

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

TW: Okay, well I'm just going to start off by saying this is Tracie Wilson. I'm interviewing Lyle Mayfield. I'm in Champaign-Urbana and he's in Greenville, Illinois. And, uh, we're talking about the Campus Folksong Club and this is part of the Oral History Project about the club. And it is July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. So my first question is could you tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from and your interests?

LM: Well I was born out here in Greenville. My parents separated and divorced when I was four, and my mother was the one that gave me most of my folk music. I grew up here and went off to the Navy when I was 17, got interested in the printing trade, worked overseas as a newspaper writer and got interested in the printing trade, came back to Greenville and became an apprentice printer, moved around quite a bit and finally wound up in Champaign as day foreman for the Daily Illini for the University of Illinois and it was there that I by chance meeting got to know Dr. Archie Green and became interested in the Folksong Club and it was then that I found out that I was a folk singer and not a hillbilly musician. That sums it up pretty well. I spent most of my adult life as a printer but about 1969 I started writing a weekly column in the paper, it was an interest I always had and I've developed into a writer, and I still write that column for the local newspaper.

TW: Oh, really? I read some of those pieces in a book that Fritz Plous lent to me.

LM: The Old Trees Die the Hardest?

TW: Right, right.

LM: That's my second book. I put the first one out, uh, 1970's. That one called the— Oh, I can't remember the name of my own book. Oh, "Whatever Happened to Red Haw Jelly?" But that column was in the second book, I think.

TW: Oh, interesting.

LM: Do you have another question?

TW: Yeah, so, well, my next question is how did you become interested in traditional music? Through your mother, you said?

LM: Yeah, when we— my first memories of music— we lived— for a brief time we lived South of Greenville in a rural community called Wisetown. And we had an old Edison wind-up phonograph and I remember at the age of about three and a half or four I learned how to crawl up on a chair and crank— operate that phonograph. And the first music that I learned— that I heard and learned— the first songs that I learned to sing were songs of Vernon Dalhart. And later on— and my mother sang a lot of the old traditional mid-Victorian parlor ballads. And I— but that is not my only interest in music, it was my first interest was the old traditional ballads and tear-jerkers. But during World War Two as a teenager I also became very interested in what we call pop music, the big

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

band music, so I have a pretty wide scope in music. I like everything from what I call raw hillbilly to Montevani. And most of my traditional interest in music was created by my mother and then my peers. I have a lot of cousins in this area and we all sang the old ballads. Of course, I remember when Jimmie Rodgers, the old blue yodeler was quite popular. And some of the first recordings that I listened to when I was either 7 or 8 or 9, 10 years old, in that area, were from, uh, we lived close to a black family and this “old black grandma” we called her had an old phonograph. It was a cylinder-type phonograph, and she had recordings of Jimmie Rodgers the old blue yodeler. And so I became interested in what we call “cowboy music” or “hillbilly music.” And then when I returned from the service in 1948 I became quite interested in Eddie Arnold, he was my first love in country music. So I’d evolved, into a—I have a large spectrum, as I said, of music that I like. I like everything from Uncle Dave into Montevani.

TW: I see. So, you touched on this but maybe you could say a little more about how you became involved in the Campus Folksong Club.

