Logging Songs of the Pacific Northwest: A Study of Three Contemporary Artists

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LOGGING SONGS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: A STUDY OF THREE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

By

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ABSTRACT

In 1938, Stewart Hall Holbrook lamented that he had not seen any decent academic study of the American lumberjack, reason enough for his writing the book *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack*. Now nearly seventy years later, there have been a few studies, but usually with some sort of regional and “liberal” political or social focus by an outsider, but still none from the “conservative” point of view of the logger himself, or at least one who identifies closely with the logger. Likewise, there has been little research in the way of folk arts, music in particular. There are a few collections on the Northeast and Great Lakes regions, but nothing for the Pacific Northwest, defined as Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. This thesis studies logging songs in the Pacific Northwest, focusing on three artists who represent the area, and who have been recognized at the national level for their works: Buzz Martin, Hank Nelson, and Bob Antone. Each of their chapters also includes collaborations with some of their closest associates. The logging songs I discuss are neither labor songs nor work songs. Instead, they are a different type of occupational song, one that is sung outside the work environment for the purpose of entertainment. The succession of these three artists also reflects the gradual decline of the logging industry and its culture in the Pacific Northwest, due to enviro-political issues and increasing urbanization of the area. This project has been animated by my personal experience growing up in a family of timber beasts in the Pacific Northwest.
CHAPTER 1

TIMBERBOUND IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The white man’s call “TIMBERRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!” has permeated the landscape of the Pacific Northwest since the mid-1800s, most notably since the late 1800s. Other sounds fill out the airways: snapping branches, earth-shaking booms from crashing logs, the bullwhacker’s\(^1\) profanity, tooting steam donkey whistles, the rumbling freight train, the old chug-a-lugging logging truck (or even a shiny new MAC), the grinding Stihl power saw, the occasional crackling forest fire, and so much more, and I have heard these sounds. The landscape in which this occurs is generally mountainous, sometimes just moderately hilly. Regardless of the terrain, the land was thick with timber, and stories were told about its mammoth quality and quantity. Originally from Vermont, logger and historian Stewart Hall Holbrook settled out west in Portland, Oregon. He outlined the history of the American logger in a book called *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack*, published in 1938. He wrote how the West was described to those in the Northeast and Great Lakes.

To a logger “West” meant mostly the great forests of the Pacific Northwest and Coast which he knew about rather vaguely. Maybe he had heard a stray, wide-ranging lumberjack tell of something called Douglas fir that grew to be twelve feet through at the butt and ran three hundred and more feet straight up into the clouds; or of Western pines bigger and taller than ever grew in Maine or Michigan; or of monstrous trunks of redwoods whose size passed all belief.\(^2\)

Throughout the 1800s, the loggers of the Northeast and the Great Lakes regions responded to these stories about western forests in a rather dismissive manner, as if they were just more tall stories, saying things like “well I’ll believe it when I see it,” for they thought their own forests were impressive enough. It was still hard to believe it even when they did see it.

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1 The bullwhacker is the one who drove the oxen as they pulled logs out of the woods up until the early 1900s.
When the first loggers saw the fir that grew along the banks of the Columbia and around Puget Sound they said there couldn’t be timber that big and tall. It took, so they told each other, two men and a boy to look to the top of one of these giants.

And thick? Holy Old Mackinaw, the great trunks stood so close that the boys wondered how a tree could be felled at all! And between the trunks grew a jungle of lush growth that no Maine or Michigan logger had ever imagined. You actually had to swamp out a path to a tree and to clear a space around it before there was room to swing an ax… It would take some doing, mister, to let any daylight into this swamp.\(^3\)

Another sound associated with the falling of a tree, but not necessarily heard on the work site is a logging song. This project will be a historical and sociological study of the music associated with the logging industry in the Pacific Northwest, that is Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, focusing on only the music of three main artists and their closest associates, who have worked on the west side of the Cascade mountain range. The music of Buzz Martin, Hank Nelson, and Bob Antone is representative of the Pacific Northwest. They have been recognized at the national level for their works, and have participated in events sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. Their music-making is predominantly an oral tradition which illustrates the livelihood of a culture whose industry came to dominate the lumber markets of the United States and the entire Pacific Rim throughout the twentieth century. Audio recordings are the most common sources of information, and the majority of songs used in this text will be taken from these, with their texts, tunes and harmonies transcribed by myself.

Some printed collections from the last half of the twentieth century feature songs from throughout the century, some of which were sung earlier. Interviews with the artists themselves, their families, and their friends, have brought out other songs not found on the recordings and publications, as well as insight into the artists’ music, influences, thoughts, and histories. For information on the logging industry and other aspects of the logging culture, similar types of items were consulted – books, articles, and other documents. These sources were obtained from a variety of institutions: libraries, historical societies, government archives, and personal collections. Most notable are the personal archives of Dr. Jens Lund of Olympia, Washington; Curt Deatherage of

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\(^3\) Holbrook, *Holy Old Mackinaw*, 161.
Creswell, Oregon; artist Hank Nelson of Wasilla, Alaska; and artist Bob Antone of North Bend, Washington.

The purpose, significance, and contribution of this project are intertwined. The primary purposes are to increase awareness of a particular repertoire and to document this oral tradition. As there is very little literature on the topic, this thesis should serve as a foundation for further research. Works dedicated solely to logging songs were last published in the early to mid-twentieth century by members of the culture, such as Stewart Hall Holbrook and Earl Clifton Beck, but their works did not focus on the Pacific Northwest. Instead, their volumes dealt mainly with the Northeast, the Great Lakes region, and eastern Canada, where many logging songs originated. Since the Pacific Northwest has been explored and discussed only peripherally, this project will be a significant contribution to the scholarly literature on American Folk Culture. Logging songs were the most important form of personal expression available to the loggers, and these men contributed so much to the rapid growth and economic development of the United States, especially the West Coast. Although logging is a fruitful business, loggers have always worked long hours and have never brought home large paychecks. Loggers could not afford the time or money it takes to publish collections of songs, especially when music is more expensive to print than plain text.

The Pacific Northwest is important primarily because of the fluctuating yet steady economic growth that occurred within the logging industry throughout the late 1800s and mid 1900s. This growth was the result of a complex relationship between periodic migrations and economic booms. Land with big timber was plentiful and gradually bought up by different companies and individuals with investment in mind. Groups of workers continually migrated from across the nation, especially from where logging industries had already been thriving, looking for new and better work opportunities, coming especially from places where logging industries had already been thriving. Consequently many logging songs, fragments of text and tune, and musical styles were imported from these regions. Immigration into the area from foreign countries, especially northern Europe, was particularly high in the early 1900s. Many of these immigrants were already familiar with the logging industry and sought better opportunities here. Their logging songs too, were also incorporated into the existing repertory, or adapted as necessary. Additional influences also came from the migration
of a different kind of people throughout the 1930s: residents of the Southern and Midwestern United States who were hit hard by the Great Depression. These people had very little logging experience, and those who did had operated on a completely different kind of terrain and with different types of trees. These migrants brought the influence of bluegrass music with them, rather than their own logging songs.

The focus of this thesis is on artists of the late twentieth century, continuing into the twenty-first. Two of the most important subjects are still performing, Hank Nelson and Bob Antone. The other main subject, Buzz Martin, died in 1983; but his son Steve is still alive and has continued his father’s work. Other subjects included in the chapters are friends or family members who have worked closely with the main subjects. Because there are only a few subjects and they are from a wide-spread area, no generic statements for the area can be made. Each subject has a different cultural founding and frame of reference for going about his life. One outcome of this project is the relationship between the men that I seem to have imposed on them. Initially some knew each other or had met or worked together, mostly through the efforts of representatives from the Washington State Arts Commission and the Smithsonian Institution, particularly Dr. Jens Lund of Olympia, Washington. Now the network among “singing loggers” in the Pacific Northwest is stronger than it was a few years ago. They have all met and been exposed to each others works, and have initiated their own gatherings where they can share their works with each other and with audiences throughout the region. They are planning to open their performances to other “singing loggers” and poets in the region as well. On the whole, this project is a benefit to the subjects, their peers, and their work.

Areas of investigation include: the music and texts of logging songs, performance practice and settings, compositional process and dissemination of the music, definition of the logging culture, logging industry economics, and the social history of the area. While conducting research on the music, I looked at the types of songs, styles, borrowings, sources, origins, performance practice, and instruments used. The setting and venues of performances was considered, looking at factors such as various hierarchies, including age and job seniority, and the (in)formality and flexibility/rigidity of rules. Also investigated were the types of venues in which logging songs might be heard, such as the bunkhouse, the tavern, and the ride home. This study will consider the various themes, moods, and purposes of the songs, and how they correspond to the various social and
work-related issues. Special attention will also be given to the meaning of the texts, the role the logging industry plays in the texts and its relationship with those who perform and listen to logging songs.

**Definition of a Logging Song from the Pacific Northwest**

The logging song or lumberjack song is a musical form sung by people associated with the logging culture. The texts of these songs usually deal with work-related themes – danger, money, employment – as well as more personal issues such as love, women, drinking, et cetera. Pride in the occupation shapes the mood of many of these songs as well. Stemming from a largely oral and illiterate culture, logging songs were often made up on the spot. Some songs became more popular, were sung more often and borrowed by other loggers, and at times modified to their liking or convenience. Others might have been only sung once, perhaps because they were not very entertaining or were forgotten.

The musical style of logging songs is generally quite simple. The melodies are straightforward and can be modified easily to fit text variations, which is especially important in verses with different syllable counts. Many melodies are also borrowed from other well-known tunes. The harmonies implied and also played on accompanying instruments are also very basic – tonic, dominant, and sub-dominant. The rhythms of the songs are largely dependent on the texts chosen and how they flow as regular speech. The vocal style is generally speech-like, usually attempting to fit some kind of melody, depending how “skilled” one was at singing according to the western system of scales and pitches. Many of the histories from the early twentieth century comment that the singing style was often very rough, and if there were two or more singers, they were usually not together pitch-wise or “in tune.” The tunes themselves were also difficult to decipher or make out. The logger historian Stewart Hall Holbrook explained:

Most of the authentic logger songs are dreary stuff. Practically all of them were sung to the same tune and the tune was anything the singer happened to think of – a weaving up-and-down drone, interminable and, for the most part, lifeless. … Singers were of two principal schools – wailers and bullroarers. Only two of their songs appear to have been sung, equally bad, in Maine, the Lake States and on the Pacific Coast, thus following the timber line.  

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Holbrook added a footnote to that, saying that Dr. Earl Clifton Beck, another logger ballad collector from Michigan, had come to the same conclusion after writing down the texts and tunes from the older lumberjacks, “that all the songs were sung to the same basic music, or lack of it.”5 This is not always the case though, as there have been artists who were quite “skilled” singers, such as the subjects of the next three chapters.

The instruments used to accompany singers were generally traditional stringed instruments, such as the guitar, banjo, fiddle, or violin. These instruments served the solo artist well, because a singer could play while singing. An interesting use of the violin bow was on the hand saw. The origin of saw’s use for music is unknown, for there are varying reports about where it was first played, not just in logging camps, but in other work camps as well. One such report is that the musical saw was first played in the logging camps of the Midwest in the 1800s. It then spread to other parts of the United States and Canada with vaudeville music and logger migrations.6 The saw could be any size, just as long as it was not too big to handle, but saws up to thirty-two inches in length could produce up to three octaves. A cello bow could also be used, generally with the larger saws, if one was available.

The player would place the handle of the saw in his lap, with the blade of the saw towards his body, and holding the end of the blade up with the hand, but making sure that the metal was bent to create an s-shaped curve. The player would bow the straight edge of the saw, at the point of contact, while bending the metal of the saw to change the pitch, similar to fretting or changing positions on the neck of a stringed instrument. The relationship between the sound, pitch, and bow is referred to as “chasing” the pitch,7 as the point of contact depended on where the saw was bent to yield the desired pitch. In general, the lower pitches are bowed towards the handle held in the lap, and the higher pitches are closer to the end of the saw blade. A player could also produce vibrato by the hand that held the end of the saw, or by shaking one of the legs the handle was held with. The instrument can also be played in a hammered fashion, usually using a small hand tool called an awl, with some kind of soft material attached, like a wine bottle cork.

The logging song was originally created and sung by lumberjacks in the “big woods” of the northeastern United States and the Great Lakes region, isolated from the

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rest of society. These men worked and lived with each other – their co-workers, comrades, and friends – every hour of the day, every day of the week. Lumberjack songs in the United States can be documented from as early as the 1800s. Most of the published collections originated in the northeastern United States and the Great Lakes region, especially the states of Maine and Michigan. Neighboring areas in Canada have also produced a number of songs, especially Newfoundland. As people migrated west throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so did logging songs. As a result, many older songs of the Pacific Northwest are not strictly from the Northwest, but are a mixture of songs from other areas: the Great Lakes, the Northeastern U.S., and also from foreign lands where logging was a major industry; Scandinavian countries in particular: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. Musical styles were also influenced by other groups, such as the Irish fiddling tradition and later by bluegrass from the South.

Logging songs of the Pacific Northwest are about logging and logging life, and were created more recently by loggers and their families and friends in this particular geographical area, primarily for entertaining. An important factor informing this study is the logging culture. The loggers in this area were primarily immigrants, both from other regions in the United States and from abroad. Consequently logging songs of the Pacific Northwest were influenced from many directions. Both foreigners and other Americans came looking for better work opportunities and quality of life. Those already in the American logging industry came from the Northeast and the Great Lakes regions. Foreigners came mostly from northern European countries (primarily Scandinavia, Finland, and Germany) since these people tended to move to regions with similar landscapes, in this case the Pacific Northwest. Prompted by the Great Depression, many migrants came from the Southern and Midwestern United States looking for work. Because the steamship, the railroad, and later the car became important sources of transportation to the Pacific Northwest, migrations of people and their traditions across the county occurred more frequently. As a result, traditions crossed paths, and many songs were shared, borrowed and adapted. The presence of recordings also helped to shape music styles and performance practice.

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7 Nick Coby, interview by author, 3 January 2006.
8 See bibliographic entries for Phillips Barry, Earl Clifton Beck, and William Main Doerflinger.
Also significant to this culture is the supreme importance of the logging industry to the local, statewide, regional, national, and international economies. Timber products were the chief export of the Pacific Northwest, and remained so up until the late 1990s when lumber prices skyrocketed in the United States but plummeted in New Zealand, on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. The northwest coast is where most of the nation’s lumber was and still is processed for the market, primarily due to the ports of Longview and Tacoma, the Long-Bell and Weyerhaeuser companies, the Columbia River and Puget Sound (the water was a dependable vehicle for transportation), and the railroad system. As a result of the continually thriving lumber economy, work was generally plentiful, and the quality of life in the rural areas was better than that of other places in the nation.

Singing loggers have for a long time used this art form to express their thoughts and feelings about a variety of issues including: the big bad boss, the ex-girlfriend, loss of work, death, drinking, having fun, working hard, low pay, being glad to get home for the night, looking forward to the weekend, and loneliness. These diverse themes are very similar to other work-related songs—work, money, leisure, relationships, entertainment, and others. Likewise, the tools for making music are similar—objects or machines that are familiar to the respective sub-societies and sub-cultures. Loggers used working tools from the job (such as hacksaws and axes) as instruments and their voices for the tunes. The musical saw is one of the most important tools used as an instrument.

The logging song is an extension of storytelling within this culture, immediately evident when listening to the examples recorded by Buzz Martin and Hank Nelson. Many of their songs begin with a lengthy introduction of spoken text, with a great deal of vocal inflection, and casual guitar strumming as a backdrop. A similar technique is used in the performances by the older loggers, like Virgil Wallace, one of Hank’s logger poet friends. In many of his songs, he recites the text as if he was talking, but he incorporates a great deal of vocal inflection and his texts are written to fit the regular rhythm of songs.

Storytelling is a very important art form in the logging culture and a vital component in the everyday life of a logger, his co-workers, friends, and family. Two functions for the storytelling tend to overlap: the recapitulation of daily events and the telling of lies for fun. The first function is the most casual and often involves dialogue

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9 This refers to occupational song by other types of manual laborers, such as cowboys, coal miners, farmers, iron workers, sailors, and the like.
between the singer and the listeners (the word “audience” is too formal a term for this situation). As an extension of this and a bridge to the second aspect, the more interesting stories are told or sung over and over again. After so many years, these stories or songs might take on the qualities of a legend, such as “The Frozen Logger” by James Stevens. The second function is not necessarily a contest, but a recreational activity performed more for the sake of pure entertainment, where people take turns telling stories. The participants might try to “out-lie” each other as they say, meaning who can tell the most outrageous story, but it is not a formal contest by any means.

Another important aspect of logging culture is the extensive use of logger lingo, primarily because most of what loggers talk about, both at work and outside of work, concerns logging. Buzz Martin said in one of his songs, “Loggin’ in the Bars,”10 that some of the best logging was done not in the woods but in the taverns after work by using extensive logger lingo to tell stories, either to talk about the day’s events or to make up stories to entertain each other. The song “A Language I Don’t Understand” points out the challenge of dealing with logger lingo, comparing it to a foreign language:

These loggers don’t talk like most people you find,
You’d swear they’re from some foreign land.
It was never the hard work that I couldn’t take,
It’s their language I don’t understand.11

In the second verse he gives a few examples, mostly with names he could not say:

And ‘em big steel cables they used to pull in the trees with,
They had a name for a splice in it that made this poor boy’s face turn red.12

A story that has circulated around the region also demonstrates how different the loggers’ language is from ordinary English: here a logger who ended up in the hospital was telling the nurse how the accident happened, using logger terms to describe the process that went wrong. However, the irony is that at the end of the story, neither the logger nor the nurse understood each other. The nurse did not even know what he was talking about because she did not know the vocabulary, and the logger just did not know how the accident could have happened.

10 Buzz Martin, “Loggin’ in the Bars,” The Old Time Logger, Ripcord Records SLP-004, no date, track seven.
12 Ibid., second verse, lines three and four.
He told her, “Well, I was settin’ chokers on the candy side and was just hookin’ on to a big blue-butt, when the riggin’ slinger says ‘Let ‘er go!’ The hooker yelled to the punk, punk jerked the wire, puncher opened ‘er wide, and well, nurse, here I am!” The young nurse looked confused and said, “I…I don’t understand!” The logger said “Miss, I don’t understand either. That haywire riggin’ slinger musta been crazy!”

To aid the novice in understanding some of these terms loggers use on a regular basis, a variety of glossaries and dictionaries have been written. Hank Nelson, one of the main subjects of this thesis, has one page of terms that he gives to those interested in his music. Stewart Hall Holbrook dedicated eight pages to logger terms in his historical survey on loggers of the northern United States, *Holy Old Mackinaw*. Leland G. Sorden and Isabel J. Ebert compiled a short volume of words called *Logger’s Words of Yesteryear* in 1956. The inside front cover to this volume also contains a version of the above story, although using different terms to describe a slightly different version of how the injury happened. One of the most significant volumes of logger terms is the volume *Woods Words: A Comprehensive Dictionary of Loggers Terms*, by Walter F. McCulloch, with an introduction written by Stewart Holbrook. This volume was originally published by the Oregon Historical Society in 1958 but has since been republished by the Oregon State University Book Stores in Corvallis, Oregon.

**How Logging Songs Fit into Folk and Labor Song Definitions**

Many theoretical issues and factors were considered in this project on logging songs, sung by loggers and their associates. The scholars discussed below have used a number of methods to examine songs associated with labor and industry. In addition to these associations, other issues surrounding logging songs include: work and labor associations and definitions, occupational songs and folklore, relationship between work and recreation or entertainment, and truth in folksong.

In his 1993 article, Norm Cohen immediately offered three terms to help classify songs associated with labor. The term “occupational song” covers a broad, if not the broadest, spectrum of labor-related songs. Cohen defines this term as “a piece in which

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13 *Common Wealth: A Play About the People of Darrington and the Sauk-Suiattle: In the Big Tent in Old School Park in Darrington, WA; May 20, 21 and 22, 2005*, mailer to Resident of Darrington, WA 98241, no date, page 10.
descriptions of work or work conditions, or attitudes towards work form a significant
textual element.”

Logging songs fit very well into this category, as the work is almost always the focus of the texts. In other cases, the text uses the logging job as the context for the story, in terms of people, the setting, and other aspects of the song. This definition is very broad and allows a great deal of flexibility in determining what can be classified as such. The definition of this broad category suites the logging songs for all three of my main subjects.

Cohen offers two other categories, both of which are sub-categories of the “occupational song” and are thus more specific. The “labor song: is “generally geared to trade unionism, often hortatory or polemical in tone.”

