Yeah, we can shut it off for now.

LAMBERT: There's a picture of John McKernan, you've heard of him. Sports announcer. That wouldn't, you're after the Country and Western.

LAFOND: The Maine Broadcaster.

LAMBERT: Yeah.

LAFOND: What years? When did they stop, uh?

LAMBERT: Well, I don't know when they stopped doing it. Went on for... three or four...that's something that Ed Guernsey would know more about.

LAFOND: It's got NBC up here in the corner. Was a put out by...

LAMBERT: Maine Broadcasting Company. See, Portland, CHS in Portland has NBC. And they own this, LBZ here. The Maine Broadcasting Company, they own the station here. They own one in Augusta, and I don't know if they own one in New Hampshire.

LAFOND: Would there be any reference, there must be references to Country Music in that.

LAMBERT: See, on at 11:45, Tuesday and Thursday, we'd have the Maine Central program, 11:45 to noon. And then Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at night. Tony and Juanita was more or less country also.

LAFOND: Tony and Juanita?

LAMBERT: Yeah, they did all kinds of different things, but, a lot of them were Hillbilly, and Western, too. Country Western. A Visit with Hezzie. That was Uncle Hezzie.

LAFOND: Uncle Hezzie?

LAMBERT: Yeah.

LAFOND: Was that, RDO and LBZ?

LAMBERT: RDO was in Augusta, CSH was in Portland, and LBZ, Bangor.

LAFOND: I see.

LAMBERT: They covered the whole program area. [Inaudible... Howard?] just died, couple-three weeks ago. The Bangor Male Chorus. There's Irving Hunter. And Ed Guernsey. Maine Central show. I don't see the years.

LAFOND: Well, wouldn't this be 1947?

LAMBERT: Yeah.

LAFOND: That picture would be.

LAMBERT: 1947. 6:30 in the evening, Monday through Friday, and 11:45 on Tuesday. RDO, that's in Augusta. Might be on network there. I don't think this is going to be helpful.

LAFOND: There isn't any particular references to Country-Western music in your

LAMBERT: Have to put that away, I don't think so. [Name, inaudible] retired. Bangor. This. It's all about me. Not much here.

LAFOND: Mr. Music.

LAMBERT: No, that's all personal. Don't think there's any country stuff at all.

LAFOND: No, it doesn't. That, in itself, is good to know. At least we know that's one avenue that's closed. Let's see here. Now, we've heard about a Wednesday night Amateur Hour that used to be on. Was that the one that Uncle Hezzie or Ezra had?

LAMBERT: That, he used used to be on a Sunday, though. That used to be on a Sunday, so we could get the outside people coming in on. no school and no work, you see, and they'd come in Sunday afternoons for rehearsal, put them on Sunday evening. Then they could go home afterward without losing any work or school. So we couldn't have put it on Wednesdays.

LAFOND: Was there only that one Amateur Hour that you had on or

LAMBERT: Could have been [inaudible] because you had a lot of amateur hours, but they weren't as big a scale as that particular one I'm talking about.

LAFOND: You mean during the week, you would have more than one Amateur Hour that were that were kind of smaller scale?

LAMBERT: Well, at different segments, you know, at different times. But not at the same time the big one was on. It was either small ones to begin with, then we went to the bigger one.

LAFOND: Oh, I see.

LAMBERT: Combined the whole thing together.

LAFOND: So when uncle Ezra had his Amateur Hour, most of the performers were country-western or

LAMBERT: No, everything. All mixed. Yeah, everything.

LAFOND: So there wouldn't be

LAMBERT: They did what they wanted to do when they came in.

LAFOND: And yet Uncle Ezra was a Country-Western, was known for his country western

LAMBERT: Yes, yes.

LAFOND: When he emceed, did he

LAMBERT: He had the dialogue to go along with it and everything.

LAFOND: Now, that was a question I was going to ask. Uncle Ezra's, you could see gimmick, was a beard and the dialect? Did other people have certain characteristics that they developed it as a as a sales, you know, as a, I'm trying to think of the word, not sales, but something that distinguished them so that people would want them?