LM: Aw that’s one of the highlights of my life. I was day foreman at the Daily Illini there at the University. I was working in the print shop there as a printer, I was a foreman, a type compositor, and Archie Green came into the shop one day and was gonna have us print some posters for us. There was an artist coming to the to Greg Hall were gonna perform there and do a concert for the CFC, and I didn’t know anything about the CFC. I’d heard the name around campus but didn’t know anything about it. And I started questioning him about this fellow, about this music, and he sensed something, I guess, that I had more than just a passing interest in music. And he asked me, he said “do you play— do you sing and play?” And I said “Yeah, I play the guitar and several other instruments.” And he said “what kind of music do you play?” And I said “Well, I just do the old-timey stuff and some swing music, some big band music.” And he said “well, why don’t you come down to Greg Hall next Thursday and do a couple numbers for us at the Folksong Club?” And my answer was— kind brought a grin to his face— I said “you don’t want an old hillbilly man like me on folk music.” And he said “Well, what do you think folk music is?” And I said “Well, I guess Burl Ives and the Kingston Trio and stuff like that.” And he said “Well, what are some of the songs you sing?” And I started naming some of the old tunes that my mother had taught me, like “Two Babes in the Woods.” “Mary of the Wild Moor,” and “Black Sheep” and “Give My Love to Nelly Jack” and he looked at me and said “Oh, you mean the Child ballads?” And showing my total ignorance to what he was talking about I said “Oh yeah, I learned them when I was a kid.” He laughed, he kinda grinned, he didn’t embarrass me, and then he explained about this fellow Child that came over here from Britain and collected somewhere around 500 British ballads that had been transported orally to this country. And so he said “Come down next Thursday night and we’ll put you on the program.” Well, I didn’t— this was the sixties. It was ’62, and that was the height of the hippie generation, and I was afraid of what I would run into. And so I told my wife— we were performing together as a duo at the time, but I said I’m not going to take you down there, we might run into a bunch of wild-eyed hippies. I’ll go by myself and see what I run into. And so I went down and I

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

did three numbers and got a tremendous reception, and I got to know Judy McCulloh, Doyle Moore and Fritz Plous and several other people. And I had just a wonderful time and so I— they invited us to come back the next week, and we did. And from there it just took off and in late 1963 they asked us to—or early 1963 they asked Doris and I if we would perform on that record “The Green Fields of Illinois.” And from that— from that chance meeting with Dr. Green, it just opened up a whole new chapter in our lives. As a matter of fact, I call it a major turning point in our lives musically and otherwise because we made so many wonderful friends, got to know so many nice people and had so much fun. We performed on that record with the five other people that were on there, and that was a stepping stone to get to meeting Jimmy Driftwood in Arkansas, and was a stepping stone to us performing at the Bicentennial Folk Festival in 1976. And we got to know Ralph Rinzler at the Smithsonian, and we got to perform at the Old Town School of Folk music in the seventies. And it was just— it opened a big door. I could go on forever about how good that chance meeting with Archie Green was.

TW: Well you mentioned when he first invited you to come perform you were a little concerned about you know the people you might encounter? Can you just tell me what your first impressions of the club were as best as you remember?

J: Do you want me to describe to you what happened the first night? That might be interesting.

TW: Sure.

J: Well, when I went to— I asked Dr. Green— or, Archie, I don't call him Dr. Green, he's Archie. I said “Archie what should I do?” and he said “Well, if you could start from the old songs, that'd be good.” And I said “Well, I have a song that I've written about an instance in our community about a girl that was found frozen to death back in the early 1900's.” I said “Would it be all right to do that?” and he said “Yeah” and he explained that it is an original song, but it's about an actual event in history and it's written in the folk tradition. And I said “I'm also a big fan of Jimmy Driftwood.” I'd become a fan of Jimmy Driftwood after the “Battle of New Orleans”. He said “Well, It'd be okay to do one of Jimmy's old songs too, if you want to do it.” So I opened the program with this song of Jimmy's called “The Slacky Rope Hangman” off of one of his early records, and I got a nice polite applause. And then I said “Now I'd like to do one that I wrote. It's about an actual event in our community, And its based on folk-type music.” So I did this “Ballad of Melissa” and I got a nice polite applause. And then I said “I'd like to do the oldest song I know, it's a”— Judy McCulloh told me later it was about 400 years old. It was called “Two Babes in the Woods.” It's a very brief song, only three short verses. And the audience got kinda quiet. I did this very simple the way my mother taught it to me, it just was a straight three chords on the guitar, and after I finished I was— total silence. And I thought “Boy, have I laid an egg.” And the only way I can describe it— it seemed like two or three minutes, but it probably was only a few seconds, and the only way I can describe it was all hell broke lose. Those kids— there were about 500 kids in

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

that group, and they just went crazy over that one— they'd never heard that song before, I guess, and never heard anybody— and I went backstage and I had tears in my eyes, I was so taken by it. And I went backstage and Judy McCulloh came rushing out of the wings, and Doyle Moore and several others that I later on became very close friends, and Judy says— and I said “I don't understand what happened. And Judy said “Well, Lyle, for the first time in these kids' lives, they've heard a real folk singer.” And I was just overwhelmed by it, it was— the kids— it was kind of an unusual thing happened. People started coming up to me and said “we're gonna have— we usually get together after the folk things and we have a jam session somewhere.” And I said “Go out to my house!” Now this is like ten or 11 o'clock at night, and before I got home 23 people had showed up at my house, and Doris didn't know what was going on. But Nate Bray, with the Bray Brothers, you've heard of them?