A number of songs created by the International Workers of the World attempted to make an issue of trade unionism, such as the song “Fifty Thousand Lumberjacks;” however these are not part of the standard repertory. These songs were a way of expressing the fair labor issues brought forth in the early twentieth century when unions were created for industrial workers. These issues were dealt with swiftly by most logging bosses so that the work flow would not be disrupted; hence they never became a substantial problem among the general population of lumberjacks in the Pacific Northwest.

Very few of the logging songs found in collections for loggers deal with labor union issues in the above manner. Of those sung by loggers, the attitude is not one of protest, nor does it suggest self-pity. Instead these songs usually use humor to deal with these issues, as in the songs by Buzz Martin, the main subject of the next chapter. In essence, logging songs generally cannot be classified as labor songs.

According to Cohen, the work song is “an item that is actually sung during the work process. This implies that we can always ascertain whether a particular song was sung to accompany work.” Logging songs do not fit into this category, as they were not sung on the job while working, or during the act of completing the tasks required in the

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15 Ibid.
16 Many loggers viewed the IWW, or the Wobblies, as problematic, because their strikes were so disruptive and endangered logging jobs. With fewer hours worked, loggers could not earn as much as they normally would, and then of course would have trouble paying their bills at home. Likewise, logging bosses did not appreciate these disruptions either because they would be a detriment to a day’s or week’s potential profits.
work. Although many loggers are involved in the felling of a tree, and it is required that they all work together, each logger is responsible for his own duty and works by himself to some extent. Workers are spread out in a large area, and this area is very noisy. It is difficult to communicate with each other, and the constant hollering of commands and warnings could strain a voice quickly. In addition, the tasks of a logger would not provide a stable rhythm. Forest work involves too many irregularities. The rhythm of transporting oneself and fallen logs was not regular, because of the dramatically uneven terrain, the jagged pathways, and the variety of debris to climb over – trees, limbs, animals, puddles, foxholes, etc. The process of climbing and sawing through a tree was not only irregular, because of knots, snags, and not enough room to work, but was also extremely grueling and dangerous. Because of the concern for safety and efficiency, singing might be considered a dangerous distraction from the work. The very nature of the logging job could not support a musical tradition on the work site.

When loggers wanted to entertain themselves after a long day or week, song was one of many traditions from which to choose. As logging was the main concern and commonality among loggers, recreational activity was largely shaped by the industry – art, woodwork, crafts, poetry, storytelling, song and other forms. Likewise, as fellow loggers spent most of their time with each other, they shared these recreational activities and experiences. Since neither of Cohen’s subcategories works for the logging songs seen by this author, there must be another way to classify them. According to Robert S. McCarl, this melding of shared worker culture and traditions is called “occupational folklife.” McCarl defines this as “the complex of techniques, customs, and modes of expressive behavior which characterize a particular work group.”

In this case, the particular work group is the loggers. The customs are the activities that the loggers take part in or share as a group, such as woodworking and singing songs about logging. The techniques used for expression are drawn from techniques used at work: what tools to use, how to carve, and how to holler across a large space are some examples. These skills would be transferred to wood carving, playing the saw, and yelling out roughed-up tunes and text. There is a certain degree of interaction between the individual and the work environment. McCarl places emphasis on the idea

of “working knowledge,” a concept extensively discussed by Ken Kusterer.\textsuperscript{19} The core idea of “working knowledge” is what one needs to know in order to do the work.\textsuperscript{20} Another point about “working knowledge” is that it includes the importance of the dissemination of technique – “through imitation and instruction.”\textsuperscript{21} The same technique is used for the dissemination of logging songs among loggers as is used for the skills and knowledge used in the process of logging.

Modes of expressive behavior, the third part of McCarl’s “complex,” concern communication, the way workers pass information to each other. The three different kinds of modes are oral, gestural, and technical.\textsuperscript{22} All three modes are evident when viewing performances of logging songs. Oral modes, also known as verbal modes, are used in the verbal arts outside of work. The oral mode is narrative used to tell stories, recite poetry, and sing songs. Gestural modes involve the use of the body. In logging, the gestural mode is demonstrated by the use of hand signals, since the environment is usually too noisy for verbal communication. Along with the singing of songs, hand signals can be used to portray physical labor movements, such as sawing a log. Hand signals also add a physical dimension to aid the meaning of song texts, such as location, direction, size, and space. The technical mode is directly related to the dissemination of technique within “occupational folklife.” This is the telling of how to do something, like setting chokers or playing a particular pitch set on a musical saw.

As part of “occupational folklife,” logging songs have traditionally been performed as leisure activities. Logging songs have also been disseminated among loggers in the same way as the work skills and knowledge. A number of sources document this, not just the collections and performers themselves, but the scholarship as well. In his dissertation, Robert Walls discussed this as part of the Bunyanesque imagery that has typically characterized loggers. These performances usually took place in the evenings before bedtime, or on Sundays, their day off from work.\textsuperscript{23} The topics of the

\textsuperscript{19} Ken Kusterer, “Knowledge on the Job: Workers’ Know-How and Everyday Survival in the Workplace” (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1976), 281-296.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.. 148.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.. 150.
\textsuperscript{23} Robert Eric Walls, “The Making of the American Logger: Traditional Culture and Public Imagery in the Realm of the Bunyanesque” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1997), 130. Hank Nelson, one of the main subjects of this thesis, also confirmed this, telling me about his experience in the old logging camps when he was young, in an interview on 12 November 2006.
songs dealt with the logging industry in a number of ways. Some songs would be improvised to recall particular events of the day – accidents, the super log, the river jam. Other songs might be old favorite ballads. Because these songs were not actually sung while at work, they are not work songs; they might be classified as leisurely or recreational occupational songs within “occupational folklife.” Since logging songs are neither labor songs nor true work songs, according to the definitions outlined by Norm Cohen, and they refer back to or recall various aspects of logging, such as the job, culture, people, or landscape, they might also just be referential songs, adding another subcategory to Cohen’s incomplete model of occupational song. This would leave room for those songs that did not have a great deal of nostalgia or other positive feeling for the subject addressed in the texts.

Robert Walls also discusses storytelling in his dissertation, especially tall tales and “lies.” He identifies two similar types of stories told: 1), “the mundane affairs of everyday life: the politics, religion, family life, and the work itself,”25 and 2), “the beliefs, attitudes, and humor of men living under these circumstances.”26 The stories or “lies” of the second type required much skill in order to “amuse, horrify, and above all entertain.”27 The stories or “lies” told involved the supernatural, wild animal encounters, treasures hidden by pirates and staged fights between the biggest lice picked off clothes. Though these stories seem too fantastic to be true, the element of truth lies in the subjects of these stories and their presence in everyday life and culture, as in Hank Nelson’s “Ghost of the Oregon Coast,” written with the help of Woody Gifford and Bill Iund, both of southwestern Washington. This song opens up with a narrative on the eerie setting of the story, finishing with “and when the wind is howling, take heed mister lumberjack, there are voices in the wind.”28 In this song an old and strange unnamed visitor from Quebec appears at Old Joe’s saw shop at the end of the day. He tells the workers a few stories about him and his logging partner Big Mike’s tremendous feats, as well as Big

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24 Bob Antone, interview by author, 20 February 2007. We were discussing this issue on the telephone and he tossed out this word and definition on a whim, just as an idea.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
Mike’s death. Immediately after telling the story, the old stranger falls to the floor and dies, leaving bodily fluids staining the floor forever, as well as a fantastic story.

In his 1977 article, John Ashton discusses the concept of “truth” in folksong. He defines “truth” as “eminently flexible and that a song need not be documentary or ethical in its application to be considered true.” This idea helps explain the dichotomy between storytelling and the “telling of lies” in logging songs of the Pacific Northwest. Many of the texts often serve to tell the events of a day’s work or to tell the story of a particularly important event, like “The Jam on Gerry’s Rock.” Other texts “tell lies” as loggers say. These “lies” are not outright falsehoods with the intention of deceit. They are seemingly outrageous stories that serve as entertainment and are meant to be funny or ironic, such as Buzz Martin’s “Butterin’ Up Biscuit.” Sometimes texts will incorporate both of these elements. Regardless of what the function of the text is, the “truth” is measured by the presence of “elements which symbolize his [the singer’s] life experience or typify his culture.” In these two songs mentioned, the elements are typical work experiences: logs jamming in the river, the occasional death on the job, and going to the bar after work to relieve stress.

**Thesis Chapter Structure**

The next three chapters will be structured around specific singers, and they will examine a variety of elements: the music, texts and themes, learning process, influences, and performance practice. The second chapter will be dedicated to the “Singing Logger” Buzz Martin from Oregon, who performed with his own family band and produced a number of commercial recordings. The chapter also features Buzz’s son Steve Martin, since he has become the principal figure to revitalize interest in his father’s music. The

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30 This song tells not just about a log jam on a river, but about the death of a logger resulting from this event.

31 This song is not about the popular breakfast item. The word “biscuit” is used as a nickname for the persona’s wife. In order to “butter up Biscuit,” the persona tells how he needs to “suck up” to his wife after spending his paycheck on liquor and gambling and getting home later than he should.

third chapter will feature Hank Nelson, a self-proclaimed raconteur who has produced three recordings so far. Some of the songs on his album were written with the assistance of logger poet friends. The fourth chapter will center on Bob Antone of North Bend, Washington. It will feature the music from his album *Timberbeast Town*, most of which was performed in the two Loggers Tributes near North Bend, that followed the closing of the Weyerhauser mill in the town of Snoqualmie in 2002. The conclusion will revisit the lack of literature issue, the network and collaborations, summarize each of the three main artists, and highlight their similarities and differences. It will finish with common themes and how the progression of the three artists reflects the decline in the logging industry and its culture. I have placed a short glossary in the appendix to assist readers’ understanding of some of the more important terms used in the thesis.
CHAPTER 2

BUZZ MARTIN THE “SINGING LOGGER”

Some of the most important documents for the study of Northwestern logging songs are the mid-twentieth century recordings by Lloyd Earl "Buzz" Martin, a logger from western Oregon. The songs on his six albums, five of which were produced by Ripcord Records in Vancouver, Washington, cover a variety of topics - from setting chokers in the snow, to joking about "snoose" (chewing tobacco), to lamenting about fire danger or the prospect of unemployment. Buzz Martin’s songs deal with issues that loggers could face any given day: the occasional death or injury on the job, frustration with bureaucracy, and pride in being a logger. What made him most attractive to his audience was that because he had worked just about every job in the woods and knew so much about working in the woods, the issues and sentiments in his lyrics rang true to his audience, particularly the loggers. 33 This chapter features three main sections. The first section addresses Buzz’s life, his upbringing, musical influences, and music-making. The second section explores songs from his albums and how they address the issues that loggers face. The third section highlights work being done to revitalize interest and awareness in Buzz’s music. Unless noted otherwise, all information presented has been obtained from either personal interviews or written correspondence with Buzz’s son and daughter-in-law, Steve and Sandra Martin.

The Singing Logger

Buzz Martin was born on 14 August 1928 in a tent outside of Coon Holler, Oregon. 34 Cataracts developed in his eyes when he was young, causing him to go blind, and so he was sent to the Oregon State School for the Blind when he was thirteen years old. 35 There he first received music instruction and his vision was completely restored by an experimental surgery. Both his parents died while he was at Oregon State School for

the Blind, so afterwards he went to live with his older sister Nellie, her husband Bill Woosley, and their children, in the Five Rivers area of Oregon. There Buzz Martin was able to continue his musical studies with Bill, who was also an instrument maker and taught his sons and Buzz how to play. Bill made instruments such as guitars, fiddles, dulcimers, and mandolins. Buzz’s sister Nellie also encouraged him to sing, saying:

   Keep a song in your heart and on your lips. Even the toughest burdens are easier to bear when you sing.\(^{36}\)

It was perhaps this sentiment (or rationale) in the music Buzz created later in his life that made his music so popular with other loggers. As Hank Nelson stated, Buzz’s music rang true to his audience because he knew what he was singing about, it was heartfelt,\(^ {37}\) and he knew how to use song to make light of the issues.

Buzz was also exposed to the Grand Ole Opry while growing up. Despite the lack of electricity in the Five Rivers area until 1951, the Woosley household was occasionally able to catch the Grand Ole Opry on battery-operated radios. They were particularly fond of this show, and Buzz had always dreamed of one day being up on that stage at Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee.\(^ {38}\)

In addition to studying music while he was growing up, Buzz also learned a strong work ethic and the trade of logging from Bill, who told Buzz this:

   A logger must always be concerned about his surroundings. God made the logger to be guardian of the forest, so care for it well and it will always be here for others to share with you.\(^ {39}\)

Bill wanted to impress upon the boy a sense of respect for the forest and for the timelessness that the forest needed to have, so that it would last for others, and that the forest was not for exploitation in their own time. Buzz followed his brother-in-law’s footsteps and became a logger himself. He started working in the woods with Bill when he was a teenager, and continued logging throughout his life. He worked various logging jobs, such as cutter, high climber, and whistle punk. He also knew how to use and operate almost every tool and machine on the job, equipment both large and small.

\(^{35}\) Steve Martin, interview with author, 6 January 2006.
\(^{36}\) Deatherage, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,,” 4.
\(^{37}\) See quote by Hank Nelson on the previous page.
\(^{39}\) Deatherage, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,,” 1, 4.
Many of Buzz’s songs were inspired by the various jobs he held as a logger, and by real events that occurred on the job. One of these songs was about a truck accident one of his buddies had on his way through town one day, when he lost his load of logs in the Safeway parking lot.\textsuperscript{40} “I Made a Boo Boo”\textsuperscript{41} tells not only how the accident happened and some of the aftermath, but also the embarrassment and aggravation the driver felt from all the bystanders checking out the scene and asking silly questions.

Refrain:
And it wasn’t just that I had made a booboo,
And dumped my load in the busiest part of town;
And it wasn’t all them cops with flashin’ lights an’ wavin’ arms,
It was all them stupid people gathered ‘round.

Extra spoken text at the end of the track:
Sayin’ things like “hey d’ya turn your truck over?
You did that all by yourself?
It’s a wonder half of ’em wadn’t run over by the tow truck.

As a young man Buzz performed regularly at logging camps, which were important venues in his development as a singer and entertainer. Here at the end of a hard day’s work, he would be called upon to entertain the other loggers. The employer’s purpose of keeping a man like this around was to encourage good morale on the job. If the men had something to entertain them and keep them happy, then they would probably be better workers during the day. Despite the high turnover rate among employees each year, it was not uncommon for a logging camp to keep a singing logger around even if he was not of much value on the job. A benefit of high turnover though was that music was able to spread quickly so that the men were constantly being exposed to new voices, songs, ideas, and instrumental techniques. Buzz was probably exposed to many other singing loggers while he participated in the logging camps, and it is likely that he learned their songs and performing techniques. In addition to singing songs of other artists, Buzz had already started to write and sing his own songs too. Eventually his popularity gave him opportunities to perform outside of the logging camps and at local venues such as dance halls in nearby towns like Waldport, Tidewater, or Alsea, where more people

would see and hear him. His popularity also grew so that other types of people, such as talent scouts and radio hosts, began to take notice.

Buzz Martin even wrote a song about all the attention he was getting, specifically about the experience of one talent scout. The song “I Just Happened to be in the Way” does not specify which scout, but in the first line Buzz says he was about twenty years old, so we know he must have been one of the first to come along. On the other hand, he could have just been making it up, an exaggeration based on a later encounter perhaps. The point of this song is that as a young man, Buzz was deceived by this man’s words and his own youthful foolishness, thinking that he could be a star in Nashville. In the first verse, Buzz tells the scout’s lofty promises:

> When I was a kid about twenty, I thought I knew everything,
> An’ I met a guy in a bar room, he told me how well I could sing.
> He said “let me take you to Nashville, no doubt I could make you a star,
> You’ll live in a forty room mansion, drink champagne and eat caviar.”

In the refrain, Buzz tells about his naivety and innocence:

> And to think I believed him [he believed it],
> And there’s a sucker born everyday.
> And there’s somebody right there to take him, I just happened to be in the way.

The root of his naivety might be found in Buzz’s statement: “I was a poor country boy with a heart full of joy, on the way to becomin’ a star.” In the second verse, Buzz also tells about playing for the record companies in Nashville but they could not offer him a contract any time soon. In the third verse Buzz realizes that something is not quite right, and he decides to head back home and not trust any more agents that he meets in bars.

Despite this unfortunate event, Buzz still longed for a musical career. In 1963, he wrote a letter to Buddy Simmons from Portland’s “Channel 2 Hoedown.” Although Simmons had received many requests for appearances on his show, he was struck by Buzz’s sincerity and honesty. Buddy met with Buzz soon afterward and facilitated Buzz’s first appearance on television that year. Simmons also helped Buzz get his first

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42 Buzz Martin, “I Just Happened to be in the Way,” *A Logger Finds an Opening*, Ripcord Records SLP-003, no date, track three.
43 Text in bracket is sung by back-up vocalists.
44 Verse two, line two.
45 Deatherage, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,” 4.
record deal with Lavender Records in 1967, on which Buzz sang the two songs “Whistle Punk Pete” and “Sick of Settin’ Chokers.” The success of this “singles” album prompted a deal with Ripcord Records in Vancouver, Washington, resulting in four full length albums, SLPs 001-004.

This growing exposure and popularity did eventually attract more interest from the media. In 1972 Johnny Cash had heard about Buzz and invited him to appear on his nationally broadcast television show at the Old Ryman Auditorium. At last Buzz’s dream of performing at the Grand Ole Opry had been fulfilled. Impressed by Buzz’s music, Cash was quick to point out the difference between them:

The only difference between me and Buzz, is that he’s singin’ about lumberjacks and I’m singin’ about cotton pickers.

This experience inspired Buzz to write a song on the flight home, “The Man at the Top Reached Clear to the Bottom to Give This Logger a Helping Hand.”

Buzz Martin’s media exposure and growing popularity created other opportunities for promotion. He performed at a variety of venues throughout the western United States, such as county fairs, timber conventions, and trade shows. Chainsaw manufacturers took advantage of his fame and asked him to promote their products. Buzz Martin also performed at the Country Jamboree at Disneyland in 1973, and produced another album that same year in Los Angeles, California, with Ranwood International: *The Singing Logger*, R-8117. Buzz was also asked to represent Oregon at the Smithsonian Institution’s Festival of American Folk Life in 1976, the year of the United States’ bicentennial.

In addition to his solo albums, Buzz Martin performed and toured regularly with his family band called “Chips Off the Old Block.” This band consisted of Buzz himself, his children and their spouses. Overall, eight people were involved in various combinations: Buzz, Steve, Cindy, Judy, Todd, Dick, Rod, and Sandi. The chart below shows the roles each played. Diana, one of Buzz’s daughters, was not part of the group.

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47 Deatherage, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,” 4. Quote by Johnny Cash, in his introduction of Buzz Martin to the audience.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Role in the Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buzz</td>
<td>43-ish</td>
<td>the man himself</td>
<td>lead voice &amp; guitar, harmonica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>son of Buzz</td>
<td>drums and guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>daughter of Buzz</td>
<td>voice, autoharp; only briefly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>daughter of Buzz</td>
<td>voice, played bass guitar later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>son of Buzz</td>
<td>voice, played drums later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
<td>25-27</td>
<td>Diana’s husband</td>
<td>bass guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>Cindy’s husband</td>
<td>lead guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandi</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>Steve’s wife</td>
<td>piano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four people who were always involved throughout the band’s lifetime were Buzz, Judy, Todd, and Rod. The other four left for various reasons, such as regular employment opportunities. Two people from the family were not directly involved in the music making. Buzz’s wife did not perform with the band, but rather served by sewing all of their clothes; and one of their daughters, Diana, did not participate in the music either.\(^{51}\) This is the band that can be heard with Buzz on the last record, SLP-1025 *Solid Gold* produced by Ripcord Records of Vancouver, Washington.

Buzz lived most of his life in western Oregon, first in the Five Rivers area and then in Albany from the late 1960s until 1980, when his music career had already been slowing down. He then moved up to Alaska to look for new logging opportunities, mainly operating heavy machinery and driving log trucks. He continued performing and writing music about logging in Alaska as well, but he never made any more professional recordings. According to Buzz’s son Steve Martin, some private tape recordings were made, but he has never been able to obtain copies of them. Buzz did not live in Alaska too long either. He was found dead on 1 August 1983 out in the wilderness, presumably after slipping on some rocks.

### The Record Albums

Copies of six LP albums from around the 1970s were made available by Curt Deatherage, from Lebanon, Oregon.\(^{52}\) The albums are no longer published, and it is

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\(^{50}\) These ages are only approximate, early 1970s, guessed by Steve Martin during interview.

\(^{51}\) Steve and Sandra Martin, interview with author, 6 January 2006.