LAMBERT: No, he was the only one in that category, I think.

LAFOND: He was the only one who did things kind of out of the ordinary? The rest were just performing straight?

LAMBERT: Straight performers. I remember Uncle Ezra, for three years, he was a Santa Claus over at Freese's also. So he'd come in the studio, dress as Santa Claus, go next door to Freese's to perform there. He was also Santa Claus. Anything with costumes or makeup, you know.

LAFOND: He used to like that stuff.

LAMBERT: He used to like it, yeah. Ezra, Uncle Ezra, Uncle Hezzie, he had all kinds of names, you know.

LAFOND: Do you happen to know what his real name was?

LAMBERT: Yes, Gilbert Snow.

LAFOND: Gilbert Snow.

LAMBERT: I think he was born in Orrington, here. Or somewhere.

LAFOND: Do you know if he's still around?

LAMBERT: No, he died. He dies several years ago. Peoria, Illinois, that's where he went to work, after he left Bangor, here.

LAFOND: Peoria? I can never say that. Huh. Do you know much about the local dance spots that were in the area?

LAMBERT: Now, you mean?

LAFOND: No, I mean back, you know.

LAMBERT: Yeah, I used to play with all the bands around here.

LAFOND: And you went to the different spots? Were there any that

LAMBERT: In fact, I came to Bangor here, with, it was called the O'Brien Orchestra. I came from Waterville. I was a kid. I was only 18 years old. And I heard that there was an opening here with an orchestra. And I got the job, played six nights a week. Callais, everywhere, every night different places. We were called the O'Brien Orchestra.

LAFOND: Was that a Country-Western? No.

LAMBERT: No. That was a jazz band. And Tom [Cane?] Orchestra, that was a dance band, too. And Clyde [Lugi?] and his real Flying Clouds sponsored by Cole's Express. They sold [wheels?] there, way back, on Exchange Street. And that was a dance band also. They were all dance bands.

LAFOND: Were there any dance spots around the were mostly Country-Western or maybe known for the country western?

LAMBERT: Just in the small town that's not like Bar L Ranch, Newport. Things like that. Grange Halls.

LAFOND: Most of the big ones in the area here though

LAMBERT: Were modern dance bands

LAFOND: Modern dance, but an occasional Hayseeders Ball, or something like that like that

LAMBERT: Yes. Like one of them in that program there's Chateau Barn Dance. [Chap - inaudible – Railey?] He put on a Hillbilly band, put it together for that. It wasn't an organized group, you know.

LAFOND: Were these Hillbilly dances, were they taken seriously, or were they more like

LAMBERT: Just another dance.

LAFOND: Just another

LAMBERT: Another party, you know.

LAFOND: Another party

LAMBERT: 'Course, like at Carmel Auto Rest, they'd have then every Saturday night.

LAFOND: So, to them it was

LAMBERT: It was a real thing. Yeah.

LAFOND: But around here, Country-Western was kind of slow. It wasn't really taken seriously?

LAMBERT: [It want's taking the whole town, no. ?]

LAFOND: I see.

LAMBERT: It came here, it [inaudible], like Slim Clark, Dick Curless. They really brought it in here.

LAFOND: I see. It didn't really start going till then?

LAMBERT: Until they came on the air.

LAFOND: So for people like, not necessarily Waity Aikens, but maybe Uncle Ezra and and people around like that

LAMBERT: It was just the start of it

LAFOND: It was just a, it was an uphill battle for them.

LAMBERT: Right.

LAFOND: I see. What year did, you know, around, like within a five-year period, did Slim Clark get Curless started around here? I guess what I'm asking is when did Country Western really start

LAMBERT: Come up?

LAFOND: Come up, right.

LAMBERT: It was it was in the Slim Clark area, but I don't remember

LAFOND: 1930s? Before that?

LAMBERT: Let's see, '75, I would say, 40s.