TW: Yeah.

LM: Nate introduced himself and said “Lyle sent us.” And when I got home there were 23 people sitting in my living room and we played music 'til three o'clock in the morning.

TW: Oh, my.

LM: And we— I can't say how beautiful the friendships that we established up there— it was a very— that time in Champaign, those two years that we spent with those kids at the University have a very special place in our heart. In fact, we still have contact with several of them. Preston Martin and his wife live in Plano, Texas. He was part of the club. Fritz Plous, and John and Judy Munday from over in West Virginia— over in Chesapeake Bay, West Virginia. And just dozens of people. It's opened up a whole chapter of our lives. It's very special to Doris and I. Before we go too much further, Tracie, as I told you I am a writer now.

TW: Right.

LM: And I've written— excuse me. I've written quite a bit about the Campus Folksong Club and our association with all these people, and if you would give me your mailing address, I would like to send you some of the stuff I've written up 'til now.

TW: Oh, okay. Great. Yeah, that would be wonderful. Okay, so my next question kind of follows on this theme. What role do you think that the club played at U of I and in Central Illinois?

LM: Say that slowly again, I didn't catch all of it.

TW: What role do you think the club played, the CFC played at the U of I and in Central Illinois?

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

LM: Oh, very important. Very important. They awakened a lot of people and made a lot of people, like Doris and I, aware of what a treasure we had in our music. And I think it's one of the nicest things the students of the University ever did for Central Illinois. For example, I had a friend here in Bond County that was an old time fiddler— Stella Elam, she's on the record with us. And Stella and I, we were like mother and son. She was very— I called her my musical mother. And she didn't have any— she wasn't aware of the value of her music. She's a wonderful, sweet, dear old lady and she never attended school a day in her life. She was— had a childhood illness, her father wouldn't let her attend school but she became one of the finest old time fiddlers you could ever wanna hear. And it awakened her and made her aware of the value of her music and I think that more than anything else it made Doris and I aware of the value of our folk music, because after that— after our experience up at the University of Illinois, we became more involved in the preservation of folk music in Bond County when we came back here. And I got so particularly interested that I even went out and did some field recordings and I have about thirty hours of traditional music from people that I interviewed deposited over at the Indiana University.

TW: Wow. Well, great. I'm glad to hear that.

LM: I'm in the— approximately thirty hours I have over there. I've gone out and we even had a— we even started a folk festival down here in Greenville and had it for seven years. And one time we had 240 people in a group we organized called the Strings n' Things Club. And I think making people like Doris and I aware of what we had and of the value of it— I never thought of country music, or hillbilly music as I call it— I had never thought of it as any value, just something that people do for their own amusement.

TW: Right.

LM: But I— when we went to Washington in 1976 it really brought it home to Doris and I and our youngest son came with us, we performed up there for a week at the— we call it the Bicentennial Folk Festival. I think it went by another name, but well it was a bicentennial year and we represented Illinois folk music up there. And well it just made us aware of the value of it.

TW: Right. And I don't know if since you came from Greenville and you weren't originally from here— what do you think local people thought of the club?

LM: Oh, it was mixed. As I said it was a hippie time, and some of the kids sported long hair, and I ran— not a whole lot of it, but I ran into some resistance from people who— well, when I worked at the Daily Illini we had a writer, Dave Young. And Roger Ebert was our editor when I worked. I knew Roger personally. And this Dave Young was a city oriented type and he was always making fun of our music and he wrote a very derogatory article about being able to learn to play the guitar in five minutes and none of those songs

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

had any quality to them or anything, and I took offense to it. And I took umbrage with him and I wrote a responsive article and Roger Ebert put it in the paper for me.

TW: Hmm. So, do you know what year that was?