\(^{52}\) These albums are: *There Walks a Man*, Ripcord Records SLP-001, no date; *A Logger’s Reward*, Ripcord Records SLP-002, no date; *A Logger Finds an Opening*, Ripcord Records SLP-003, no date; *The Old Time Logger*, Ripcord Records SLP-004, no date; *The Singing Logger*, Ranwood International R-8117, 1973; *SOLID GOLD*, Ripcord Records SLP-1025, no date.
almost impossible to find used copies for resale through used media outlets. A few copies can be found in personal archives in the Pacific Northwest, and perhaps in an uncatalogued part of a university or government archive. Buzz Martin’s son, Steve, who did not have his own recordings of any of these albums, has just finished the process of obtaining the rights to the recordings and is planning to release music from the albums.

None of the five Ripcord records is dated, nor is the one Ranwood record, and the order in which they were produced is not necessarily clear. However, the record label numbers, found on what seem to be the first four records made by Buzz do give an idea of what would have been produced first: SLP-001, SLP-002, SLP-003, and SLP-004. All four of these solo albums were produced by Ripcord Records. The other two albums were produced later. SLP-1025, another Ripcord album, was the last record produced by Ripcord when the company was still in Vancouver. The other album, R-8117 by Ranwood, by 1973, was evidently produced long after the company had been in business; but there seems to be no correlation with the other album numbers; thus it is not clear when this album was produced in relation to SLP-1025. R-8117 easily could have been produced between SLPs 004 and 1025, given the seemingly large gap between the two numbers. SLP-1025 could have been the last record produced because it involved the family band, an endeavor which lasted through the 1970s.

Buzz Martin’s musical style is generally simple. The melodies are easy to sing; and the range is generally no more than an octave, which can be modified easily to fit variations in texts – especially important in verses with different syllable counts. For example, as one line may have more syllables than the same line in a different verse, subdivisions or ornaments can easily be added to the appropriate beats in order to accommodate the extra syllables. Likewise, if there are fewer syllables, notes can be removed and those surrounding will be lengthened accordingly. The harmonies are also very simple – tonic, dominant, and sub-dominant. Steve Martin said this about Buzz: “Well, Dad only played three chords, A, D, and E.” The rhythms of the songs depend largely on the texts and how they flow as regular speech. The vocal style is generally speech-like, sometimes sounding like Sprechstimme or Sprechgesang, speaking voice or

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53 Steve Martin, interview with author, 6 January 2006.
54 This is the only album that can be found cataloged in the Library of Congress. None of the others could be found, presumably because the albums were never registered with the Library of Congress.
55 Steve Martin, interview with author, 9 September 2006.
speech song, where occasionally sung pitches are approximate, especially in sensitive places such as large leaps or the higher register of the voice. The meter of Buzz’s songs is usually a type of duple. The tempi vary from 40 to 144. Buzz’s most common instrumentation consists of male voice (Buzz), lead guitar, and bass.

The six albums contain a total of sixty-four songs, including six re-recordings, as will be discussed in this section. Four are not logging songs, but other types of songs; they appear on the last album, SLP-1025, **SOLID GOLD**, a performance with the family band “Chips off the Old Block.” Two of these songs are country ballads sung by Buzz’s younger children; the other two have patriotic texts honoring the nation and its flag. Thus the six albums contain a total of fifty-four logging songs. The texts for nine of these songs are completely recited and not sung, and two other songs have a mixture of spoken and sung text; the remaining forty-three are all sung. The six re-recorded songs must have been the most popular songs. In their second appearances, five of the songs appear on the last album, SLP-1025. This is understandable since the last album functioned partly as a “greatest hits” album as well as a collection of excerpts taken from a live performance of Buzz Martin with “Chips off the Old Block.”

The song “Monday Morning Again” employs a strophic form, with six four-line stanzas; and the fourth line of each verse has the same text, “Ooh-ooh-o-oh, oh Lord, it’s Monday mornin’ again.” It is a humorous description of what it is like for a logger to get up in the morning at the beginning of the week. The narrator describes two challenges that face him on a Monday morning. One is the agony of his body feeling extremely tired and worn out as he gets up early, and the other is that being tired also affects the way he performs his morning chores, such as shaving. In this case, the narrator claims to have “carved a road map” on his chin as he tried to shave.

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56 One could say the singing was just “out of tune,” but the connotation behind that phrase is a negative one, suggesting that the singer just did not know how to sing. To say such a thing would be to apply a personal value judgment, which would be totally pointless in this situation, since Buzz’s purpose was to entertain his audience with his stories through song, rather than to show off his “perfected” singing skills.


58 These songs are “I See Men as Trees Walking,” track six from *The Singing Logger* (R-8117), and “Earthquake Migoon,” track eleven from **SOLID GOLD** (SLP-1025).


60 Verse one, line three.
As a logger, the narrator uses logger lingo metaphorically to describe the bad shaving job he did. The metaphor of carving a road map is significant to the logger, as it highlights two important aspects of logging culture. First, the act of carving is important because it is a principal technique used in making a variety of items from wood: canoes and paddles, furniture, boxes, tools, crafts, and other artifacts. Second, the road map is a key tool in the logger’s work. Being able to look at a road map while in unfamiliar territory is important since many logging roads are not marked by signs or flags in the woods. A logger might even want to look at a map while surveying the landscape or planning to build new roads.

The other challenge is the bad luck the narrator seems to have had during his morning. At the end of the song, the listener discovers the possible cause of all this bad luck: the narrator’s actions at the end of the preceding week—going out and drinking with his buddies. By getting intoxicated and inappropriately spending all his paycheck each Friday, the narrator creates a difficult situation for himself as well as for others, like his wife; and it becomes difficult not just to get up in the morning, but to function at all. The narrator left his raingear and new boots in the bed of the pickup truck over the weekend. During that time it rained, which it often does in the Pacific Northwest, and so his outer clothing got wet not just on the outside but on the inside as well.

Perhaps one of the more unfortunate stereotypes of a logger who goes to the tavern at the end of a hard day’s work is that he is likely to cheat on his wife. The song “Butterin’ Up Biscuit” is a lament by the logger/narrator telling about how he has to make amends with his wife after staying out late and spending his paycheck on getting intoxicated with an old flame. The song incorporates the verse and refrain structure with a fading coda of spoken text. The verses tell the story, starting with a metaphorical description of his wife, and the refrain tells of the upcoming challenge he faces when he arrives home. The narrator compares his wife and the process of dealing with her to a biscuit. The crucial element of relationship between the making of a biscuit and the reaction of the wife is the delicacy of each. When the biscuit is made just right, or when the wife is nice, “she’s warm and soft and nice like a fresh-baked little sweet’n roll.”

At the end of the second verse, just before the first instance of the refrain, the narrator

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summarizes what it is like to deal with the wife at the different stages: “Now butterin’ up a hot biscuit’s a fairly easy thing to do, but stale old butter on a cold hard biscuit is a near catastrophe.”

The negative stereotype (and reputation) of the logger not being completely faithful to his wife and recklessly handling their money originates from the sense of truth that originates from a story like this. In his 1977 article, John Ashton discusses the concept of “truth” in folksong. He defines “truth” as “eminently flexible” and notes “that a song need not be documentary or ethical in its application to be considered true.” This idea helps to explain the dichotomy between storytelling and the “telling of lies” in logging songs of the Pacific Northwest. Many of the texts serve to tell the events of a day’s work or the story of a particularly important event, like “The Jam on Gerry’s Rock.” Other texts “tell lies” as loggers say. These “lies” are not outright falsehoods with the intention of deceit; instead they are seemingly outrageous stories that serve as entertainment and are meant to be funny or ironic, such as Buzz Martin’s “Butterin’ Up Biscuit.” Sometimes texts will incorporate both of these elements. Regardless of the function of the text, the “truth” is measured by the presence of “elements which symbolize his [the singer’s] life experience or typify his culture.” In this song, the truth is a typical work experience: going to the bar after work to relieve stress and enjoy oneself. The excessive behavior that may arise from this activity is what causes the problems, which leads to the stories and then the reputation or stereotype. The problem that arises from this is that it is not necessarily true that every working man participates in this type of activity, but because this kind of activity tends to generate much attention, and it is an activity that loggers do joke or tell stories about, it becomes difficult to keep it from becoming a stereotype and thus a truth in some sense.

62 Verse one, line three.
63 Verse two, line four.
65 This popular song from the Great Lakes region tells not just about a log jam on a river, but about the death of a young logger resulting from this event.
66 This song is not about the popular breakfast item. The word “biscuit” is used as a nickname for the narrator’s wife. In order to “butter up Biscuit,” the persona tells how he needs to make amends with his wife after spending his paycheck on liquor and gambling and getting home later than he should.
In the Pacific Northwest, it is well-known that many loggers like to relax with some sort of merry-making beverage after a long hard day’s (or week’s) work. In order to accomplish this, they usually can be found in the local tavern “chugga-luggin’ the good stuff,” or maybe even at a party at somebody’s house. In order to encourage camaraderie and good spirits among the workers, companies that have some extra cash like to reward their workers and celebrate the good times by throwing some kind of company party. The song “Logger’s Annual Party” is a humorous exaggeration of just such an occasion, and the characteristics of the men in this song and the rowdy things that they do certainly fit the bawdy stereotype that exists of loggers in the Pacific Northwest.

This stereotype and some of the problems that come with it are addressed in each of the two verses. The biggest problem that intoxicated loggers create is that they tend to be disorderly in their surroundings and somewhat destructive in the process. The concern and reason for this issue is addressed in the third and fourth lines of the first verse.

They don’t invite us loggers to the office for a drink,
they know that it’d be a mistake.
They have everybody together at the old truck shop,
there ain’t much there we can break.

The cause of this rambunctiousness is best explained in the text of the bridge between the first verse and the refrain.

You take a bunch of ornery loggers, especially when the booze is free.
They just try to out-drink one another I guess, it sure is a sight to see.

The refrain is a crazy jumble of present participles that tell what all the loggers are doing during the party.

Well there’l be arm-bendin’, up-endin’, hand-grippin’,
ear-flippin’, tin hats sailin’ around.
There’l be chugga-luggin’, shoulder-sluggin’, joke-tellin’,
laughin’ yellin’, nobody wearin’ a frown.
They get to calculatin’, speculatin’, aggravatin’,
agitatin’ each other constantly.
Then the shop will get to ringin’ ‘cause they’l all start to singin’,
everybody in a different key.

Buzz Martin, “Logger’s Annual Party,” There Walks a Man, Ripcord Records SLP-001, no date, track nine; Solid Gold, Ripcord Records SLP-1025, no date, track nine.
In the second verse, the boss narrates from his point of view what actually happens and why, saying “ya guys just make a big mess outta things, there’ll be no more booze around here;” but then he also acknowledges the value of his men and gets back to the party and restores the good mood.

The song “Fire Danger” is a satire on administration and bureaucracy by the book. It humorously laments on the state of affairs that loggers must deal with when the forest service comes around to administer fire safety checks. The core issue the loggers have with this agency is that they come only to shut down the operation; and in order to do this, the forest service workers look in their inspection manual for any possible violation that they can find. “But these guys from the Forest Service every time they come around; all they do is look for somethin’ wrong so they can close me down.” The idea of using the book solely to justify closing down the operation is emphasized in the second and third lines of the refrain. The first line of the refrain is like a prelude to the second line. When the inspectors look around, all they can see are the dangers.

We gotta close you down, fire danger all around.
Right here you see on page twenty-three, we gotta close you down.
Right here you see on page twenty-three, we gotta close you down.

The two things that irritate a logger the most are first that these inspectors have probably never had any real work experience of their own out in the woods, as joked about in the first line of the second verse, “it’s the first time they’ve seen a tree,” and second that they use their manual simply to justify any reason to close down the operation. All the loggers want is to be able to get the job done so that they can put food on the table for their families when they get home and pay for their equipment. Buzz Martin uses a great joke at the end to completely mock the inspectors about what they might end up doing if they don’t get into heaven, because of their stubborn ways. “But if they go to the other direction, they’ll take one look around; to say Satan look at the fire danger, we gotta close you down.” Joking is perhaps one of the most important ways for loggers to handle and make light of a difficult situation.

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69 Second verse, second line.
70 Buzz Martin, “Fire Danger,” There Walks a Man, Ripcord Records SLP-001, no date, track five; SOLID GOLD, Ripcord Records SLP-1025, no date, track one.
71 Verse one, lines three and four.
72 Refrain, all three lines.
73 Third and fourth lines of fourth verse.
One of the issues that a logger, especially a gyppo logger, might occasionally have to deal with is the prospect of unemployment. Lay-offs could come for any reason, even in a major corporation, and many times were probably just temporary. Reasons could be that perhaps an independent bid was not secured, not as many men might have been needed at a given time, there might have been fewer logging jobs going on (which would happen more frequently in the winter), or perhaps an operation was shut down by an ignorant fire inspector. Along with unemployment though, comes the task of having to go to the unemployment office for financial assistance, which can be quite daunting for some, and for others quite miserable depending on the circumstances.

The song “Unemployment Compensation” is a humorous lament on the experience of doing just that, going to collect unemployment compensation. The experience described in this song is not exactly a pleasurable one, but rather a very uncomfortable one, where the logger feels belittled by the staff just because he is out of work. The second verse of the song addresses this sentiment and its resulting frustration.

I make forty-four dollars a day once a week
when I turn in my little white book.
They ask me silly questions, they make unfair suggestions,
and they give me a suspicious look.
I say “nope I didn’t have any earnings last week,
and yes I’m a lookin’ for a work.”
They act real funny like it was their money
and I was some kind of a jerk.

Buzz Martin sums up his thoughts about this process in the refrain. “And what causes me the most aggravation is drawin’ unemployment compensation.” The act of drawing unemployment is one that could seriously undermine the logger’s ego, or that of any worker from any industry. This is evident from the way in which the logger describes how he feels when dealing with the staff. Their giving the logger a suspicious look would naturally make him feel that they do not trust him. Of course, if the logger had been a frequent visitor to the office, depending on the circumstances, then the officers would naturally be suspicious of him anyway. Either way, the process of drawing unemployment compensation is one of the most frustrating aspects of being a logger.

74 A gyppo logger is an independent logging contractor. Also spelled “gypo.”
75 Buzz Martin, “Unemployment Compensation,” There Walks a Man, Ripcord Records SLP-001, no date, track six; SOLID GOLD, Ripcord Records SLP-1025, no date, track 10.
76 Refrain, second line.
The song “Strong Winds and Widow-Makers”\textsuperscript{77} stands out from the other five songs that were recorded more than once because it incorporates so many more typical elements of Buzz Martin’s music, starting with simple melodies and harmonies. The verse uses the tonic and dominant chords, alternating each line in this song. The chorus or refrain is based largely on the sub-dominant chord, assisted by the tonic chord. The dominant chord helps the end of the refrain cadence on the tonic chord. The meter of this song is a quick 4/4; the tempo is moderate, and the metronome would be set at about eighty per half note. The song also features Buzz’s normal orchestration, with lead guitar, bass, and Buzz singing.

The text features two important components. First it is clearly identified with the region from which the song came: the northwest. This is dictated very clearly in the first line of the song (verse one, line one): “We’re the northwest unsung hero, the backbone of the land.” The idea of the northwest is also present in the text of the refrain, in the third line: “We don’t complain if the timber’s small or if the ground is steep.” Here the ground’s steepness is the significant northwestern element. The hills and forests of the northwest are notorious for their sudden changes in elevation. Crevices and cracks are literally everywhere in the northwest forests, due to the volcanic nature of the landscape and its creation. The jagged and rugged landscape of the Pacific Northwest is a byproduct of violent earthquakes and volcanos that have rocked the area throughout time.

Second, many of the issues, ideas, and concepts that appear in Buzz’s music are touched on in this song. Great pride is associated with man and his job. The first verse addresses the logger as a man of great stature who does not receive much credit for his efforts. He is even chastised by those who process the product, despite the fact that they would not have their jobs without the logger doing what he does.

\begin{verbatim}
We’re the northwest unsung hero, the backbone of this land,
Where there walks a timber faller, we claim there walks a man.
The riggin’ crew and the sawmill boys, they’re always puttin’ us down,
But they can’t log ‘em and they can’t saw ‘em, if we don’t cut them down.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{verbatim}

The refrain displays pride in the loggers’ abilities to handle a variety of challenges on the job, whether it be falling limbs, bad weather, harsh terrain, undersize trees, or hard work.

\textsuperscript{77} Buzz Martin, “Strong Winds and Widow-Makers.” A Logger’s Reward, Ripcord Records SLP-002, no date, track ten; SOLID GOLD, Ripcord Records SLP-1025, no date, track four.

\textsuperscript{78} First verse, all four lines.
Strong winds and widow-makers, they don’t bother us at all,
We don’t care what the weather’s like, if it’s winter spring or fall.
We don’t complain if the timber’s small, or if the ground is steep,
Hard work don’t scare us, we can lay right down beside it, and go to sleep.79

Other issues treated include the size of trees, the value of hard work, bureaucracy,
chewing tobacco and the habit, health issues, machinery and repairs, drinking, the lure of
the bar, and getting home late. In sum, the three large themes covered in this song are
pride, the work, and lifestyle.

Buzz Martin Revival

Once Buzz Martin’s musical career declined in the late 1970s, interest in his
music waned, but this has increased in the last ten years or so. Efforts to revitalize
Buzz’s legacy have been led by several individuals. A former high school English
teacher, James LeMonds from Castle Rock, Washington, has written several articles
about logging culture and music of the Pacific Northwest, all of which involved Buzz
Martin as a key figure.80 Dr. Jens Lund, the former director of the Washington State
Folklife Council, and now Program Manager for the State of Washington’s Folk and
Traditional Arts in the Parks Program, has also included Buzz in his discussions of logger
folklore at various cultural presentations and in some of his articles on folklore.81 Ross
West has written articles on Buzz Martin, most notably in Logger’s World, a monthly
publication for those involved in the timber industry throughout the western United
States.82 He was also collecting memorabilia in the 1990s, in hopes that he might write a
book about Buzz Martin also, but the project was never started. Hank Nelson from
Wasilla, Alaska, who writes his own timber tunes and performs regularly, has helped
publicize Buzz by including him in his stories about the woods and the artists he has met
and worked with throughout the years. Hank, who grew up and lived most of his life in
western Oregon, met Buzz in the 1970s when Buzz was touring throughout the region.

79 Refrain, all four lines.
Quarterly 43/1 (March 2006), 32-45.
81 Jens Lund, interview with author, 2 January 2006.
82 Ross West, “A Voice from Out of the Woods: The Saga of Buzz Martin the Singing Logger,” Logger’s
World, December 1994, 6-10.
He has also performed some of Buzz’s songs on his own programs in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.  

Curt Deatherage of Creswell, Oregon, was first introduced to the music of Buzz Martin by his brother Denny, in the summer of 1972, when he was nineteen years old. Deatherage was more interested in rock and roll music at the time and was reluctant to listen to anything else, particularly anything from his little brother’s boss. Curt has logging history in his family and was intrigued by what he heard, but this fascination lasted only as long as any other musical fad in a young adult’s life. Twenty-eight years later, while talking to a trucker, he mentioned the name Buzz Martin, and the trucker connected Curt with his boss who happened to own copies of Buzz’s albums. The next year, 2001, he set up a small website on a friend’s website who researches logging history in central Oregon, Martin Morisette. The website address changed in late 2005 when Martin changed his server address from http://www.oregongreengold.com to http://www.co-greengold.com.

Curt dedicated his website to Buzz and his music, and wrote two articles for a small historical newspaper for Creswell, Oregon, Creswell’s History, published by The Chronicle in 2001. These newspaper articles were the same he used for two pages on his Buzz Martin website, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,“ and “The Latest ‘Buzz’ on the Internet.” The first article contains information about Buzz’s personal and professional life, as well as his music. The second article tells how Curt discovered and then rediscovered Buzz’s music, and then how he was able to set up his website. The website contains a third page that lists all six full-length albums and the track listings for those albums, and information about how to obtain copies of them. This page also contains contact information for both Curt and Buzz’s son Steve Martin, who occasionally performs his father’s music.