LAFOND: The forties?

LAMBERT: That's what I would say, that's when it was really growing up, you know, Country-Western.

LAFOND: Were there any performers, Country-Western performers that seemed to play any odd instruments? You know, I mean, we know the fiddle is a pretty big instrument. The banjo and the guitar. Were there any that you consider, you know, out of the ordinary?

LAMBERT: They used to take those big tubs, you know, and put a stick on it, bass fiddle, things like that.

LAFOND: Did bands, there were bands around here that did that?

LAMBERT: Country bands, yeah.

LAFOND: All of them? Or just a few?

LAMBERT: Just a few.

LAFOND: Do you remember which ones?

LAMBERT: No. I know that they used them. But most of them were just regular instruments. It was like, Carter, the performer, Carter plays fiddle, the violin. He's still playing with Curly O'Brien now. Harold Carter. He used to have a little barber shop on the main drag.

LAFOND: Did most of, that's a another question I just popped into my mind. Did the Country-Western singers in the forties, when they were just starting to come in, or even maybe a little before that, like Waity Aikens, was he just, was his main source of income singing Country-Western, or did he have another job?

LAMBERT: Waity Aikens wan't Western. He wasn't Western.

LAFOND: He wasn't?

LAMBERT: Oh, no.

LAFOND: No kidding?

LAMBERT: No. He was strictly a straight musician. He's the one who did all the arrangements for bands and stuff. He was no Western.

LAFOND: He never?

LAMBERT: Don't know what to say. He played at Lakeside in Lincoln. But that was a jazz band. Dance band.

LAFOND: Well, let me rephrase that question. Did people like

LAMBERT: You mean, the Country-Western, did they have other work to do besides

LAFOND: Right. I mean did they, did the stars have

LAMBERT: Other vocations, yes.

LAFOND: Right.

LAMBERT: Yeah they were all doing something else.

LAFOND: They didn't rely on County-Western then for their main source of income?

LAMBERT: No. There wasn't any money in it at that time. They had to do something else for a living.

LAFOND: Do you remember?

LAMBERT: It was just a side-line. That's all.

LAFOND: Do you remember, maybe, what some of the people on this list did for side-lines?

LAMBERT: No, I don't think so.

LAFOND: Like Paul Barrows? Let me see here. Who were some of those?

LAMBERT: I think Paul Barrows. Reid Hand. Do we have Reid Hand in here?

LAFOND: Yep.

LAMBERT: He was working for Darling's Auto Parts, Darling Motors. Blaisdell's Orchestra, Miss Blaisdell was a piano teacher.

LAFOND: What about the Lone Pine Mountaineer? What did he?

LAMBERT: I think he was strictly music, I think.

LAFOND: He was probably the first, maybe, to rely.

LAMBERT: Yeah, he was the first one to really go into it. George Emerson and his Old Timers, he was a regular laborer man, you know.

LAFOND: Oh, just

LAMBERT: Working for labor, right, regular labor. Reid Hand was with Darlings. Overlark, I don't know what he did, but he was a regular worker around town here.

LAFOND: Was he Country-Western? No, you say here he's more jazz.

LAMBERT: More jazz, yeah.

LAFOND: Well, that's about all the questions I have worked up for now here.

LAMBERT: Uncle Seth was a regular. He had work around Old Town all the time. Sam Viner owned a music store.

LAFOND: I guess that's it. I've exhausted all my questions.

LAMBERT: [Laughing] Like I told you, I didn't think I'd be much help to you.

LAFOND: Help? Yeah, you were a big help. I've learned a lot today. So, now what I have to do is a little bit on the end. This is Mark Lafond. I've been talking to Norm Lambert in his home in Hampden, Maine. We've been talking about Country-Western music and a couple other things, whatever came to mind. I guess that's it. Oh, the date. March 18th, 1975.

NORTHEAST ARCHIVES staff member: That is the end of the March 18, 1975, interview with Norm Lambert.

[transcript ends]

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