LM: It would have been about 1963. As a matter of fact, I probably have a copy of the story of it.

TW: Yeah, if you happen to have a copy and could send a copy that would be great.

LM: I'll tell you what—

TW: Or you could tell me where to find it, maybe.

LM: Well, it's in the Daily Illini.

TW: Right.

LM: If you have Daily Illini files or if you— are you at the university now?

TW: Yes, I am. So if I knew when you wrote it more or less, I could probably find it.

LM: Well it would be late '63. We moved there in October of '62 and left in May of '64.

TW: Okay.

LM: But the— Dave Young was the other writer's name, he went on to work in Chicago with Roger. But he wrote a very biting article. He was really making fun of our club and the foot stompin' music that we played and stuff and I took umbrage with him, I took offense at it and responded to him. And I've been writing since 1946— when I was in the Navy, I was Seabee in World War Two, and they sent me over seas and when I got overseas to Midway Island out of a group 85 of us that went over there, 81 of them were put in a power house running steam boilers, and I was one of the four lucky guys that got picked to do something else. And I wound up as the editor of the station newspaper. And I'd began writing, and I do know how to write. So when I worked at the Daily Illini and when Dave Young wrote that very derogatory article about our club I had the ability to respond intelligently. And Roger Ebert got a big kick out of running my article in response to Dave. And I think Dave went on to become a quality writer in Chicago, but he just had that big city boy attitude about our kind of music.

TW: Right, right.

LM: The thing that I had going in my favor, I feel, was that I also had an understanding or love of other types of music besides country and hillbilly and folk music, so I could

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

compare and see the quality of folk music. And I think the club— I think the people, for the most part, we were well received around Champaign. But I never got to know Champaign-Urbana that well. Two years doesn't teach you about all the people, but I know that our neighbors all— we were written up in the local paper, and I worked for the Champaign-Urbana Courier for awhile too, and I— for the most part I think the area responded well to the kids. And they were a nice bunch of people—it taught me that long hair doesn't say anything about a person's character.

TW: Okay.

LM: When I had teenager of my own I learned to live with long hair.

TW: So, do you remember what your friends and family thought of your involvement with the club?

LM: Oh, they were all proud of it. Doris is an accomplished musician, too. She plays the guitar and the autoharp. And her family is all musical, her father played the guitar. And my mother had passed away before we moved here so my mother never lived to see me achieve success with my music, but my family and Doris's family both were very proud of what we did, especially when we went to Washington and represented the state at that Bicentennial Folk Festival there. And actually two things have brought our— my family recognition in Greenville— quite frankly I grew up as one of the poor kids in the county on the wrong side of the tracks, and when I started playing music and got on the radio and did some radio work and also when I started writing my column, it gave me some recognition that I had never achieved before. And now we're— we've been referred to as the first family of music in Greenville which— all of our children play and sing, our oldest son passed away three years ago—

TW: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

LM: And he was an accomplished musician. Trouble was he played the kind of music I don't like- rock'n roll. And well, our youngest son has his own band, and my daughter married a classically trained musician. We have three grandchildren who all play music. So it really, as I said it was, that opened a whole chapter in life. It was the best part of our life after we became aware of what our folk music heritage really was. And I'm quite proud of— but truthfully I'm as much, or more proud of my writing as I am of my music, although music is a very important part of our lives. The fact that Doris and I, we played together for almost sixty years, and she's become my right arm in music. And about thirty or forty years ago we evolved into just a man and wife team rather than me just going out and playing with other bands. And she's gotten to be an accomplished autoharpist, an accomplished guitar player, an accomplished singer. She's a fine singer.

TW: Could you maybe just tell me a little bit more about Doris's background since she's not here to tell me?

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

LM: Doris is third generation German. Over just west of Greenville there's an area that was heavy German settlement in the 1800's and her grandfather— two of her grandparents and two of her great grandparents came directly here from overseas. And her father played music, played the guitar and the fiddle and mandolin, and he lived to be ninety-four.

TW: Wow.