Buzz’s son, Steve Martin of Lebanon, Oregon, has been working hard over the last ten years to obtain all the publishing rights for his father’s logging songs from a

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85 The article “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’” can be found at http://www.co-greengold.com/BuzzMartin/buzzbio.html.
86 The article “The Latest ‘Buzz’ on the Internet” can be found at http://www.co-greengold.com/BuzzMartin/BuzzInternet.html.
company in Tennessee that had bought out Ripcord Records. Before completing this venture by the end of 2005, Steve had already been able to release his own album of Buzz’s music. *Where There Walks a Logger: A Tribute to My Dad Buzz Martin* was produced in 2003 in Junction City, Oregon. This album has been released in both audio cassette tape and compact disc formats, and features Steve singing twelve of his father’s songs. Only three of the six duplicates are on this album: “Monday Mornin’ Again,” “Fire Danger,” and “Strong Winds and Widowmakers.” The other three were omitted for various personal reasons. However, the first two songs ever recorded by Buzz are on this album, “Whistle Punk Pete” and “Sick of Settin’ Chokers,” two of Steve’s favorites. These were originally recorded with Lavender Records in 1967, whose immediate popularity landed Buzz a full album deal with Ripcord Records. They were recorded also on Buzz’s first full length album, SLP-001, *There Walks a Man*. Both songs have spoken introductions.

“Whistle Punk Pete” is a humorous story about a small logger who worked as a whistlepunk, but wanted to be a hooktender. The whistlepunk’s task is usually reserved for a smaller man, and his job is to sit on a stump and blow in the signals to the yarder engineer. The hooktender, however, is the boss of the logging operation and needs to be a rather big man who can handle and hook up logs with heavy cable loads while maneuvering around fallen logs and uneven terrain. Verses one and two tell about Pete’s deficiencies on the job and the difficulties he had completing some of the tasks that the hooktender would do, simply because he was too small.

You put a block and a strap onto little Pete’s back,
he’d head in the wrong direction,
Makin’ new layouts and pullin’ hay wire,
he couldn’t even pull one section.
But he could climb alright, didn’t mind the hike,
but when he got to the top oh golly,
He was too small to tackle a guy line shackle,
he couldn’t even hook up a molly.  

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87 These three songs are: “Butterin’ Up Biscuit,” “Logger’s Annual Party,” and “Unemployment Compensation.”
89 Verse two.
Verses three and four of the song shift gears and tell about Pete and his new wife Myrtle. The relationship between his wife and the hooktending job is actually a joke on the word, because Pete ended up doing a different kind of hooktending.

‘Cause his little wife Myrtle wore a full length girdle,  
an’ had twenty-three hooks and eyes,  
Touched a full half hour to hook her up every morning,  
much to little Pete’s surprise.  
Well he was hookin’ and thinkin’, his eyes began to blinkin’,  
he jumped up and let out a squall,  
He said “Myrtle holy cow, if the crew could see me now,  
I’m a hooktender after all.”^90

Despite the fact that this type of hooktending had nothing to do with logging out in the woods, Pete was thrilled enough by this to call himself a hooktender.

Despite difficulties and challenges on the job, some loggers such as Pete are able to keep a positive outlook and keep dreaming of accomplishing bigger and better tasks. However, some do not fare so well, and they tend to lament. “Sick of Settin’ Chokers”^91 tells about a logger originally from the South who was having difficulty adjusting to the environment of the Pacific Norththwest. He complains about the rain, the steep hillsides,^92 and even sarcastically remarks that he has moss growing on his back.^93 The refrain recalls logging in the Northwest as opportunity for financial gain, which is why this logger migrated from the South in the first place. However, this logger’s experience was not as rewarding as he originally thought it would be.

Well I come up here to these big north woods, to try an’ make a killin’;  
I heard the wages was really good, and a logger’s life was thrillin’.  
I’ve been here quite a while and I ain’t been thrilled,  
couple a times I was darned near killed,  
an’ I’m plum sick of settin’ chokers in this dog-gone rain.^94

A logger, whether new to the industry or a seasoned veteran, is always apt to want to leave the job because of the tough conditions lamented in the previous song, but a

^90 Verse four.
^92 First verse, third line: “I’m plum sick of climbin’ these steep hillsides.”
^93 First verse, fifth line: “I think I got moss growin’ on my back.”
^94 Buzz Martin, “Sick of Settin’ Chokers,” There Walks a Man, Ripcord Records SLP-001, no date, track four, refrain.
logger does have a certain degree of pride in his job. The fourth verse of “Where There Walks a Logger, There Walks a Man”\(^95\) demonstrates this.

They’re a rough rowdy breed of people,  
but it’s a tough life they live.  
An’ most of the time, their job’s demandin’  
just a little bit more than they can give.\(^96\)  
They come home at night, so dog-gone tired,  
bruised an’ cut an’ sore,  
Get up next mornin’ with a big old grin,  
and go right back out for more,  
To the same steep muddy hillsides  
they were cussin’ the day before.\(^97\)

The logging job is very demanding, especially physically. A logger must be agile enough to run around the muddy obstacle course full of stumps hidden by fallen debris, up and down and across steep hillsides; hurdle over fallen limbs large and small, duck under low-hanging limbs; run through Devil’s Club, moss and ferns; perhaps slip and fall a few times; and get his clothes wet, regardless of the weather, whether it be rain, snow, fog, high heat or bitter cold. Despite how unpleasant this might appear to be, this is the logger’s playground; it is what he loves and looks forward to doing everyday.

Steve Martin re-released Buzz’s first two albums in 2005, a compilation of the twenty songs from Buzz’s first two albums, SLP-001 and SLP-002. It is titled *Where There Walks a Logger There Walks a Man / Loggers Reward*, combining the titles of those two albums. It has four of the duplicated songs\(^98\) from the original six albums, the first two singles released in 1967\(^99\), and eight songs that Steve recorded on his first album. These statistics are merely coincidence though, because most of the most popular songs were recorded on the first album, SLP-001, and some more but not as many on the second album, SLP-002. Steve plans to release the remaining albums, but that will not happen immediately due to the high costs involved.

\(^96\) Third verse.
\(^97\) Fourth verse.
\(^98\) These songs are: “Fire Danger,” “Unemployment Compensation,” “Loggers Annual Party,” and “Strong Winds and Widow Makers.”
\(^99\) These songs are: “Whistle Punk Pete” and “Sick of Setting Chokers.”
By re-releasing Buzz’s music, Steve Martin hopes to rekindle interest in his father’s music. He has been selling the albums on CD Baby, www.cdbaby.com, and he feels they have done pretty well. Steve’s voice sounds very similar to that of Buzz’s; it is deep and surly, with a bit of country drawl. Sales of his own album have decreased since he released his first compilation of Buzz’s recordings though. He believes this is due to several factors. First, this latest album is the original singing logger, Buzz Martin himself. Second, the recording of Buzz Martin probably has more nostalgic value to those purchasing the album, particularly if they grew up listening to him, knew him or worked with him at some point in time, or his music was otherwise a significant part of their lives. In addition to selling recordings, Steve also performs his father’s music at various venues throughout the year, logging shows in particular. He usually averages ten to twelve shows each summer throughout Oregon and occasionally in Washington.

Buzz’s songs contain sentiments and issues with which loggers, their relatives and friends can identify, and he uses effective tools to reach his audience. Joking is one of the most important techniques for handling difficult topics or the issues loggers face. Having grown up in a family of loggers in two logging towns in different parts of Western Washington, this writer has seen them do it just about everywhere – on the job, in the truck, at the dinner table, at the store, in restaurants, on the street corners, at the gas station, in the bar, at City Hall, even in church. Joking serves to relieve stress, shed light on a bad situation, cheer up the mood, celebrate an accomplishment, or just plain look at something from a different perspective. The jokes can be short and simple or they can be longer stories, satires such as “Fire Danger,” or laments like “Monday Morning Again.” Demonstrating pride in being a logger or some other aspect of the job is another effective technique in sharing common sentiments among logger-types, especially where there is a good deal of nostalgia for that way of life. The songs “Logger’s Annual Party” and “Strong Winds and Widow Makers” are good examples of this. The other advantages Buzz had were his credibility because he had worked every job in the woods and was honest. The combination of these three factors ultimately led to his successful if short career as a singing logger.

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100 Sandra Martin, interview with author, 3 July 2006.
Originally from Coos Bay, Oregon, Hank Nelson has been in southeast Alaska for about twenty years. He has worked in the woods throughout most of the Pacific Northwest and beyond: northern California, western Oregon, western Washington, and southeast Alaska. Hank is passionate about logging and its culture and history, relishes in the memories of his past as a logger, and boldly admires the work and the difficulties faced on the job. A self-proclaimed “raconteur,” Hank brings out this passion in his poetry, song, and stories, with sincere sentiments and humor that people can identify with. Furthermore, he is credible because he has done what he sings about. Hank is also a walking tribute to loggers, speaks only highly of his colleagues and comrades, often sings their songs, or writes songs about them. Part of this is out of obligation he feels to keep the heritage alive, as this breed of men has been so important to the development of this part of the country. Hank’s repertoire also includes songs and poetry by others he has worked with, and says that this is very important, because their works would go unknown otherwise.

In some sense Hank has become a success story, largely because of his passion for what he does, but also by accident and sheer luck. As a youngster, what Hank wanted most was to do well and be approved and affirmed by his parents, his Uncle Fred, and Grandma Cooper,\(^1\) by whom Hank was influenced in many ways. Even as an adult, Hank wanted to prove himself to show that he could really do something, but at the same time he wanted to remain genuine, authentic, and sincere. In some ways he has accomplished just that. In a personal interview, Hank shared that he has been blessed, lucky, and successful along the way anyway, not to mention fortunate to have performed and associated with some of the best known logger yarn-spinners\(^2\) and songsters during his adult life. At the same time, Hank has never given up on his dream and doing what he loves, “being on stage and sharing his love of logger lore with anyone who will

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2. Ibid., A “yarn” is a tale or a long story of adventure or incredible happenings.
Hank also hopes he will be an inspiration to others out there. All of the information in this chapter has been obtained directly from Hank Nelson, either by letter, email, telephone, or in-person interview. The exceptions are footnoted.

“Stir the pot boys, stir the pot!”

Hank Nelson was born in North Bend, Oregon, a small logging town near Coos Bay, just at the tail-end of the Great Depression, in the year 1933. The country was just beginning to see a bit of light and hope. Long before television, people got together as a primary form of entertainment. Only a few people owned radios at the time, thus they were a novelty. Some houses did not even have electricity. Hank remembers people making up their own forms of entertainment – picnics, Sunday afternoon ballgames, etc. They had jam sessions, parties at someone’s house, or a barn dance at a local grange hall. Hank’s biological father Chet, was a guitar player and a piano player. Hank’s mother Betty, described by Hank as “a beautiful young sixteen-year-old girl,” met Chet at a jam session. Hank was conceived at this jam session. The relationship between Hank’s parents did not last long though, as his mother was rejected by his father’s family because they were rich and did not approve of the fact that she, Betty, was from a poor family. Hank’s mother eventually married his step-father.

Hank’s Uncle Fred and Grandma Elizabeth Hatfield Cooper raised Hank for most of his childhood years. Hank regards his Uncle Fred Cooper as a wonderful father figure to him, “and I idolized him. I loved Uncle Fred.” Uncle Fred was one of many musicians in the family. He listened to classical music, but he loved Dixie Land music and played slide trombone. Hank wrote a song after his Uncle Fred’s death, “The Old Bunk House.” Uncle Fred worked in the woods for over forty years, and it was he who introduced Hank to the woods. This led Hank to a life he loves and has never

104 Hank Nelson, interview with author, 12 July 2006. This is something Hank’s Grandma Cooper always said while Hank was growing up.
105 Chet’s full name was not given to the author, although it appears on Hank’s birth certificate.
106 No additional information about this man has been given to the author at this time, other than the fact that he was half Swedish and half Klamath Native American. The Klamath are from southwestern Oregon.
107 Hatfield was her maiden name, and Cooper was her married name.
108 Hank’s mother was present during his childhood, but it seems she was not the dominant female figure.
The song “The Old Bunk House” appears on the album *Old Dogs, Old Cats, and Old Lumberjacks*. In this song, the narrator discusses the absence of an old friend named Big Al who has just passed away, and the sense of loss and loneliness stemming from Al’s absence from the bunkhouse. The last line of each of the two verses is “I sure miss my old friend in the old bunkhouse tonight.” The first and last line of the refrain, half of the refrain since there are only four lines, is “Well something sure not right in the ol’ bunkhouse tonight.” These two lines are very similar and they add emphasis to the mood with as much of the text that they take up, especially since the refrain is sung three times: at the beginning before the first verse, in between the first and second verse, and at the end after the second verse.

Despite the heavy sense of loss, the concept of death is treated very lightly. Each time it is mentioned, the narrator treats it as a natural part of life, a by-product of aging, the Lord’s plan; the process of death is okay.

> Yah he was just an old tired worn-out logger,
> Tired and worn right down to the bone;
> So I guess the good Lord just figured,
> Give us time to take Big Al home.\(^\text{111}\)

The narrator also mentions that his mother had passed away the same time last fall season, and that he knows both his mother and pal Big Al are up in heaven. “But I know they’re up in heaven now and you know Lord that’s sure all right.”\(^\text{112}\) It is perhaps because of the association of heaven with a better place in traditional Christian doctrine that Hank’s narrator is at peace with his friend’s death.

Hank’s Grandma Cooper, originally from West Virginia, was a good ballad and gospel singer. She sang Jimmy Rogers blues songs, made up songs, and strummed on her vintage flat-top guitar. “She could yodel up a storm and she’d make a harmonica sound like a freight train chugging uphill.” She filled Hank’s mind with colorful and varied recollections of growing up in West Virginia, such as camp meetings, mountain music, and going to church. Hank credits his Grandma Cooper with his story-telling talent, and a couple of his songs tell about her storytelling when he was growing up. Three of the fourteen songs on the album *Old Dogs, Old Cats, and Old Lumberjacks* (1995) feature

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\(^{110}\) Kate Kelly,, “Tellin’ it like it is: Hank Nelson’s logging life makes for great stories,” B7.
\(^{111}\) Verse one, lines one and two.
memories about growing up.\textsuperscript{113} Although Hank was born in Oregon, he considers his roots to be in West Virginia, blue grass country. He says he inherited a love of mountain music, songs that told stories about the ups and downs of life in the coal mines, working below ground, both hard times and good times.

Hank’s mother, Betty, was also a musician with what Hank calls “a wonderful lusty blues voice.”\textsuperscript{114} She was also a good dancer, and her dream was to be a professional dancer. “She always encouraged me to aim high in life. I love her more today than I was ever able to express as I should have – when she was alive. I OWE everything to my beloved mother.”\textsuperscript{115} Other members of the family were various types of artists as well. Hank’s aunts, Dacia, Anna, and Daisy, were all musicians and cartoonists, “Real artists!” quotes Hank. Aunt Dacia taught Hank his very first chords on the guitar.

Hank always wanted to meet his father, Chet. He began looking for him in 1962, but later learned that he had already passed away by 1959, at age fifty-three. In a phone conversation, with someone who knew Chet, Hank was told that his father was a friendly and out-going person. Chet had played the piano, sang, and spent his working years a long-shoreman in North Bend, Oregon, and was president of the local union during the 1940s. Hank had always dreamed of meeting with his real father, watching him perform, shake hands, and catch up, but it never happened. Despite the fact that Hank never knew his biological father,\textsuperscript{116} he still had a certain degree of respect for him. He eventually told me that he had always wanted to meet his father but never really had the opportunity to do so. Hank wrote the song “Curly Joe” for his biological father, Chet, and it appears as the last song on the album \textit{Tall Timber, Volume I}.

“Curly Joe” is a ballad about an old log truck driver and his vintage truck, both of which are passed their prime. This ballad is also about a reunion between father and son, and the memory stirred up by a faded photograph. The setting of the first six stanzas is a reunion between father and son, the father being the old truck driver, and the two are

\textsuperscript{112}Verse two, line three.
\textsuperscript{113}These songs are “Intro” (the introductory track on the album), “Same Old Gospel Music,” and “Mountain Memories.”
\textsuperscript{114}Hank Nelson, letter to the author from Hank Nelson, 12 July 2006.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116}The exact meaning of this is difficult to tell, because in a letter to the author dated 12 July 2006, Hank did state that his father did visit him on a few occasions. It is not known though how many occasions there really were, but the number must be minimal, considering Hank’s consistent claim that he never knew his father. This claim has been made in a variety of contexts, from letters, to emails, and conversations.
standing back and looking at the old log truck, with the father reminiscing about his glory
days with the truck. The next and last four stanzas of the song are of the son later on,
looking back at that reunion and thinking about his father, the sound of his rig, and a
picture that his father gave him, signed “I love you, your Dad.”

Hank encountered many interesting musical figures from outside the family while
he was growing up. One of these was Mervin McMasters, a country and western singer
and guitarist. “When I was about 16 a young, good looking, dashing cowboy, white hat –
cowboy boots and Belt Buckle with a steer’s head on it – showed up.” This figure
fascinated and was revered by members of the family. Mervin wooed and courted
Hank’s sister Roberta, he would pick the guitar and sing, and Grandma Cooper loved
him. The courtship with Roberta was brief however, but during that time he taught Hank
a few chords on the guitar. Hank credits Mervin for his guitar skills, and said that
“because of him he probably turned out to be a pretty good guitar player, despite
occasional indolence.”

Hank spent much of his youth in a logging camp on the Coos Bay River. In 1943,
his Uncle Fred, the head cook for the last splash dam in the 1940s, took Hank up to the
logging camps each summer. Hank was only ten years old, and his uncle did this
thinking that it might help Hank grow up. In the document “Inspirations From the
Forest,” Hank describes one of the first scenes at camp he remembers quite well:

After supper, the loggers retired in the bunkhouse. “Hey, Kid, didn’t you read the
sign? Off limits to whippersnappers!”

Mountain Swede, the bull buck, waved his hand. “Leav’im be. Com’mon, Kid,
sit over here on the bench and keep yer yap shut … maybe you’d learn
something.”

Hank picked up on what he was taught pretty quickly, and by age fourteen, Hank was
working as a chokerman, setting choker cables around logs that had been fallen. There in
the forest canyons, he was exposed to the life of the old-time lumberjack. He witnessed

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six, eighth stanza, line four.
120 A splash dam is a log dam that holds back a reservoir of water used to flush timber out of the hills and
float the logs down river to the mills.
121 Hank Nelson, “Inspirations From the Forest,” typed document, January 2006. From the personal
archive of Leslie Johnson.
the hard work required, the ever present dangers, and absorbed the sounds of various
saws and steam donkey whistles. There were tree toppers, high riggers, donkey
punchers, whistle punks, school marm’s, widow makers, bark angels, cross cut saws and
double bitted axes.  

There Hank also encountered and heard stories of many camp bards and a variety
of colorful characters. “Those camps were the melting pots… they were the places where
all those colorful characters who were living on the edge of society were hanging out.”
Also contributing to this melting pot were tramp loggers, brindle stiffs, and camp
inspectors traveling south to work in the short pine during the summer and long logs
on the Columbia River in the spring. These men who moved around often would pick up
a few stories in the various camps they had been to, and essentially fed new ideas to the
main camp bards. This entire experience growing up was what led Hank to want to be a
logger when he grew up.

As a youngster, Hank got to know the forest well and loved it. When he first
started at age ten, one of Hank’s favorite moments was at the end of a workday, where he
would listen to a certain young logger singing. This was Hank’s first exposure to a
singing logger. At the time, Keith LeBranch was seventeen years old and his job was
setting chokers on fallen logs. Hank would go and watch him as he worked and fly-
fished in a narrow canyon with tall timber rising on both sides. There Hank would listen
as Keith sang, yodeled, and whistled while fishing. To the youngster, “the logging camp
was a world of wonderment, high adventure, danger, and romanticism.”

The danger and excitement lasted long after the trees were fallen. Hank would
tell how some of the logs would get hung up in the rocks along the way downstream to
the mills, and “jacks” armed with a variety of tools would cajole and wrestle logs back
into the river current. Many stories were told in the logging camps about these log jams
and the battles lumberjacks fought with them. Some ended in victory, and others ended
in death, such as the famous ballad “Jam on Gerry’s Rock” from the northeastern United

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122 These are a variety of tool that have been used in the woods for logging.
124 Camp inspectors are short-timers who do not stay long at any particular camp and frequently move from
camp to camp. This can be for various reasons. In many cases they were known to not be very good
workers and were released by the boss. On the other hand, some inspectors just liked moving around.
States and southeastern Canada. Such a story was just one of many told by camp bards. There and later on in his career, Hank was exposed to many stories, yarns, tall timber tales, ballads, made-up songs, and poems. Most of the music he heard was Irish or Scottish melodies or renditions, and the themes varied from sentimental love to hard work and the ever-present dangers. The most famous lumberjack song Hank heard when he was a young logger was the American classic, “The Frozen Logger,” written by James Stevens in 1951. In this song a café waitress tells about a Bunyanesque logger who stirred his coffee with his thumb and could easily work in sub-arctic temperatures, but was finally frozen to death at one thousand degrees below zero.

Hank’s first public venture in music performance came in 1965. Billy Aseltine was a pioneer in country music in northern California. Hank regarded him as a great singer and a wonderful personality. “He changed my life forever when he [Billy] asked me to play lead guitar in his band, The Siskiyou Play Boys, a popular country band. Hank also played occasionally with other groups, but he stayed in Billy Aseltine’s band fourteen years until 1978. The most important thing Billy taught Hank was stage presence, and that one has to talk or sing into the microphone. Most important to Hank, Billy gave him a lot of encouragement, which is what Hank says he needed the most. Hank regards Billy as his best friend at the time, almost like a brother.

Hank played Dean Blankenship, another musician who had a profound influence on him. Dean had one of the best high-lonesome-sounding bluegrass voices Hank had ever heard, and invited Hank to perform with him. Hank felt fortunate to be a part in the prime of Wales Gospel Blue Grass Band for two years, despite the fact that his talent level never matched his zeal for blue grass. Dean sang and played a five-string banjo and a flat-top guitar. Hank played and sang the harmony, and there were “great” back-up musicians. For Hank, it was a wonderful time.

In 1968 Hank started working in a logging camp north of Sitka on Baronof Island as a greenhorn timber faller. One day he heard Buzz Martin singing, and after collecting all of his albums, Hank was convinced that no one could or ever would equal the standard Buzz had established. He spoke the logger’s language and he was authentic to the core. Hank had the opportunity to meet Buzz on three occasions. The most memorable was in

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126 These log-wrestling tools included peaveys, cant-hooks, and pike poles.
127 Dates were not provided to indicate when this happened.
Prineville, Oregon, when Buzz was Grand Marshal of the big parade down Main Street. Another time was in Roseburg, Oregon, where Buzz was performing at a show. Buzz politely listened to Hank sing three lines on a song he had written, inspired by Buzz himself, “It’s a Picnic Every Day.”

Hank regards Buzz as the one and only prolific logger-song writer, and that “nobody is ever going to top him.” Despite this, Hank realized that he needed to keep going, performing Buzz’s music as well as his own. This realization came after hearing Don Bell’s words, after a breakfast memorial for Buzz up in Alaska. In 1983, Don Bell, the manager of the Alaska Loggers Association in Ketchikan, asked Hank to speak at a memorial breakfast for Buzz Martin in Juneau, Alaska. In addition to speaking, Hank also performed some of Buzz’s songs and a few of his own. Hank was well received by the two hundred in attendance, and after the event, Don encouraged Hank to keep performing. What Hank has done since then is to try and create another sort of “niche,” which has taken years to evolve. To Hank Buzz was a hero, and “it has been an honor and privilege to have sung his music to audiences from Elko Nevada to New York City, Washington D.C. and many places in between. Buzz is, was and will always remain the old Growth in woods music.”

Hank has encountered many other positive influences on his music-making throughout the years. In 1981, Hank met Gary Shawvers, while working for a logging company up in Alaska. Hank regards Gary as talented musician and song writer. Gary has produced two of his own logging song albums with his son Grady. Hank also met Les Looney in the 1980s. Les is another logger from Alaska who tells stories, jokes, and satires, and is a singer and song-writer. These two men recorded an album together in Eugene, Oregon, in 1992, *It’s a Picnic Everyday*. This album features a song by the same name, which Hank performs most frequently.

Hank originally wrote the ballad “It’s a Picnic Every Day” in 1968 in False Island, Alaska. The title of the song sums up this song the best: every day out in the woods is a picnic, it is fun for Hank. This is how much Hank loves working out in the woods. There are times when he gets frustrated enough to think he wants to quit, but the

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129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 No further information was given about these albums.
positives outweigh the negatives of working out in the woods. He likes to breathe the fresh mountain air, and he likes the view when the sun shines through. Despite the nasty weather and its effects described in the first two lines of the second verse, cold extremities, hillsides of snow, subzero temperatures, and rain dripping from his nose, Hank still likes what he does, and he is proud of it. This is the same song that Hank had asked Buzz Martin to listen to in Roseburg, Oregon.

The song “Double-Second Cousin” from the *Tall Timber* album also demonstrates a basic or fundamental level of pride that Hank has in being a lumberjack. He says he can do just about anything, and lists four different jobs: faller, bucker, cat-skinner, and trucker.\(^{132}\) He has worked all over, “from Oregon to Maine” and “in the sunshine an’ in the rain,”\(^{133}\) and because he is “the hardest workin’ logger there are A-round,” that makes him “a double-second cousin to a dog-gone beaver,”\(^{134}\) an animal that chews down trees to collect limbs, branches, and skinnier logs to make its own home.\(^{135}\) Aside from cutting down trees, one of his duties as a lumberjack is to plant new ones, and “when I see those ol’ trees a growin’ back, makes me mighty proud to be a lumberjack.”\(^{136}\)

In the years 1984-1985, Hank was a disc-jockey at a Sitka Alaska Radio station, KCAW. There he hosted a country music show and coined the phrase: “the bright and sunny side of your radio dial.” “I ‘ham’d it up’ with corny jokes, lots of music, and people like it – ‘personalized’ radio,” says Hank. “KCAW was and still is a wonderful format.” Hank conducted interviews with traveling music personalities, and one of the highlights was when he had the honor of introducing “Riders in the Sky” from Nashville to a large crowd. On his show, Hank also did live performances of Buzz Martin’s songs, verse by Robert Service, Robert Swanson and others, as well as his own logging songs and poetry.

In 1986, Dr. Jens Lund of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission placed an advertisement in a logging magazine to solicit participants for a logger poetry gathering. Hank responded to this inquiry and this event became a launch

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\(^{132}\) First line of the first verse.

\(^{133}\) From the first line of the refrain.

\(^{134}\) From lines four and five of the refrain.

\(^{135}\) Gary Johnson, retired Forest Resource Manager from Plum Creek Timber Company, interview with author, 25 December 2006. In the discussion, he added “and perhaps you could say the beaver is the original logger,” with a chuckle.

\(^{136}\) Lines seven and eight of the second verse.
pad for a secondary profession, that of being a logger troubadour, performing both poetry and song. This event also fostered a professional relationship between artist and folklorist, which enabled Hank to perform at many events throughout the 1990s and continuing into the twenty-first century. Jens Lund believes that much of Hank’s popularity has stemmed from his sense of humor and sincerity.  

Hank told a reporter from the *Washington Post* about his working relationship with Jens Lund. He described Jens’ quest for “pocket gold,” that artist that would fit exactly into whatever it was Jens was looking for. The reporter asked Hank, “Are you a nugget…Hank?” Instead of replying with something egotistical or with pride, Hank replied “No, but I know a few and have worked with them, and performed on stage with them…” and listed a few, Lon Minkler, Virgil Wallace, Eathyl Rotschy, Woody Gifford, and Otto Oja. Even though Hank has produced albums and these men listed have not, Hank gave credit to these men that he has worked with, in conjunction with Jens Lund, all of whom are from southwestern Washington State.

Hank’s music has been featured on an award-winning documentary, “Loggers and Their Lore,” produced in 1987 by television KCTS-9, a Public Broadcasting System affiliate in Seattle, Washington. Hank was featured as background music behind other video footage at the beginning and at the end. At the beginning he sang two songs, Buzz Martin’s “Sick of Settin’ Chockers,” and Hank’s own “It’s a Picnic Every Day.” This last song was played again at the end. Hank’s reknown also enabled him to perform at major regional events, such as the Northwest Folk Life Festival in Seattle, Washington, and along the Columbia River Gorge between western Washington and Oregon for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Arts and Trails series.

Hank has performed at various national events, such as the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, the People’s Poetry Gathering in New York City, and the thirty-ninth annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. in 2005, from

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138 Hank Nelson, letter to the author, 15 November 2005. This part of the interview did not actually appear in the article though. The purpose of the article was to provide a brief overview of the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2005. Hank was one of the two artists that were briefly highlighted in the article.
Thursday June 23 to Monday July 4.\textsuperscript{139} At the latter event, Hank performed in a setting representing that of the lumberjack culture. There the audience was able to sit on benches made of halved tree trunks, while he sang and played his guitar while wearing frayed logging jeans and a flannel shirt and suspenders.\textsuperscript{140}

Hank has been very visible on other fronts of the logging industry. Hank has received much attention for his efforts in journalism as well. He has written articles on logging and submitted logger poetry for various publications, including \textit{Logger's World}, \textit{American Truck and Timberman}, and \textit{We're Alaska Loggers}.

\textbf{Some Tall Timber Tunes}

Hank Nelson has produced three albums on audio tape cassette since the 1990s, and has written many other songs throughout his life as well. Most of his ideas came while working in the woods. This was not a very convenient place for writing things down, but he might write down ideas on his lunch sack, or even on the band of his hard hat during breaks. Hank regards the production of his albums with much sentiment. The album \textit{Old Dogs, Old Cats, and Old Lumberjacks} was produced in 1995 at Whistlenose Studios in Dundee, Oregon. Hank describes this album as “a brown-paper bag, generic, hands on production. It was fun and a family affair.”\textsuperscript{141} Hank’s son Gene contributed in many ways to the project, including being the engineer. Gene played lead guitar, bass, and drums at various points in the album. Both Gene and his wife Cynthia were involved as backup vocals and harmony. The album cover has a picture of Hank playing the guitar while walking around a forest. This album has fourteen tracks, nine on side A and five on side B. Two of the tracks on side A are spoken texts, brief talks. The first track is an introduction to the album, and the eighth track is an introduction to the song that follows, “Logger’s Old Rugged Cross.”

The album \textit{Tall Timber, Volume I}, also features a band with different people, the most important being Stu Schulman. He performed on pedal steel guitar, bass, drums,

\textsuperscript{139} Dan Zak, “Oman! Oh Camel! Oh Boy!: At Folklife Festival, Middle East Meets Southwest and Northwest.” \textit{The Washington Post}, 24 June 2005, C1-C2. There is a headshot picture of Hank on page C2, and he is featured in the last four paragraphs on that page. The article says that he was 71 at this time.

\textsuperscript{140} Kate Kelly, “Tellin’ it like it is: Hank Nelson’s logging life makes for great stories.” B1, B7.

dobro, and lead guitar. The album was produced in 1998 in Anchorage, Alaska. This album has twelve tracks, six on each of the two sides. The cover has a picture of a snow-capped mountain peak in the background, and three fir trees on the left in the foreground. On the right in the foreground is a caricature of Hank in logger clothes with an axe in the left hand, and his guitar slung over his right shoulder like a logger might carry out his chainsaw after a hard day’s work. The artist for the album is listed as “Hank Nelson… and Friends.” The album was intended to be the first volume of an anthology with the purpose addressed by Hank on the inside of the cover.

“to provide a platform from which to introduce and elevate various artists, whose talent might otherwise go unheard and unnoticed… “Their Stories” swallowed up in silent canyons or lost along a timbered slope.”

Three of the twelve songs involved Hank’s colleagues in some way. The text to “Rose Valley Store,” is from a poem that Hank’s friend Eathyl Rotschy of Yacolt, Washington, wrote, also known as “The Ladies from Rose Valley Store.” The texts of the other two songs started out as rough drafts and then Hank had some colleagues help him finish them. Lon Minkler from Castle Rock, Washington, and Gary Shawver now from Alaska helped Hank finish “Surplus Owl.” Woody Gifford and Bill Iund, both from rural southwest Washington, helped Hank finish “Ghost of the Oregon Coast.”

Another earlier album was produced in collaboration with a good friend of his, Les Looney, It’s a Picnic Everyday, in 1992 in Eugene, Oregon. Hank is currently working on the album Tall Timber #2, which will be finished in the near future in Anchorage, Alaska. This album is to be released on compact disc, and will be a collection of favorite songs from previous albums, incorporating bluegrass, gospel, and country-western styles. Hank will be dedicating the album to “the hard-working men and women of the forest resource industry, and the foresters who plant trees, fight forest fires and protect the land for future generations.”\(^\text{142}\) The track listing is not yet available.

Hank has a list of fifteen songs that he usually performs in various forestry settings, and has listed two of his newer songs that had not been performed, as of 2005. Of the fifteen, four are from the album Old Dogs, Old Cats, and Old Lumberjacks (1995), and five are from Tall Timber, Volume I (1998), two are from It’s a Picnic Everyday (1992), and four are not on any of the albums. In the case of two of these songs the texts

\(^{142}\) Kate Kelly, “Tellin’ it like it is: Hank Nelson’s logging life makes for great stories,” B7.
were written as collaboration or with the assistance of others, three of the texts were
written by others but the music written by Hank, and two of the songs were older songs
that were logger favorites that Hank picked to show off, leaving eight songs written
exclusively by Hank. Almost half of his normal repertoire involves some kind of
collaboration with other artists or tribute to past artists.

“Those Ladies From Rose Valley Store” is one of Eathyl Rotschy’s most well-
known poems turned into song. This song, titled “Rose Valley Store,” appears on Hank’s
album Tall Timber Tunes, Volume I, in which Hank sings the song and plays guitar. This
song highlights a few themes and issues that pervade the lives of loggers. One of the
main ideas behind the song is that these hard-working men appreciate good service,
which is why the men visited the store so frequently, “each morning and night.”\textsuperscript{143} The
song cites some of the products that the men enjoyed, particularly Barbara’s coffee in the
morning, for it “brought us fully awake at dawn’s early break.”\textsuperscript{144} The logger would
certainly need something to help him stay awake and alert at the beginning of the day,
not only to start his day off efficiently, but to perform his job safely as well.

The products at the store were not the most important part of going to the store
though. “All the fine fair just didn’t compare, to those ladies in Rose Valley Store.”\textsuperscript{145} Rather it was the respect, pleasantry, and good manners that did the trick.

We were muddy and wet with dust and sweat,
We were whiskery, splintery, sore;
But they never were rude or cranky or crude,
Those ladies from Rose Valley Store.\textsuperscript{146}

“It’s hard enough being a logger without someone acting foul towards you at the end of
the day,” says Eathyl. At the end of a grueling work day, the men are tired, dirty, and
perhaps exhausted. It has been my experience that the positive customer service and
acquaintanceship would add a relatively nice touch to the end of the day, and pick up
one’s mood if the day had gone bad.

The other main idea in this song is that the loggers are going to miss those ladies
at Rose Valley Store, their service and pleasantry, now that their job has been completed.

\textsuperscript{143} Verse one, line three.
\textsuperscript{144} Verse two, lines one and two.
\textsuperscript{145} Verses four, lines three and four.
\textsuperscript{146} Verse three, lines one through four.
Those ladies at Rose Valley Store,
We may never see them no more;
We’re done with our sitting we’ve pulled in our rigging,
An’ won’t be back there anymore.\textsuperscript{147}

These four lines of the refrain, which is sung four times, make up half of the entire sung text. Due to the mobile nature of logging jobs, it is likely that these loggers really will never see this place and these ladies again. It is certainly possible that a group of men in this situation might pass through the same area for another job that is in the area. This would be the case if they were logging for a large company such as Weyerhaeuser that owns a great deal of land in the area and is contracting with the same loggers for logging jobs close to each other. However, because adjacent or nearby stands of trees might not always be ready for commercial harvest around the same period of time, these loggers might not be back. This depends on various factors, such as: when the trees were planted, how big they had become, what kind of trees they were, what the market was like at the time, and which contractor won the job bid. There are the jobs with smaller landowners, in which case a logger might not know where his next job is until the next contract has been finalized.

Most of Hank’s songs focus on the difficult but wonderful life of the timber logger, a life he should know well after living it for more than forty years in Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. A few have dealt with contemporary and controversial topics. “Surplus Owl” from the album \textit{Tall Timber, Volume I}, deals with the spotted owl issue that inflicted significant damage on the logging industry in the 1990s. Advances in technology, both at work and at home, have had an effect on the logger as well, as demonstrated in “Urban Sourdough,” a song from the same album discussed later in this chapter. “Shanghaied” from \textit{Tall Timber, Volume I}, shows another modern element of the logger’s life too, that of not being on his own, but being in partnership and having a domestic relationship and responsibility to another person, such as a wife.

“Surplus Owl” was written with the help of Lon Minkler from Castle Rock, Washington. It was then rearranged and shortened by Gary Shawver of Alaska. “A tongue-in-cheek classic,” this song is a humorous poking at the spotted owl issue that wreaked havoc on the logging industry of the Pacific Northwest in the 1990s. The

\textsuperscript{147} Refrain, lines one thru four.
federal Fish and Wildlife Service officially placed the northern spotted owl on the Endangered Species list in June, 1990, citing that their species was on the decline because of loss of habitat, that being old growth forest. This limited the type and amount of land that could be logged. As a result, thousands of jobs were lost in each of the northwestern states. These lost jobs were not just loggers, but related jobs as well – sawmills, pulp mills, truckers, road builders, tree farms, contractors, merchants of small towns sustained by just the logging industry, and many more.

Many in the logging industry questioned the need for the spotted owl to even be on the list, especially when the spotted owl was known to use second-growth forest for habitat as well as old-growth forest. This song features narrative by two figures, a logger and a spotted owl. The text starts out where an old-growth logger named Jim sees an owl sitting on a limb of second growth. The logger jokingly says to the owl, “well bless my soul, thought owl’d just live in the old growth.” The owl responds “with a war like blink” and says “now I’m not as endangered as some folks think.” Afterwards the logger starts thinking about getting some land with timber, goes to the ranger station and is told to come back in a month or two. When the logger comes back, the ranger fools him, presents himself with a sad and glum face, suggesting that the logger might not receive any land. The ranger says “It’s a long sad story but here’s the gist,” immediately changes face and proclaims “spotted owl just made the surplus list!” The ranger tells the story of how this happened in the next stanza.

I tried my best but I couldn’t do much,
the new political climate in DC is such,
And the workin’ folks raise such a din,
that the owls are out, haha, and the loggers are in!

At the end of the same stanza, the logger responds “I’m chillin’ out, hahaha.” The logger finishes the song with another stanza, telling the owl to move over and about how he is going to build himself a sky-high condo on about forty acres. Some people, such as environmentalists, might interpret this as a sick joke or verbal exploitation of the spotted owl and its habitat. While Hank and other loggers are fully aware of and sensitive to the seriousness of the situation, songs such as this one cast their concerns in a more humorous light, in which the logger makes light of an ugly situation he faces.

\[148\] This change in mood is evident in the recording, in the change of the singer’s voice.
Hank wrote the song “Urban Sourdough in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1997. Hank uses this song to make fun of the modern logger, a man who the narrator says he wishes “he’d been born about two hundred years ago.” Hank’s description of the character is this: “A moose on the loose, about a guy in a tee-shirt at 40 degrees below zero … a modern day Alaska Sourdough.” Throughout the song, Hank lists a variety of items that make this new breed of logger. Like a wolf, this urban sourdough is out late at night, perhaps taking part in the nightlife of the city, but staying up late at night instead of going to bed early so he can get up early in the morning. He has a whole host of modern gadgets, including a four-wheeler, laptop computer, and a cellular phone. His vehicle is loaded: “Got a four-wheel drive pick-up truck, a fire rod in the rack; and a snow blade on the front, and a snowgoat in the back.” Although the man wears whiskers and is “tough right down to the bone,” the third stanza questions his ability to tolerate the harsh weather that lumberjacks frequently deal with in the north. “He thinks it’s balmy weather when it’s only ten below; he’s dressed up for survival, from his head down to his toes.” After the song is sung, Hank continues on with spoken text that lists a bunch of other modern gadgets one thinks he needs to live nowadays, such as a global positioning system device, satellite dish with 110 channels, and a “wall-to-wall state-of-the-art stereo system with a five-hundred-watt sub-woofer, to help combat the old cabin fever blues.”

Hank has worked falling timber all over the Pacific Northwest. In all, he has set chokers, fallen timber, been a hooktender, and a high-climber. Having migrated from camp to camp, from job to job, from one place to another, Hank calls himself a “tramp logger.” Hank wrote the song “Shanghaied” in 1997. This is a story about a tramp logger whose rolling stone days become numbered when he is bamboozled by a pretty lady. Half of the song sums up the tramp logger life the character had been living, moving around the country as he pleased, without regard to anybody else. Lines three and four in the second stanza are a great metaphor or description as to why tramp loggers are the way they are. “Yah I never could stand prosperity, I get urged to hit the trail; God just like stagnant water, if it ain’t movin’ it turns stale.” There seems to be a certain

149 Like other manual laborers, loggers rise early in the morning, depending on how far the job is away from home. Cutting jobs usually start by 7am and finish around 4pm, sometimes even earlier. This is important in the summertime when it gets hot in the afternoon, and in the wintertime when it gets dark out earlier.
150 From lines one and two of the refrain.
element of boredom in staying around one place for too long, but perhaps some of them just like the excitement associated with moving around too and seeing new places.\textsuperscript{151}

The middle of this song uses the idea of why he is a tramp logger and a scene where he has just arrived in a new town, Sitka Alaska, to shift to the story about the gal behind the counter. These are the third and fourth stanzas. Of the third stanza, lines one and two are a continuance of subject material from lines three and four from the second stanza. “Tall timber keeps callin’ me where gentle breezes blow, ‘cause a lumber camp to a timber tramp is the only life he knows.” The tramp logger decides it is time to go and offers a relatively lame excuse why in lines three and four. “So blame it on tramp Peter, I’ll see you boys around; ‘sides the bacon is way too crisp, and the hot cakes too darned round.” Because this is only a song, the food is probably not the real reason a tramp logger would leave a camp. Tramp loggers are essentially a restless breed of men.