LM: And she had four sisters and two brothers, there were seven in the family. And those kids were brought up singing and playing in church and box socials and events, and her father would play the guitar and he'd take his five daughters out. and her younger brother also who plays the guitar and the bass and sings. And she was raised with a heavy German influence. A lot of the early songs she did— she doesn't speak or read or write German, her father did, but she learned a lot of the old German songs that her father knew as a child, and he went to a bilingual school. He was a very fine musician and loved music, and they were brought up the same as I was. They were brought up on country music and the big band music of the forties. Her father loved swing music. He loved to listen to the hit parade on the old time radio. I know that's beyond your time, but you know what it was.

TW: Yeah, Right. So is Doris also from Greenville or is—

LM: No, she comes from north and west of here—

TW: Just west of there?

LM: About twenty or thirty miles called New Douglas. But she's from Bond County. We're generally from the same area of south-central Illinois, but she was raised more in a heavy German influence.

TW: Right. Interesting. And does she have other interests besides music that have been central?

LM: Well, I have a lot of interests. We both paint. Our house is full of paintings that Doris and I have done. And I'm a— I craft in wood a little bit, and Doris does crochet work, she makes— hand crochets things. And I do— about twelve years before I retired, the printing trade was changing, so I knew how to plumb and wire and carpenter so I— for twelve years I worked as Mr. Fix it doing odd jobs around town and gave up the printing trade. And we built our own place. We took an old five room house and turned it into a seven room house and remodeled it completely. We did all the work ourselves. We did all the plumbing, all the wiring, all the carpentry work ourselves. And I— my biggest interest right now is— I'm seventy-eight, and my biggest interest right now is writing. I still write the column for the newspaper, and that's really one of my first loves is writing.



Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

I'm just as proud of that as I am of my music. We've about retired from music. We're not taking any bookings anymore; we just sit around the house and play occasionally with our friends. And about three or four years ago I took on an apprentice— I build musical instruments. I build guitars and mandolins and while I was out in Champaign I invented an instrument called the guitalin.

TW: Oh, yeah. Somebody mentioned that to me.

LM: And then since I've been back in Greenville I've invented another one called a ginjo. I combined a guitar, a mandolin, a banjo into a ten string instrument. And about three or four years ago I took on an apprentice, a very— after our son died this man came in wanting to buy one of my instruments. And I told him "I do not have any to sell, I only have my two originals." I had made about a hundred or a hundred and fifty or something like that but I'd given them or sold them. So, Martin Smith came to me and said "Well I want one" and I said "Well, Marty the only way you're gonna get one is to help me build one." And I had six or seven of them out in my shop that I had started and not completed. And we built him one, and it turned out to be one of the best ones we had ever built and he took it to his church and used it. He was the song leader at his church and he took it and played it at his church. And he came back a week later and said "Let's build— let's finish the other six, I've got two more sold." And I made an agreement with him I said "Marty well you know my oldest son is gone now, he's dead. And my youngest son is not interested in building instruments and neither are any of my grandsons." I thought I'll make a deal with you. I said "If you'll let me teach you what I know about building these instruments, I will turn all my tools and all my jigs and rigs and all my knowledge, I'll write everything down I can. If you'll be my apprentice, I will turn the entire operation over to you as a gift." But he became like our son.

TW: That's great.

LM: And since then we've built something like thirty-five or forty instruments together.

TW: Wow.

LM: And now he's producing them on his own, and he's become quite knowledgeable. And he's learned to play five different instruments, and the last few times that Doris and I have gone out to perform, he's played with us, performed with us on stage. And he's from Arkansas; he knows the same old time songs that we do. And we've kind of adopted him. He and his wife are like our son and daughter-in-law.

TW: I'm glad to hear that you were able to pass on your knowledge, you know, that's great.

LM: Well, that's what I wanted him— and none of my descendents— all of my descendents are musical, but none of them really took an interest in building instruments,

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

and its something I've been doing for sixty years. And I wanted to pass it on to somebody, and Marty was a perfect person.

TW: That's great.

LM: And he's, well, he's become part of our family. And he's here with us at least once or twice every week, he just lives a few blocks away, and we're mom and dad to him.

TW: That's great.

LM: And he and his wife are both like our kids and it really makes me feel good that I was able to— it's a knowledge that I acquired over a long period of making mistakes and doing it and redoing it, you know how that goes.