The main point of this song is that a very important part of his life has changed. The issue that is brought up is what is now controlling his life. Now that he has met an attractive woman who seems to have some sort of power over him, he and his restlessness are no longer controlling his life and making him move around all of the time, but of course he will not admit it, as he says so in the third line of the sixth stanza.

“Well I’m not sayin’ who’s the boss, but there’s a ring somewhere in my nose; an’ I guess you know who pulls the strings, it’s my sweetheart Sitka Rose.”

The narrator points out the irony that had it not been for his previous lifestyle, tramp fever, that he would not have this “fine” woman, who “had more darn dangerous curves ‘an any logging road I’ve ever seen,”\textsuperscript{152} He refers to her as gold at the end in the seventh stanza. “Say the gold is where ya find it, well I reckon that it’s so; but if it wasn’t for tramp fever, there be no Sitka Rose.”

In the minds of the old camp and tramp loggers, it is significant that somebody on the domestic front has power and control over the tramp logger. In the early logging camps, many of the men were single and they lived in bunkhouses at the logging camps. They did not have wives or families to go home and report to each night. They were lucky if they were able to ride the train or bus into town on the weekends to see a show or go to the bar. Aside from being employees of a logging company, old-time loggers were

\textsuperscript{151} The transient nature of loggers is similar to that of cowboys, who also have a very famous culture of song.
essentially independent men. The concept of having personal decisions influenced by somebody else was foreign.

The concept of a logger’s utopia is rampant in American lumberjack songs, all the way from the East Coast to the West Coast. Two of Hank’s songs on the album *Old Dogs, Old Cats & Old Lumberjacks* describe idyllic logging camps of dreams. “Smile High Canyon”153 describes a place that Hank’s narrator would love to go to. The first two verses describe what this place is like and what it means to him.

First Verse:
There’s a place called Smile High Canyon,
it’s a place of my fanciful dreams,
Way up there in the land of the bear,
an’ glaciers and valleys an’ streams.
Now I wanna go back ‘cause this old lumberjack’s
got Alaska way down in his soul,
Can’t wait til I tramp to that last loggin’ camp
somewhere just south of the pole.

Second Verse:
They’re mountains and trees marked down to the sea,
and the eagles still soars in the wind,
For geese fly high in the clear blue sky,
an’ the caribou an’ the wolves are my friend.
I miss the frontier, things are different down here
I feel like my back’s against the ol’ wall,
Can’t wait til I’m back in my little log shack
‘sides the Kenais sure look good in the fall.

The first and second lines of these verses describe the scenery that the narrator loves, the landscape and the fauna. The third and fourth lines of these verses tell why he wants to go there: he has Alaska in his soul, and is homesick for the Alaskan frontier and the log cabin he already has up there.

“Log Cutter’s Prayer”154 is another example of utopia, but in this case the utopia is what the logger would like to see in heaven when he dies. The text is spoken all the way through, as in a prayer. The first thing Hank asks for is a strip of tall green

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152 Fifth stanza, second line.
timber.\textsuperscript{155} He has a list of conditions that he would like to see, and these are some examples: perfect weather, no more mosquitos or “mean ol’ grizzly bears,” no more breakdowns and costly saw repairs.\textsuperscript{156} To justify his request, one of the lines Hank says is “I haven’t barber-chaired a tree in many years no and I’ve made all my cuts true and square,”\textsuperscript{157} and asks the Lord for what he thinks is fair. The idea of a logger’s utopia in heaven is not uncommon in the repertoire of other singing loggers. Buzz Martin wrote three songs that dealt with an idyllic logging scene, the most well-known being “A Logger’s Reward.”\textsuperscript{158}

\textbf{Tramp Logging Balladeer or Tall Timber Troubadour?}

Hank’s tall timber tunes are simple and he has a simple purpose in writing them, to demonstrate and share his passion for his profession. In early November 2006, I jokingly asked Hank in a letter what he would like the subtitle of his chapter to be, and I made a few suggestion just to help him out, and he wrote back on a postcard that had a picture of a log truck with a load of logs stacked twice as high as the truck. He mentioned a few subtitles, but the two he liked the best were those in the title of this section. Finally he said he liked “T.T.T.” best, meaning “Tall Timber Troubadour,” but he didn’t say why, since he had run out of room on the postcard at that point. Tramp logging has definitely been an important part of Hank’s logging career, and he has written songs about it, but I think “T.T.T.” is more appropriate as well. Hank has loved being a tramp logger most of his life, but I think there is a greater love for the entire logging profession in general. Hank writes and performs songs and poetry about working in the woods, but his doing so is not just about making the music for the sake of the music, but Hank’s art is about sharing it with others and entertaining them, which is what a troubadour does, as opposed to singing just to sing.\textsuperscript{159}

There is a kind of a happy-go-lucky attitude in all of Hank’s works, which just seems to be part of his personality as an individual. He has so much respect and

\textsuperscript{155} From line two.
\textsuperscript{156} From lines three to six.
\textsuperscript{157} Line eleven.
\textsuperscript{158} Buzz Martin, “A Loggers Reward,” \textit{A Logger’s Reward}, Ripcord Records SLP-002, no date, track one.
\textsuperscript{159} Although logging songs might not typically be considered part of the high art song tradition of western classical music, individual singing loggers do consider themselves to be contributing.
appreciation for everything in his life, even for that which one would think would not be a positive condition, such as death, injury, or misfortune. I think a lot of this has to do with how he was brought up, because his whole outlook is just very positive and optimistic. I think a lot Hank’s manner also comes from his the way his Grandma Cooper raised him and that it was a very positive experience for him, and that he has had such a strong faith in the Lord. As a result, Hank seems to have a sense where he knows that everything will turn out fine, regardless of the circumstances, and it has for him so far. He has been very fortunate to live a successful life as a logger, and more recently as a performer of logger lore. This quote by Hank speaks volumes about his attitude, manner, and perhaps why he has been so successful.

“Always - - stay on the uphill side of the stump – keep a smile on your face – a song in your heart – and to know this: That it is never too late to be everything you always wanted to be.”

Nellie Woosley had also said something similar to her little brother Buzz Martin:

Keep a song in your heart and on your lips. Even the toughest burdens are easier to bear when you sing.

It is perhaps this idea of having a song in his heart that has helped Hank as well.

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161 Deatherage, “Buzz Martin, the ‘Singing Logger’,” 4.
Bob Antone of North Bend, Washington, is a unique figure in this study for a number of reasons. He is much younger than any of the other artists, only thirty-three years old, at least half the age of the others. Due to his young age, he is perhaps not as “old and wise” as the others, although one might question the relevance of that idea when listening to the stories he tells about loggers in the area and some of the experiences he has had in his own life. Although he did spend some time in the woods when he was younger, he does not consider himself a logger at all. However, he was brought up in a logging town by a musical family with a logging background, so he was brought up hearing all the stories and jokes that loggers tell. Bob was also brought up learning folk fiddling and singing traditions from both his mother’s and father’s sides of the family. Both these factors would serve as significant pieces of a foundation for his interest in creating and performing logging songs. The other significant piece, unique to Bob, is his participation in and borrowing of the local Native American traditions and the inspiration it brings to him. This is unusual for a tradition that has been attributed solely to the white man, not just in the Pacific Northwest, but throughout the United States and Canada.

This chapter will feature a variety of settings that Bob regularly participates in, and discuss issues that define his music. The first and largest section of this chapter will focus on the influences that impact Bob’s musical style and thought. This will include influences from family and friends, and a tool-turned-instrument specific to loggers, the saw. The middle of this section will focus on Bob’s involvement with the musical traditions of the Native Americans in the Puget Sound area and their influence on his music. This section will finish by exploring the idea of what makes Bob’s music and other logging songs “northwestern.” The second section of this chapter will focus on the music performed in the Loggers Tributes in Snoqualmie, Washington, memorial performances that followed the closing of the Weyerhaeuser mill in that town. Unless noted otherwise, all information presented has been obtained either from personal
interviews or written correspondence with the subject or from personal materials borrowed from him.

**The Making of Back-Rattle-Beat – a Northwestern Sound**

Bob’s music has been influenced by people on both sides of his family and by local Native American traditions. His maternal great-grandfather originally played German and old-time American fiddle music. After he found a job with a family of Irish brick masons and fell in love with the boss’s daughter in the 1890s, he took up the Irish fiddling tradition as well. This has since been passed down the generations to Bob as an oral tradition, and he still uses his great-grandfather’s violin. His mother grew up in a log cabin near Snoqualmie Pass, east of Seattle, Washington, in the Cascade Mountain Range. She played traditional American folk songs and religious music, and taught Bob how to sing and play guitar. Bob’s paternal grandfather, John Antone Sr., learned to play the saw when he came out to the Pacific Northwest in 1928. During the Great Depression he hopped trains between hobo camps throughout the Pacific Northwest, where he met a variety of colorful characters, listened to their stories and entertained them with his own stories, limericks, and songs. Many of these were inspired from his work in the timber industry, the railroad, and the Seattle Watershed. Bob memorized John’s tales and tunes as he grew up and has included them in his own performances. Bob regards his grandfather as a great storyteller and his own works have been greatly influenced by him.

Bob is also a third generation northwest saw player, “northwest” referring to “whatever style I feel represents this region, logging history, and my family – is exactly that and nothing more than that.” He learned the saw from his grandfather John Antone, who had learned to play in North Dakota in the early 1900s. Bob’s friend Nick Coby also plays the musical handsaw, and has written a few songs about “working in the brush” and also his grandfather who used to work in the woods. Nick was taught the basics of saw playing by his father, who was a gyppo logger and worked at the White River Mill east of Enumclaw, Washington. He was not taught extensively, just “given enough to get going.” Playing the saw was not considered a formal exercise, and taking
advanced lessons to become an exceptional player was not important. “Just as long as you could get it was all that really mattered. Hell, if you wanted to get better, you pretty much had to just figure it out for yourself.” Both Bob and Nick use violin bows and corked awls to play the saw.

Bob’s first experience with the local Native American music traditions occurred in 1993, while playing white-man square dance tunes on his fiddle for some children at a branch of the King County Library System on the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, located between Auburn and Enumclaw, Washington. At first the children were quiet, but eventually they picked up various percussion instruments that had been passed out and started playing along with him on their own. Bob thus felt prompted to investigate the Native American musical traditions, and since then he has worked extensively with Native American musicians in the greater Seattle area. In particular, Bob has created and performed music with violinist Swil Kanim of the Lummi Nation, and worked mostly with various drum bearers of the Snoqualmie Tribe. As a member of the Snoqualmie Tribe Canoe Family, Bob has performed many ancient songs from the Pacific Northwest. He has learned to speak some of the area’s indigenous language and has sung songs in the Snoqualmie dialect. Bob has also collaborated with a number of Native American artists, from both inside and outside the Pacific Northwest.

Bob was gifted a Native hand drum by Swil Kanim, a violin player from the Lummi Nation. Later, Gail Mullen of the Snoqualmie Tribe took this drum to Oklahoma where Charles Chibbity, one of the Comanche Code talkers from World War II, personally blessed the drum with a prayer in his Native Comanche language. The drum can be played two ways, either with the stick on the drum rim, or the head of the stick on the drum head. Bob’s violin, which originally belonged to his great-grandfather, was also blessed by two Salish Shaman from the Lytton First Nation in British Columbia.

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163 Nick Coby, interview by author, 3 January 2006.
164 This tribe occupies land in the Snoqualmie Valley, running the distance of the lower Snoqualmie River, from the south end near Snoqualmie Falls to the north end near Monroe, Washington. The tribal headquarters is located in the town Carnation.
165 In addition to the names mentioned in the text, some of the other tribal names Bob gave me were: Duwamish, Suquamish, Snohomish, Chilkwac, Cherokee, Sioux, and Choctow.
166 The name Kanim can be found all over Western Washington. Swil is actually related to the late Chief Pat Kanim of the Snoqualmie Tribe.
167 This tribe is from the northwestern corner of Washington State near Bellingham, just south of the border with British Columbia, Canada.
Canada, in a special ceremony in which red cedar branches were brushed along the drum for the purpose of purification. The process, called a “brushing,” has been performed in ceremonies for thousands of years by Native Americans. In 1997, Bob started working intensely with the Snoqualmie Tribe, being a key figure in their drum circle and channeling songs for tribal use. Using the International Phonetic Alphabet, the tribe’s Native name is spelled “Sdoh q"al bix”,’ the name meaning the Transformer’s People, or the Moon’s People. Since the 1990s, his music has been heavily influenced by Native American traditions and sounds, even that not written for tribal purposes. Some of the Native elements include ornamental figures, quarter tones, pitch bending and slides, rapid scalar falls, use of harmonics, mimic of Native melodic motifs, and use of the pentatonic scale. He has also adopted a variety of percussive tools and techniques as well, such as the use of rattles, drum sticks, and the hand drum. Strong pulsating beats characteristic of the Northwest Coast native tradition frequent his music, both tribal and non-tribal. The number five is sacred to the Snoqualmie people, and so many of the spiritual songs are written using five-beat cycles, similar to the 5/4 meter of Western music. Since working with Natives, Bob has become aware of other songs related to logging that would not be found in the white man’s repertory otherwise. These songs have influenced his song writing, both for personal and tribal use.

The evergreen tree, especially the cedar tree, is a very sacred symbol in the local Native American religions. This includes both the indigenous Smokehouse (or Salish) religion and the Indian Shaker Church. The red cedar tree is considered to be an expression of extreme generosity and a giver of life. This tree has been a significant part of Northwest Natives lives, governing everything from food, clothing, shelter, transportation, basic tools, storage, arts and crafts, ceremonies, and religion. Within spiritual realms, the belief of life and spirit in the cedar tree informed taboos, rituals, healing, and prayers. Anytime something was to be taken from the tree, whether it be limbs, bark, roots, or the log, the Natives asked permission of the tree for the item, and explained the need, so that the tree might give the needed item.

168 Bob Antone, interview with author, 27 December 2005. The number five is significant because it refers to the hands and the five fingers; they are sacred, gifts from the Creator, tools for working in the woods, just like the cedar tree was used for everything.
169 It is not until later that it becomes referred to by some as an incarnation of God. This later reference is due to the influence of Christianity, as the idea of one god became mixed into the indigenous religion.
Because of the high regard for trees and the environment in which they grow, logging has been a very serious and sensitive process. Before cutting down a tree, the Native American logger must do several things, which are covered in the four different types of cedar harvest songs. At an interview, Bob and an anonymous drum bearer from the Snoqualmie Tribe sang examples of four types of logging songs, all of which were in a Native American language. Translations were not provided for a variety of reasons. First, because of the way the texts are composed and the syntax employed, many of the song texts cannot be translated literally into English. Second, these types of texts were not meant to be translated into English, because they were not meant for the white man to hear. Third, and most importantly, due to the sacred nature of the song, the texts and the songs are not meant to be shared outside the venue in which they were created or intended to be performed.

The first type of logging song is a protection song. This would be sung before a dangerous logging operation or also when someone felt like they might need protection while in a logging operation. This would be similar to a white man saying a prayer to ask for his protection and safety before going to set chokers all day. The second type is a power song. This would be used to call upon an animal guardian spirit. The spirit power is given to a native person during adolescence. Calling upon that spirit for this song would be used to give that person extra strength in the woods, particularly during dangerous and exhaustive logging jobs. The third type is called a prayer song, sung when a Native American logger becomes injured or dies. Native people would gather to sing a prayer song for that individual. This would be similar to the singing of “Amazing Grace” for a fallen logger at an un-marked grave in the white man’s tradition.

The fourth type of logging song is the harvest song, also known as the cedar work song. This is the most serious, traditional, and important song. The process itself of thanking the tree is very ancient, and it applies to any part of the tree, such as limbs, the stump, or the spar. The form of the song is very personal and individual. The form of the song also depends on the animal spirit called upon from the second type of native

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170 This drummer is not a member of the Snoqualmie Tribe; his family is Choctaw, from the Great Plains, but he grew up near the Snoqualmie Tribe, and has participated in their activities ever since.
171 Bob Antone and anonymous Native American, interview with author, 19 December 2005. While these songs are a different type of occupational song, in the spiritual realm, they have influenced Bob’s music making, both for his own personal and tribal uses.
logging song. Overall, the form of the song varies from place to place. In order to cut
down or harvest the Western Red Cedar tree, the native people would first ask permission
of the tree to cut it down. The natives would also thank the tree as they completed
related tasks: fell the tree, stripped the bark, and cut out planks or lumber boards.

Today Bob describes his musical style as “Back-Rattle-Beat,” a term he coined in
early 2000. It is a mixture of contemporary, Irish, German, old-time American, Blues,
and Native American fiddling from the hills of Washington State. Also informing his
music are the memories of growing up, the Snoqualmie-North Bend area history, the
people who have passed through or spent a significant amount of time there. As a result,
much of Bob’s music is the result of combining various musical styles he has
encountered throughout his life. Bob describes this in the song “Back-Rattle-Beat.”

Take the Native drum, and the old time sound,
A blues man’s rage, and the haunted towns;
It’s the railroad lines, along the Puget Sound,
It’s the visions in my dreams.

It’s the men that lived, it’s the men that died,
Become miners black and dust-filled eyes;
On the day the mountain blew, up the mountain side,
It’s the visions in my dreams.

You and me, lookin’ back to the times,
Makin’ sense of the past, while they made the climb;
Before they cover it all, for the sake of a dime,
(line left empty).

So let the rattle shake, and the old men sing,
The women dance, and the iron ring;
Let the stories tell, about everything,
Let the stories tell, about everything,
It’s back, rattle, beat. 172

In addition to being geographically and ethnically diverse, Bob’s music spans a broad
swath of time, mixing older with newer styles. In an interview, Bob said “my music is
contemporary yet sounds very old.” 173 Examples of older elements would be the
influence of traditional Native American musical elements that had been passed down

173 Bob Antone, interview with author, 3 January 2006.
each generation, over the course of hundreds of years, just as had the Irish and German fiddling traditions. Aside from writing brand new tunes, there are several features that make Bob’s music contemporary. He has used modern instruments, both the fiddle and guitar, electronic media and manipulation, and such.

A prime example of this is “Driving the Overland,” an instrumental duet between Bob, playing fiddle, and his brother Mike Antone, playing guitar. After making the live recording, various sound effects were added to the track in random places, such as whistles, burps, lip toots, and bird sounds from a cuckoo clock.\textsuperscript{174} Also at the beginning and at the end, there are other prerecorded sounds added to the track. The most significant is at the end, while Bob and Mike are still playing fiddle and guitar, there is an audio scene of wild young men yelling and laughing, revving up their car engines, squealing their tires, crashing and knocking over objects, and Bob beating on a drum.\textsuperscript{175} Bob also uses nontraditional techniques on the fiddle towards the end of this track, in which he intentionally screeches and scratches on the strings. Another example of electronic manipulation is in “Gold Mountain,” in which Bob plays fiddle, and later adds echo sequences and other computer effects on his fiddling. He also adds brief excerpts of speech by David Battey from the first annual Snoqualmie Loggers Tribute in 2002.\textsuperscript{176} This material is also manipulated with echo sequences, and it is muted as well. Bob applied the vinyl effect from the computer on the song “Tomorrow Brings Another.”\textsuperscript{177} The track sounds like an old record being played. It has a muted sound and you can hear the crackle of the needle passing over the dust.

Bob has also been influenced by contemporary lumberjack artists such as Buzz Martin, the Singing Logger, who was famous nationwide for his logging songs. Buzz’s son Steve came to the area to perform some of Buzz’s songs at the second Loggers Tribute in April, 2003. While in the area, Steve taught Bob some of Buzz’s songs, including “Bigfoot,” from the album \textit{The Singing Logger}, R-8117. His style has also been influenced much by listening to popular contemporary musicians with different styles, mostly country western, while he was growing up. These artists include Johnny

\textsuperscript{174} While this appears to be a similar technique used the methods of \textit{musique conrète} by Edgard Varèse and others, Bob does not think of this as such. These electronic additions are just for comical effects.
\textsuperscript{175} Again, this example is another comical effect, not necessarily an attempt to create an artistic statement.
\textsuperscript{176} Snoqualmie Center for the Performing Arts, Snoqualmie, Washington, 5 April 2002.
Cash, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson. Other contemporary artists include Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Jimmy Hendrix.