TW: How did you become involved in building instruments? Is it something you took up on your own?

LM: Well, yeah. I don't mean it egotistically, but I guess I'm a strongly creative person. I've always felt like I was— I'm not a religious fanatic but I do believe that some of us are more blessed than others. Maybe it's just because— maybe I've always had a creative mind, and there were a lot of environmental things that made me be like I am, but I've always been a creative person. And 1949 or 1950, somewhere about there, I got married in 1950 so it would be about 1949 I built my first instrument just to see if I could do it and it was successful. And over the years I've kind of fooled around, and I took up repairing instruments and people would come to me and experimenting and by trial and error I learned the things that you can do with an instrument— guitars and fiddles and banjos and stuff. It's mostly string instruments that I've worked with, and I began experimenting with ideas. And when we were in Champaign my son came to me, my youngest son who was four years old, a little under four about three and half, and he said "Dad, I want a guitar." And I said "Well, I'm not gonna let you have my D28 Barton to play with." So I said "I'll build you one." And I went out to the shed and I had some scraps, some plywood, some banjo parts and some mandolin parts, and threw together this little eight-stringed instrument. A little wedge-shaped thing called the Giddolin. And when I strung it up I thought about "If I string that up with just a bunch of strings on it, he's gonna run me nuts running around the house plunkin' all night hitting discordant sounds, which I cannot stand." I'm a musician. Discordant sounds run me crazy. So I said "I'm gonna tune this to an open chord." So when I did, he lost his instrument. And, but I later built him one. But I built about a hundred, a hundred and fifty, I don't know exactly how many I've created. But anyways, the next week I took it down and played it for the Campus Folksong Club, and they liked and went nuts over it. I played "the Wildwood Flower" the old Maybelle Carter song, and Nate Bray had to have one. And they— the Bray Brothers used my original Giddolin on one of their early recordings.

TW: Really? Interesting.

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

LM: And he played Barbara Allen, I still have the little forty-five RPM record, I still have a copy of it. And when they reissued some Bray Brothers music about five years ago, they used that original recording on that.

TW: Oh. That's exciting.

LM: And then I have— I started building these Giddolins. Doyle Moore has number two. You met Doyle, didn't you?

TW: Yeah, I talked to him last month.

LM: And he has number two, and I made one for a friend down here in Greenville, down near Greenville, down over in Vandalia and he tuned it differently than I had tuned it. I tuned it to an open G chord; he tuned it to an open C chord. Well that gave me the idea, so I built an extra one for myself and wound up with five of them all tuned different ways. So finally, I said— I only had eight strings on it, and I figured out that if I would put ten strings I could get all the configurations all at once on a ten string instrument that I was playing on these five and I would only have to carry one instrument when Doris and I went out to play. But I designed it to look just like a banjo only it had a wooden top. It has ten strings, and these strings were tuned in octaves like a twelve string guitar. And it proved to be the most successful thing I ever did. And we used it in most of our performances, like when we went to the Old Town School of Folk up in Chicago, we took it up there and played it. That's the thing that Marty wanted— that Marty Smith wanted one of, and that's the one he got the first one of that we built together. And we've sold several of those, Marty has, he's built. Oh, I think we've built over thirty together. He's built twelve now by himself. But, oh, it's a long evolution.

TW: Right. Well, I've got two more questions. And one of them I think you already answered, so if you don't have much else to say, you can just tell me that. But it's— the question is how would you describe the impact that your involvement in the club had on you then and later in life?

LM: How did it affect my life later?

TW: Or— at the time and later, yeah.

LM: Well—

TW: But I think you've already answered it, at least partly.

LM: Let me sum it up this way. I'll try to be brief. It's hard for me to be brief. I love to talk. It opened a door that revealed a whole new vista. Is that the proper word to use?

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

TW: Sure.

LM: Because of that chance meeting with Dr. Green half the people that we call friends today are— resulted. My association with people like Judy McCulloh, Doyle Moore, Fritz Plous, John Schmidt, Preston Martin, Jimmy Driftwood. Because of— Doyle Moore introduced me to Jimmy Driftwood and took me down there to the first Arkansas Folk Festival, and we stayed at Jimmy's house. I got to— we got to go to the Smithsonian in Washington DC in 1976 because of that, and to this day half the people that we still associate with are direct or indirect result of that performing at the club, getting to meet Archie Green. And that's why I say we owe half of our life to Archie Green. And there's just no way of putting a value on it, because I'd say that at least half the people that we know as close friends today are a direct result of that chance meeting with Archie Green. And its just had such a tremendous effect. And not even just me, but my family as well. My children know these people and associate with them. It just— it was a major turning point in our lives, I don't know how else to put it.

TW: Well, that's stating it quite well I would think. And my last question is did the political climate of the 1960's influence how you viewed the club?

LM: It did until I made that first appearance. Until I met them one on one. And it— I'm a strongly conservative person. I'm a republican basically, but I've voted for many democrats, I'm not a narrow minded, I'm not a yellow dog republican. But I'm a very conservative person, I believe in old line values. I was raised by a mother who was forty years older than me, my mother was forty when I was born. So my political values are strongly conservative. I'm technically— by technicality, I am a veteran of World War Two, although I never got in on the fighting. But I was in before the peace treaty was signed. What I'm trying to emphasize is that my values are based on things prior to World War Two— On America prior to World War Two. And I had strong feelings about the hippie generation, and I'd read all the news reports with all the things and the— I lived the sixties, and that's when the things were really getting out of hand, in the early sixties. And I had very strong impression about it, but when I met some of these people one on one, I learned to judge a person one on one, not by what the news media said about them. And I worked in the news media all my life, so I have an inside impression of what the news media is all about. I worked for daily newspapers, and I did a little radio work. I've been a radio announcer, and I've been around and I won't get into the political aspect of it, but I have very strong opinions about the news media. But I had formed opinions about long-haired people, to put it in that context.

TW: Right.

LM: But when I went to the club and met these young people and saw what they really were, I had I changed my opinion. And some of those people that were long-haired hippies in the sixties to me are now very dear friends.

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

TW: Okay, that's interesting. I don't have any other questions. Is there anything else that you think it's important for people to know?

LM: About folk music? Of—

TW: Well, about the club, or about folk music, too, I guess in a broader context, yeah.

LM: Well, I'll try to sum it up. I think the club served a very useful purpose. I think the term "folk music" has been corrupted. But these young people were trying to delve into what folk music really was. And I think sometimes they over emphasized the value of it. While I appreciate traditional music, and I use the word traditional more than I do folk, because the word folk has been so corrupted. For example, I heard a radio announcer one day say— make this statement— that Bob Dylan was the greatest living folksong writer and that is— that is the most ridiculous statement that anyone can make because no one writes folk music, folk music happens. It evolves through oral tradition. And to say that someone could sit down and write a folk song— now I've written songs in the folk song vein. I've written songs like this one I wrote "The Ballad of Melissa," and I wrote one called "Saddle Tramp," and I say that they are written in the folk music style, but I don't classify the style as folk music. And now I got straight off what I was talking about, but anyway I think I made my point.

TW: Okay. A couple things just to touch on. I wanted to include some photographs back from the sixties of you and Doris playing. Would that be okay if I put them online?

LM: Yeah, would you like some more?

TW: If you have some more that would be great.

LM: I have about sixty photograph albums full of pictures. Doris and I, every time we take pictures we put them in our album, we have them all logged.

TW: Yeah especially if you have any of the CFC events or anything like that that would be great.

LM: The only thing I have is I have one— a few pictures that were taken during the time that we were recording "Green fields."

TW: That would be great, too, yeah.

LM: Let me write that down, I'll just make a note. Photos from 1962 to 1964.

TW: And I'm also— if I— to include your interview on the project on the internet I'm gonna need to get a consent form. So I was gonna send that to you today.

Lyle Mayfield: LM  
Tracie Wilson: TW

LM: That's fine

TW: Ok so I'll send that to you, if you could send that back as soon as you can because I'm— my position ends next Thursday. If it comes after that somebody else will get it, and it will be ok, but I just don't want it to come in too late so it gets lost or something.

LM: I promise you Tracie, if it comes, I'll get it back out the next day.

TW: Okay