Bob has been very conscious of what makes a logging song of the Pacific Northwest “pacific-northwestern.” When commenting about the northwestern-ness of his own logging songs, he had this to say:

I am currently re-creating the NW flavor of these logging songs, adding my own parts, creating new melodies and lyrics to further integrate into the NW landscape. Even though my versions are brand new, using contemporary musical knowledge and skills, I include, wherever possible, those lyrics and melodies considered NW by current scholars on the subject.  

Much of the northwest flavor in Bob’s music has to do with the making of Back-Rattle-Beat, his own style he has classified, and all the influences that have helped shape that style. The first major influence would be that of his family, his mother’s singing and guitar playing, and his paternal grandfather’s fiddling, singing, and story-telling. The second is the experience of having grown up and continued living in a logging town in the Northwest, associating with the workers in that community, and listening to their stories, limericks, and tunes. The third major influence is the local Native American music scene, particularly that of the Snoqualmie Tribe. On top of those three, there have been other miscellaneous influences as well, not necessarily northwestern, country western musicians, and the use of modern instruments and technology.

Bob has also witnessed something very similar to what many of the older lumberjacks might have done in years past, and he has even experimented with this idea himself. The lumberjack historian Stewart Hall Holbrook from Portland, Oregon, commented: “Today’s loggers on the Pacific Coast have forgotten or never really knew the real lumberjack ballads.” The reason he gives for this is that by the time lumberjacks had made their way to the West Coast, they were more interested in popular song. This might mean that the lumberjacks in the Northwest could remember only fragments of the logging ballads and other logging songs from other regions of the

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178 Bob Antone, email to the author, 09 November 2005. These scholars include Stewart Hall Holbrook, lumberjack historian from Portland Oregon, Linda Allen of Bellingham, Washington, and Dr. Jens Lund, both folklorists for the State of Washington.


United States and Canada. With only fragments remembered, the question arises where the rest of the text of a song had come from.

This idea was further discussed during an interview/performance at the house of Bob’s friend, Nick Coby, in CleElum, Washington. In order to finish the rest of the song, one might “take-it-and-fake-it,” by making up words to replace what had been lost. Thus the song becomes of the Pacific Northwest, because it was created in this region, and only fragments of the original song were used. The same idea, “take-it-and-fake-it,” applies to the loss of a text’s tune:

“So imagine a lumber camp in Washington. Some old timer can only remember parts of a New England Ballad – so he fakes the rest, he doesn’t have a great voice, so he sings half the lyrics and speaks the other ones – the next thing you know, someone pulls out a fiddle and starts playing some old time songs – someone grabs a guitar, and a banjo, and starts putting chords along with.”

Even here the technique is taken to an entirely different level, where various texts and tunes are mixed together to create an essentially new song. This technique occurs in a song that Rob Sutter, a gyppo logger from North Bend, had heard in the 1970s when he was on a break while working in the woods one day. The original tune and some of text was borrowed from a popular song in the movie Mary Poppins. Where text was not borrowed, new text was inserted. This was not a case of having forgotten the original text, it was a deliberate attempt at making a new song from a pre-existing tune that the creater liked well enough to borrow from it, as in the practice of contrafactum. The chorus remained the same except the insertion of the word “logger” in the second line. The verses had completely new texts.

Chorus:
Borrowed text: Chim-chiminee, chim-chiminee, chim-chim-chiree,
New text: A logger that’s living is lucky as can be;
Borrowed text: Chim-chiminee, chim-chiminee, chim-chim-cheroo,
Good luck will rub off if I shake hands with you,
Good luck will rub off if I shake hands with you!

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181 Bob Antone, Nick Coby, and Bob Coby, interview with author, 3 January 2006.
182 The original song could have been from the Northeast, Midwest, or anywhere.
183 Bob Antone, email to the author, 9 November 2005.
Verse One (all new text):
Put safety first is what they did say,
They took all my troubles and savings away;
When I was young I felt so alive,
Each mountain top was one year of my life. (repeat line)

Verse Two (all new text):
Now that our timber is scattered and gone,
This town feels so empty I want to move on;
I’m the last of my family the last of my breed,
I’m a tree toppin’ Tom I’ve got all of my teeth. (repeat line)
The land that we inherit and the land that we steal,
The old ways are worn out and sorrow is real. (repeat line).

This song was featured in the first annual Loggers Tribute that Bob organized for the local logging community, in April 2002 at the Snoqualmie Center for the Performing Arts. This text, which is just the refrain, appeared later as one of the Tribute excerpts placed between the fourth and fifth songs on Bob’s album “Timberbeast Town.”

Snoqualmie Logger Tributes and “Timberbeast Town”

One thing unique to Bob is his respect for the culture from which he came. This is one of the most important driving forces behind his interest in logging songs and logging culture of the past and of the Northwest. Perhaps his best demonstration of this was his organization of the Loggers Tributes of 2002 and 2003. The songs of the first Tribute were recorded on his album “Timberbeast Town” from 2002. This album is representative of the Pacific Northwest in that it reflects the change that has been occurring in rural logging communities as of late. In general, the album migrates from a cliché country-western sound to a more modern and suburban feel.

In early 2002, the Weyerhauser Company announced that it would be closing two of the three remaining sawmills in Washington State, one just east of Enumclaw, and the other just outside Snoqualmie. Both of these mills were located on the eastern edges of King County, the most populous county in the State of Washington. The other mill in Longview on the Columbia River, which was much larger and handled more diverse operations, would remain open and sustain the company’s significance in the region’s

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184 Anonymous, untitled document, from the personal archive of Bob Antone, no date.
timber industry. As a result, thousands of local timber jobs disappeared, not only for Weyerhauser employees, but also for the independent loggers who were contracted to perform logging operations and sell harvested timber from other lands to Weyerhauser.

The closing of the Weyerhauser sawmills in Enumclaw and Snoqualmie was the end of an era for many people who had worked and known only logging all their lives. The Loggers Tribute organized by Bob served as an opportunity to celebrate and reflect upon this industrial era and lifestyle for those who had worked or were otherwise associated with the sawmill in Snoqualmie. The first gathering, “The End of an Era, a Tribute to Loggers,” was held on Friday, April 5, 2002 at the Snoqualmie Center for the Performing Arts, from 7:30pm to about 10pm. The program was framed with an introduction and closing by David Battey from the Snoqualmie Valley Historical Society. He presented a great deal of information about the history of the area and the role of the logging industry, and in the middle of the program he presented a slide show with pictures from the early 1900s.

Excerpts from David’s talk later were placed between the tracks on Bob’s album “Timberbeast Town.” These excerpts served a variety of purposes on the album, ranging from what are random excerpts, strategically-placed commentary about a song, to introductory context for a song. An example of the first type occurs at the end of track five, “Driving the Overland.” This track is a lively instrumental duet with Bob playing fiddle and his brother Mike playing guitar. About two thirds through, sound effects are added to the track. They start out quietly and gradually get louder. These sound effects are of young men driving recklessly, yelling and laughing. This audio scene ends in what sounds like a car crash and one of the young men laughing and yelling hysterically. The first words inserted from David’s text are “and that’s about all I got to say about that,” and then the crowd can be heard laughing in the background from the Loggers Tribute. This excerpt sounds as if it was used as commentary about the wild and crazy acts just heard, but it actually was not so. Even then, it could have been intentionally placed for comical purposes, but it was random, just as were the other excerpts in the album.  

An example of the introductory type of insert occurs before track thirteen, “Back-Rattle-Beat.” The text used is where David talks briefly about the 1855-1856 Indian War, the building of Fort Aulden, and the early white settlers’ fears of being annihilated
by the Indian tribes joining forces. The song combines elements of Native American music, American blues, and what Bob calls “old-time” music, such as the Irish and German fiddling traditions he grew up with. This latter type of music came from the white settlers. The name “back-rattle-beat” is the name Bob coined for his type of northwest regional music. It is heavily influenced by the northwest Native American drum and the medicine fiddle.\textsuperscript{186} The drum as an instrument is not used in this song, but its sound is implied by the steady strumming of the guitar on the lower strings. The text makes several references to Native American musical elements, specifically “the Native drum” in the first line of the first stanza, the use of the rattle in the first line of the fourth stanza, and the term “back-rattle-beat” in the fifth line of the fourth stanza.

Another example of this introductory type of excerpt occurs before the third track, “Haunted Voices.” In the excerpt, David tells of the end of the Snoqualmie mill’s log processing, and calls it “the end of an era.”\textsuperscript{187} The text of the song “Haunted Voices” refers to details of the area’s past, from the days of the forty-niner, the buried logger, to the modern-day Boeing worker. The text of the refrain, “Go see the wilderness, listen to the haunted voices,” acts as a command, constantly telling the listener to think of the past at the beginning, in between the two verses, and at the end. Excerpts from the last two lines of the second verse signify the end of the era: “this town it is changing,”\textsuperscript{188} and the word “farewell to the rivers, the forest and the sky.”\textsuperscript{189}

Bob Antone’s album “Timberbeast Town” (2002) is a snapshot and reflection of a logging town’s history – its past, present, and future. Aspects of North Bend and the surrounding area’s history are present everywhere in the album: the artist himself and his family history, the record jacket, the compact disc, the musical styles, the texts, themes and issues in the songs, and the excerpts from the first Loggers Tribute. The record cover to “Timberbeast Town” was designed by Bob himself. The front of the cover has a drawing of a chainsaw and an ax, tools used to cut down trees. This same drawing is on the back cover, but is significantly lighter, since it functions as a background behind the handwritten song titles. On the right side of the inside of the cover, there is a large color

\textsuperscript{185} Bob Antone, interview with author, 8 March 2006. Bob confirmed this in the interview.
\textsuperscript{186} Bob Antone, letter to the author, 9 November 2005, page 3.
\textsuperscript{187} Bob Antone, “Timberbeast Town,” end of track two.
\textsuperscript{188} From the penultimate line.
\textsuperscript{189} From the last line.
picture of the snow-dusted Mount Si watching over the town of North Bend and part of the Snoqualmie River. The label of the compact disc has a drawing of a circular saw blade as a backdrop.

Bob presents the different histories of the Snoqualmie Valley in the album on two levels. The smaller details of the histories are more prominent in the individual songs and spoken text excerpts from the Loggers Tribute. The larger ideas in the different eras are not only prominent in the individual songs, but also in the overall progression of the album, in terms of the area’s history, and also Bob’s own life. Aside from regional and personal history, this album represents Bob’s place in the Snoqualmie Valley and his perspective on how life has changed in that area over the years. The album focuses on one major shift, from the logging town to a suburban bedroom community, and just as the shift occurred in the area, the songs demonstrate the conflict between the old cliché country lifestyle and the effects of the newer suburban sprawl. In addition, popular issues get added into the texts that normally would not have been discussed in the older country society, such as domestic violence, alcoholism, and such. Mixed in with this is the Native American history that flourished before the time of the white man, and still survives today. In essence, three main historical groups are addressed in the album “Timberbeast Town:” the older logging town that North Bend and the surrounding area once was, the suburban bedroom community that the area has become, and the Native American population from long ago that still thrives to some extent.

The characteristics one would find in the logging town of North Bend and the surrounding area are very typical for logging towns in the Pacific Northwest: destruction of older homes, marriage problems, and Native American history. The second song on Bob’s album, “Lost & Found” highlights some of these characteristics. The first line of the refrain, “build the house, knock it down,” refers to the older houses built for workers by Weyerhaeuser back in the early 1900s that were later torn down as they fell apart due to old age. This line also refers to failed marriages, where the husband and wife worked so hard to create a strong household and loving family, but then issues would come up, like domestic violence, alcoholism, or loss of a job, and all of that they worked for would be lost. This line also refers to the Native Americans, who before the coming of the
white man, they had built their homesteads in the area, but then they were also torn down in various ways as the Native American communities were destroyed by foreign populations. The idea of building up a home and family is also addressed in the third line of the first verse: “raise up your family and raise up your home.”

The dangers of the logging job are addressed in the first and second lines of the first verse: “Take down the trees and send down the line, if you’re alive you’re making good time.” The idea behind the second line is based on the fact that the possibility of lethal accidents in the woods was so rampant, regardless of technological advances in the logging industry throughout the twentieth century. This issue is addressed in many of the other songs in the album, as well as the some of the texts excerpted from the first Loggers Tribute. What is interesting about this issue is how it is approached in the texts, from both the Tribute and the album. The line “if you’re alive you’re making good time” proposes the question of how death and bodily harm in the woods was really viewed and if there might be a difference between that and how death and bodily harm was actually talked about. In my personal experience of living and associating with loggers throughout my own life, I can say that the issue is very tragic, especially since a logger’s co-workers were usually his best friends, and in some cases family members.

However, loggers rarely express true sorrow in the form of tears or “sappy” verbalisms. Instead, they tend to not say much at all, or deal with the issue in a somewhat humorous light. Bob however, uses a different technique, one that suggests that death is merely a byproduct of the logging operation, and one could assume that death would harm the operation, by not “making good time.” In the end, staying alive is merely one of the repeated steps in the logging operation, and the attitude toward death and bodily harm one might assume could be one of indifference. The success of the operation seems to have been a more important idea than death or injury.

This idea of staying alive as just part of the job can be found in a text excerpt that Bob included from the first Loggers Tribute. Rob Sutter, a gyppo logger from North Bend, had this to say about safety when he was telling some logging jokes: “When you’re working gyppo, and you had to run in to save your job, you had to run out to save your

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190 This sentiment of tremendous loss doesn’t apply only to the Snoqualmie Valley, but to all of the Native American tribes throughout North America.
The idea of being alive, however, was also one that could be treated with humor. Another joke Rob Sutter had to offer was a re-working from the 1970s of a song from the movie *Mary Poppins.* The second and fourth lines of the refrain show his appreciation for and desire to share his luck with others. Rob had also prefaced this with a short story about how the song came about, that about twenty-five years before he got his head stuck in the wrong place, and was thinking about the incident, and so he wrote a song about it.

However, a logger might tell his wife how he really feels, such as in “Haunted Voices,” the third song on Bob’s album. This song presents images from the different peoples who have passed through the North Bend area, from the 1800s to the end of the twentieth century. In the fourth through sixth lines of the first verse, we hear not only how a logger might lament about bodily harm to his wife.

Tom was a hooker, hooked the trees, broke his knees,
My life is over, that’s what he told her,
My life is over, that’s what he told her.

We also hear about the logger’s reverence for his job. Logging was usually the only occupation a logger knew. For the most part, the men who worked in this industry started when they were young, even in the teenage years, especially if family members or friends were already working in the industry. Both the concept and the act of having to find another type of job and not work in the woods were difficult for those who loved their jobs. There are numerous stories about loggers who had been hurt in the woods, decided to quit, but hen sooner or later went back to work in the woods.

**So, what about Bob?**

The music of Bob Antone presents issues valid to both the old-time and contemporary logger of the northwestern woods. He grew up with the people and the stories from the earlier days of logging in the Pacific Northwest. His being younger has

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191 Inserted between third and fourth songs on the album “Timberbeast Town.”
192 The full text to the song is on pages 65 and 66. Line two: “a logger that’s living is lucky as can be.”
Line four: “good luck will rub off if I shake hands with you.”
193 Bob inserted the refrain between the fourth and fifth songs on the album “Timberbeast Town.” The full text of the refrain can be found on an earlier page of this chapter.
also helped make him more sensitive to the concerns of a younger population, especially
that from the gradually encroaching urban and suburban areas. As a result, his music has
become a product that is more representative of a more diverse population. At the same
time, his style is unique for the area, mixing elements from an array of traditions: German
and Irish fiddling, “old-time” American fiddling, country and western styles, popular folk
and contemporary artists, whatever he has encountered in the greater Snoqualmie-North
Bend area, and the Native American traditions. One of the other subjects in this study,
Eathyl Rotschy from Amboy, Washington, met Bob down at the Mt. St. Helen’s Visitor
Center in Castle Rock, Washington, at the end of May, 2006. Eathyl prefers Scotch and
Irish music, but he had this to say about Bob’s music:

Bob’s music is an interesting system, I couldn’t tell where it came from, but it
was good! He played “Ave Maria” on an old rusty saw, and he’s turning out
some damn fine music, never heard that violin style before and haven’t since.195

The influences of Bob’s music are integrated enough that it is difficult to tell exactly
what they are, or even what all is there.

This wealth of influences has enabled Bob to create his own sound, which he has
called “Back-Rattle-Beat.” This idea is not just informed by styles Bob encountered
while growing up, but also by the area he grew up in and the characteristics that define
that area. These include Native Americans as the original inhabitants and their culture,
logging industry and all of the issues dealt with there, the mountains and forests, and later
encroaching suburbia on the little logging town. All of this comes to life on the album he
produced in 2002, Timberbeast Town, after the first of two Logger Tributes. These
events marked “the end of an era” for the Snoqualmie-North Bend area, in which logging
had been the principle industry for almost one hundred years. Weyerhaeuser’s
announcement prompted much reaction in the community, most of it negative due to the
loss of jobs. Bob took it upon himself to organize these events and put an album together
to honor this era and everything associated with the industry: the jobs, the dangers, the
landscape, the people, the workers, the families, and the culture.

194 As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Bob says the author of this song is unknown, so it is probable that
Rob just borrowed it for this use.
195 Eathyl Rotschy, interview with author, 12 August 2006. The discussion was about a recent
collaborative performance among various folk musicians at the Mt. St. Helens Visitor Center in Castle
CHAPTER 5

LOGGING SONGS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

My initial research in logging songs was somewhat frustrating, due to the lack of literature, as mentioned in the introduction. Several times the question arose why there was so little documentation, especially in the Pacific Northwest. The obvious answer that came to my mind was that it was an oral tradition, not a written one. At the same time, I had to wonder why loggers of the Pacific Northwest appeared to be excluded from the seemingly elite group of other manual laborers – cowboys, miners, farmers, cotton pickers, iron workers, brushworkers, prison chain gangs, and more. In an article in the *Cowlitz Historical Quarterly*, Jim LeMonds wondered the same thing. To quote Robert Walls, LeMonds said that “logger poetry and music have not reached the level of ‘romance’ necessary for acceptance in our national mythology.”[^196] I can hardly think of how some of the above occupations might be more “romantic” than logging, except for maybe cowboys, but I think I only perceive that as such because of how the media has exploited cowboy culture throughout the twentieth century. Even in my own household, I watched cowboy movies and television shows with my father, and listened to him telling stories about some of his favorite shows when he was growing up, such as “Bonanza.” I must admit that even I have been a fan of the country singer Marty Robbins and many others from his time.

Neither LeMonds nor Walls clearly define what would make logger poetry and music “romantic,” so I had to try and figure that out on my own. In a discussion with several professors, we ended up doing the opposite, finding reasons why logger poetry and song might not be as “romantic” as that of cowboys. The answer seemed to be in what each of their lives were like, and how they might or might not appeal to a broader public. The answer to how they lived their lives ultimately turned to look at the land in which loggers and cowboys roamed. The landscapes of the two are very different. The landscape of the cowboy is the plains, which is very flat and empty. This land was ready
to be used for anything useful for people. It was ready for new roads, buildings, houses, businesses, barns, fields for cattle, horses, sheep, other animals, and farming. In the fascination of the unexplored West, the plains provided instant opportunity for easy growth, development, and a new life.

The landscape of the logger, however, is not at all like the plains. The logger’s playground, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, is difficult to get around in. The land is steep and rugged, and there are forests thick with very large trees that must be cleared first! That would be a lot of work, which would be very dangerous and exhausting. Given the lazy nature of humans, who would want to do that? What is so “romantic” about exhausting one’s self like that and possibly being killed by a falling log or stepping into a hidden crevasse? And, furthermore, there are large vicious animals in the forests – brown and black bears, wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, moose, elk, raccoons, and even the legendary Sasquatch. Even more scary is the idea that these dangerous animals can hide behind the trees and bushes in the forest too, stalking innocent white men exploring unknown territory, whereas on the plains one can see what is coming for miles in any direction, except for maybe a harmless prairie dog.

It is difficult to imagine how the logger’s world would not sound appealing to one looking for adventure, especially with the prospect of bravery, survival, and accomplishment, that such a feat could not be “romanticized.” Had reality television such as “Survivor” been around in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bunkhouse ballads could have knocked cowboy songs off the charts! There were other factors too which served to belittle and degrade the logging industry, such as the International Workers of the World, also known as the Wobblies, who aimed to better the conditions of all types of blue-collar workers. The song “Fifty Thousand Lumberjacks” highlights poor conditions and potential solutions in logging camps, such as decent meals, bedding, and work hours. Timber companies responded by employing their own public relations specialists, some of whom wrote Bunyanesque works in attempt to boost the lumberjack image, such as James Stevens’ “The Frozen Logger,” a song about an

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196 Jim LeMonds, “Logger Poetry and Music: The Language of a Vanishing Culture,” *Cowlitz Historical Quarterly* 48/1 (March 2006), 32. LeMonds did not provide bibliographic information on his source. Rickaby’s book was not available for study.

197 In addition to numerous reports of Bigfoot sightings in the Cascade Mountain Range and beyond, there is also a legend that a lady Bigfoot once captured a logger and kept him as her love slave.
super-logger who stirred his coffee with his thumb and was not deterred by sub-zero temperatures. Confusing the public even more, came a publication in 1926 by Franz Rickaby, *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy*, which said that “logging was a destructive occupation” and that “loggers had not been a constructive factor in our [the United States] national development.”

While Buzz died in 1983 and did not live to see this study, his family, Hank, and Bob have been very excited about their work being documented by a student at a major state university. Many of them have been looking for various outlets throughout their lives in which they might “show their stuff,” and being included in this project is absolutely thrilling to them. They have informed their friends, family, and coworkers about what they and I have been doing, which has generated more interest in the project and this genre of music. In addition, the project has stimulated the creation of a stronger network among “singing loggers” in the Pacific Northwest. The subjects are quite enthusiastic about their involvement and the outcome of the project. They had heard of each other on some level or had met and worked some each other, mostly through the efforts of representatives from the Washington State Arts Commission and the Smithsonian Institution, particularly Dr. Jens Lund of Olympia, Washington. Now they have all met and been exposed to each others works, and have initiated their own gatherings where they can share their works with each other and audiences throughout the region. They are planning on opening their performances to other “singing loggers” and poets in the region as well. In whole, the project has benefited and will continue to benefit my subjects and their peers in their work.

This thesis has covered only a handful of artists who have sung about logging in the Pacific Northwest. There are many more artists as well, whose works I have encountered, from the late 1800s to today, 2007. The three main figures in this study, Buzz Martin, Hank Nelson, and Bob Antone, have all had some kind of musical training, mostly from immediate family members, parents and grandparents. They all have produced recordings, starting in the early 1970s with Buzz, and continuing since the 1990s to today, 2007, with both Hank and Bob. All three figures have collaborated with close associates on these recordings in some way. They have also participated in

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198 LeMonds, “Logger Poetry and Music,” 37.Italicized text was a quote from Rickaby. Again, no further bibliographic information was provided.
programs sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. Most of the information was obtained from personal interviews, either with the artists themselves, or with people who knew them well, relatives, friends, and colleagues, and whatever personal materials they could provide to me.

All three artists have collaborated in some way, and there are plans to collaborate more fully in the near future. Hank met Buzz several times in the 1970s to have his songs critiqued. Buzz’s son Steve participated and sang several of Buzz’s songs in the second of Bob’s Logger Tributes in 2003. Steve also took time to teach Bob some of Buzz’s songs while up in the Snoqualmie-North Bend area. Hank’s good friend Virgil Wallace, a retired logger who has written six books of poetry and verse, also read three of his poems at the first Tribute in 2003. Bob first met both Hank and his good friend Eathyl Rotschy at the Mt. St. Helens Visitor Center in Castle Rock, Washington, at the end of May, 2006. The occasion was the program, “Inspirations from the Forests,” celebrating folklore from the Northwest woods. It lasted two days, and on the second evening, May 28, Bob joined the performance, playing guitar, fiddle, saw, and the native drum. Hank sang and played his guitar, and Eathyl read some of his poetry and told stories. Other artists performed as well, including Wilho Saari, a Finn kantele player, Ralph Bennett, a Haida wood carver, and others. The event was sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the Washington State Arts Commission.

These three artists have risen from varied backgrounds and influences, and so their music is different, and they have had unique opportunities along the way. Buzz was fortunate to have picked up a commercial recording contract and perform on the esteemed Johnny Cash Show at the Grand Opry in Nashville, Tennessee. Performing at Ryman Auditorium was something he had dreamed about as a young boy in the Woosley household, where his older sister Nellie encouraged him to sing and his brother-in-law Bill taught him how to play guitar. As a young logger, Buzz performed at many local shows, building up a fan base. His growing fame eventually allowed him to produce six full-length record albums, and perform other well-known venues such as Disneyland in 1973 and the Smithsonian Institution in 1976. His music addressed just about everything a logger had to deal with; he tackled issues both good and bad with a great deal of humor and pride, tools necessary for a logger’s survival in a challenging and dangerous industry. His songs dealt with issues such as bad luck, being tired and worn out, fire danger,
bureaucracy, unemployment, rugged terrain, the weather, getting hurt, and pride in being a logger. Being a logger himself, having worked every job in the woods, and knowing so much about the industry, Buzz’s credibility attracted audiences, especially other loggers. Interest in his music eventually waned, but picked back up in 1990s, starting with Dr. Jens Lund of the Washington State Folklife Council. Since then, Hank Nelson has included some of Buzz’s songs in his repertoire as a tribute to Buzz. Most importantly, Buzz’s son Steve has performed and recorded his father’s music as well, and he is planning to re-release all of Buzz’s albums in the future.

Hank has shared much of his music-making with his friends and family throughout the Pacific Northwest, and has based his music on his profound love and appreciation for the logging industry. Hank has been making music with his family since day one, influenced mostly by his Grandma Cooper, her West Virginia heritage, and faith in the Lord God. Memories of her contributed to three of the fourteen tracks from the album *Old Dogs, Old Cats, and Old Lumberjacks* (1995), and her faith in the Lord God provided subject material for six tracks. Other family members appear as subject material in his music as well, including his Uncle Fred and Hank’s biological father, Chet. Hank completed most of the work on his albums with the help of friends and family, as co-producers, band members, or text editors. The album *Tall Timber, Volume I* (1998), included three compositions which were collaborations with other poets. This was important to Hank, in effort to keep the heritage alive, as loggers have been so important to the development of the Pacific Northwest.

Hank’s love for logging began when he was a young teenager, when his Uncle Fred took Hank to the logging camps around Coos Bay, Oregon. There Hank met a variety of characters, absolutely loved the experience, and continued on as an adult. He worked in a world of constant danger and adventure from day one, was quick to learn, and by age fourteen, he was setting choker cables around fallen logs. Since then he has worked various jobs in the woods throughout most of the Pacific Northwest. Hank brings out his passion for logging, its culture, history, and challenges in his poetry, song, and stories. A self-proclaimed “tall timber troubadour,” Hank writes and performs songs and poetry about working in the woods, primarily for the purpose of sharing it with others and entertaining them. In addition, Hank has a happy-go-lucky attitude in all of his works, which is part of his personality as an individual. His respect and appreciation for
everything in his life comes from his experience growing up. He feels very fortunate to have lived a successful life as a logger, and more recently as a performer of logger lore, alongside some of the best known logger yarn-spinners and songsters, and at some of the largest festivals in the United States.

Bob Antone, from North Bend, Washington, is different from the other two, Buzz and Hank, in that he is so much younger, has not really been a professional logger, and he incorporates an entirely different cultural element than just the white man – that of the Native American, the original human logger in the Pacific Northwest. Hank has had exposure to the Native American culture in that his step-father is half Klamath Indian, but the Native American tradition has not played out in his music, certainly not to the degree that it has in Bob’s music. Bob’s participation in the local Native American traditions in the Puget Sound area has contributed to his own musical style called “back-rattle-beat.” Growing up in a logging town in which his family has participated, and learning the folk fiddling and singing traditions from both sides of his family have also informed his northwestern style. “Back-rattle-beat” comes alive in the Loggers Tributes near Snoqualmie, Washington, memorial performances that followed the closing of the Weyerhaeuser mill in that town, and on the album that followed the first Tribute, \textit{Timberbeast Town} (2002). As a result, his music has become a product that is more representative of a more diverse population, both old-time and contemporary.

Bob is also unique because much of his content is different. He does not write directly about working in the woods. Most of his own texts are somewhat peripheral and on the fringe. Actual logging processes and some of the things that loggers do are merely fragments of the entire texts of his songs. The album \textit{Timberbeast Town} is more about North Bend and Snoqualmie as changing towns than logging. However, the metaphors in his songs do refer to the logging industry’s presence and culture in the area. The area’s history includes the Native Americans as the original inhabitants, the landscape of mountains and forests, and the logging industry’s presence, culture, and issues. One is also exposed to more contemporary issues that the greater Snoqualmie-North Bend area has had to face with the decline of the logging industry and encroaching suburbia on the little logging towns. The closing of the Snoqualmie mill marked “the end of an era” for the Snoqualmie-North Bend area, in which logging had been the principle industry for almost one hundred years.
What these three artists have in common is that they are all in some way some kind of walking tribute to loggers. Both Buzz and Hank celebrate loggers and their own lives as loggers with humor. Buzz produced six albums full of story-telling songs, both good and bad. The bad stories are balanced with a good dose of humor to lighten up the situation, such as in “Monday Morning Again” or “Fire Danger.” Pride and nostalgia play a significant part in his songs, like “Strong Winds and Widow Makers” and “Loggers Annual Party.” Overall, whether good our bad, Buzz’s stories shed a positive light on loggers. As a tall timber troubadour, Hank puts his passion for the logging industry into work in all his songs by speaking highly of the profession, the landscape, his colleagues, and the memories, particularly “Smile High Canyon.” In dealing with negative issues, Hank uses nostalgia for the good times associated with the subject to deal with negative issues, such as his Uncle Fred’s death in “The Old Bunk House.” While writing his songs much later than Buzz, Hank was also very aware of the change in the industry, as well as the impact of modernity on the lumberjack’s lifestyle, as discussed in the song “Urban Sourdough.” Hank’s position on this idea lies somewhere between that of Buzz and Bob. Bob took the idea of encroaching modernity and the industry’s decline, and literally ran with it, incorporating these issues in his texts.

In April 2002, Bob organized the first of two programs dedicated to the loggers and workers of the recently closed Weyerhaeuser Mill in Snoqualmie, Washington. The same year he released the album *Timberbeast Town*, featuring songs he and his brother Mike performed at the tribute and excerpts from the program in between tracks. The album reflects a deep sense of loss in the community, not just from the closing of the Snoqualmie Mill, but the general decline in the logging industry, and influence of urban sprawl coming from Seattle and Bellevue. The second verse of “Your Mean Old Man” laments on this state. The first two lines highlight some of the new “improvements” that come with development. The next three lines are a metaphor for the impact of urbanites on the logger and his industry.

We got convenience and the Starbucks bean,
We’ve got a tavern that’s sporty and clean;
They took the beast that lived out in the woods,
They took him to the trash – and burned him where he stood,
Took him to the trash – and burned him where he stood.

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In some sense, the progression of these three artists symbolizes the decline of the logging industry and its culture, and the corresponding sentiments in the Pacific Northwest among those involved or sympathetic with the logging industry. In 1938, Stewart Hall Holbrook had already recognized the industry’s future decline and the impact it would have on the lumberjack.

And now, although probably not one of them realized it, the loggers were in their last stronghold, their backs to the sea. There was no hump to go over from here. Civilization had caught up with them at last and civilization would lay the true species of logger lower than any stump they ever cut.200

The lumberjacks of Holbrook’s time had already been bullwhacking the woods of the Pacific Northwest since the mid-1800s, more than half a century. With the speedy rate at which the forests grew back, there would always be good timber to cut, but since the lumberjacks were a restless breed, they might eventually look to go elsewhere, just as they did when they were back east. Holbrook says the thought of going back east never crossed their mind, for civilization had already taken over the lands cut there and they did not want to take part in any of that.201 It was bad enough they had already become somewhat civilized by things like steam-driven machinery, automobiles, perhaps a little electricity, and the other human species known as wives and children.

Holbrook indicates that change was already in the works, and the loggers of the old days were changing as well. Half a century later, with the logging industry still thriving, change comes again. The difference in this later instance, however, is not so much about the loggers looking for somewhere else to go or having run out of trees to fall, but rather the industry just being forced to decrease operations by various factors such as change in the world market, and environmental issues and regulations. Consequently, the logging culture has changed, as it did in Holbrook’s time, not only because of jobs lost, but because of the encroachment of the surrounding culture and its modernity, now far more advanced than before. As a result, the logging songs end up being cultural artifacts, a way to hang on to the old ways of life.

The pride and unrelenting humor in Buzz’s songs came about when the industry was still booming in the 1970s, when the Pacific Northwest still dominated lumber markets around the western hemisphere. Hank recalls the heyday of the industry but

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indicates some change, which took place in his own life when he left Oregon and moved up to Alaska permanently by the 1980s searching for more work in the woods. Also with this change came his sense of obligation to keep the heritage alive. Bob represents the end of the tradition, by acknowledging the presence of significant change in the industry and the seeming death of a logging town. Like Hank, Bob also is also interested in keeping alive the old culture, but he is also interested in honoring the culture that is being threatened by encroaching civilization. The common purpose of these logging songs created by Buzz, Hank, and Bob is not just to entertain but to share remnants of their culture. Using humor and sentiment, their songs exhibit a great deal of pride, passion, and nostalgia for the ways of what is quickly becoming the past of the Pacific Northwest.

APPENDIX A: Brief Glossary of Logging Terms

Italicized words in definitions indicate other glossary terms. Definitions were compiled from my own understanding, personal correspondence from the subjects, and Stewart Hall Holbrook’s *Holy Old Mackinaw* (1938).

Bark angel: Guardian angel.
Brindle stiff: One who carries his blankets with him; also spelled “bindle stiff.”
Bucker: One who cuts fallen logs into sections.
Bull buck: Boss of the tree fallers.
Camp bard: Story teller, poet, balladeer.
Camp inspector: One who works for a short time at a camp; see *tramp logger*.
Candy side: A team in *high-lead logging* with the best equipment; the other is *haywire*.
Cant-hook: Tool used to wrestle logs into place.
Cat: Diesel-powered machine that moves logs and debris around; short for “Caterpillar,”
the name of an important company that makes them.
Cat-skinner: Driver of a tractor.
Caulk boots: Boots with spikes in the soles for traction; pronounced like “cork” boots.
Choker setter: One who sets chokers or cables around logs for yarding.
Crummy: A bus that transports loggers to and from the work site each day from town;
usually characterized as old and beat-up and sometimes breaks down on cliffs.
Cutter: One who uses a chainsaw to cut into a tree.
Devil’s Club: a large weed that grows in forests with stinging nettles all over the stems
and leaf undersides.
Donkey puncher: One who operates a *steam donkey*.
Gyppo logger: An independent contractor; also spelled “gypo.”
Haywire: Anything that is not as you would like it.
High climber: One who climbs up to cut off the top of the; this job requires special skills,
not just climbing, but holding on to the tree after the top falls as the tree sways
back and forth from the stress.
High-lead logging: Uses a standard two-drum yarder for uphill and downhill logging.
Hook-tender: Boss of the logging crew.
Landing: Where logs are assembled for loading or dumping into the river.
MAC: A company that builds trucks for various industrial purposes.
Peavey: Tool with spiked point and a swiveled hook for turning logs.
Pike pole: Long pole with a spiked tip for maneuvering logs.
Rigging slinger: The hook tender’s right hand man, who guides the choker setters.
River hog: River driver.
School marm: Tree with two separate trunks of equal size part way up the tree.
Skid road: A road over which oxen or horses pulled logs.
Skidder: Yarding and loading engine with a steel tower instead of a spar tree.
Snoose: Chewing tobacco; also known as “Copenhagen” (now a popular brand name),
   “Scandihoovin dynamite,” or “Swede brain food.”
Spar tree: A tall tree that has been limbed and topped, and set with cables and pulleys to
   pull logs over great distances to the landing; used in high-lead logging.
Splash dam: Dam built to hold back water used to drive logs down the river.
Steam donkey: Sled-mounted machine that pulls fallen logs out of the woods.
Stihl: Important company that makes chainsaws and other logging equipment.
Swamp: Damp ground in which timber grew thicker and faster than higher ground.
Swedish fiddle: Another name for the cross-cut saw.
Timber beast: One who works in the woods, usually a logger or a forester.
Timber cruiser: One who makes estimates on a potential harvest.
Tramp logger: Moves frequently between logging jobs; also known as a camp inspector.
Whistle-punk: Signalman on a high-lead logging crew; usually a young man.
Widow-maker: Tree or branch blown down by the wind.
Yarder engineer: One who assembles the logs.
APPENDIX B: Human Subjects Review Board Approval Letter

Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 12/14/2005

To: Leslie Johnson
FSU Box 60712
Tallahassee, FL 32313

Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Logging Songs of the Pacific Northwest

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 12/13/2006 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Charles Brewer
HSC No. 2005.878
APPENDIX C: Human Subjects Review Board Renewal Letter

Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8633  FAX (850) 644-4392

REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/2/2006

To: Leslie Johnson
25631 SE 380th St.
Enumclaw, WA 98022

Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research:
Logging Songs of the Pacific Northwest

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 10/31/2007 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: Charles Brewer
HSC No. 2006.0974-R
Florida State University – College of Music

Human Subjects Committee
Informed Consent Form (for Adults)
Logging Songs of the Pacific Northwest

I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT:

1. Leslie Johnson, who is a graduate musicology student, has requested my participation in a research study at this institution.

2. The purpose of the research is to document an oral tradition of the logging industry of the Pacific Northwest. Approximately ten people will be interviewed. This subject will be included because he or she is familiar with this tradition.

3. My participation will involve answering questions about logging songs and telling what I know about it. Duration of participation is expected to be about an hour or two long, either in person, via telephone, email, or letter. I may provide materials to help the research process. Examples include but are not limited to: sheet music, books, articles, photographs, and other documents, as well as audio recordings and video recordings.

4. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts if I agree to participate in this study.

5. Although there may be no direct benefits to me, the possible benefits of my participation in the research are receiving a copy of the written thesis when complete. I do not expect the researcher to provide drafts of the thesis to me for approval.

6. The results of this research study may be published but my name or identity will not be revealed if I wish to remain anonymous. If I do not wish to be anonymous, my name will be included in this tradition’s history. The researcher will do the following to maintain confidentiality of my records, the researcher Leslie Johnson will make up a pseudonym to use in place of my real name. The information will be kept in the researcher’s possession, and only the researcher will have access to it. The master list containing identifying information will be destroyed once all subjects desiring confidentiality have been assigned pseudonyms. Any items I give or lend to
the researcher will be kept in a locked box for further research, stored in her closet, wherever the researcher is residing at the time. If I desire these items to be destroyed, this is the date they shall be destroyed by: (month/day/year)___________________.

7. There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort associated with this research project.

8. I will not be paid for my participation.

9. Any questions I have concerning the research study or my participation in it, before or after my consent, will be answered by Leslie Johnson, FSU Box 60712, Tallahassee FL 32313, phone number 850-853-1716, and e-mail address "LAJ03@FSU.EDU. The name of the responsible thesis advisor is Dr. Charles E. Brewer, and his telephone number is 850-644-6403.

10. If I have questions about my rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if I feel I have been placed at risk, I can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, at (850) 644-8633.

I have read the above informed consent form.

I (select one) ___ do ___ do not wish to remain confidential.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to me.

Subject's Signature ______________________ (Date) ____________

Researcher's Signature ___________________ (Date) ____________

Informed Consent Form, Page 2
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Martin, Sandra. Interview by author, 6 January 2006, Woodland, WA. Tape recording, transcript in the hand of the author.

Martin, Sandra. Interview by author, 9 September 2006, Camp 18, Elsie, OR. Transcript in the hand of the author.

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Leslie A. Johnson grew up in a logging town called Enumclaw, in the foothills of the west side of the Cascade Mountain Range, about forty miles southeast of Seattle, Washington. In this town she watched her dad work as a forester and later a forest resource manager for Plum Creek Timber Company, a spin-off from Burlington Northern Resources. Her dad’s family has also been involved in the logging industry since 1935, when her great-grandpa brought his family to Washington from Arkansas, looking for work and a better way of life. Leslie received her Bachelor of Musical Arts at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, in 2000. There she studied harpsichord with Kathryn Habedank, piano with Dr. Calvin Knapp and the late Dr. James Holloway, and played bassoon and contrabassoon in the University Symphony Orchestra and Wind Ensemble. She minored in Spanish and Teaching English as a Second Language. At the Florida State University, Leslie participated in various early music ensembles under the direction of Dr. Jeffery T. Kite-Powell, studied harpsichord with Dr. Karyl Louwenaar-Lueck, and studied viola da gamba with Pamela Andrews. She will receive her Master of Music in Musicology in 2007.