

Indiana Hoedown IH012
Traditional Music from the Hoosier State

Tape #
IH 027

vic Aigsby - Interview

VR. "Toad Bradley and I played in Wabash in 1955; when I first moved back to Indiana from Washington, D.C. I played in a group with him for two years."

P.T. "When did you start playing professionally?"

VR. "In 1954. Well...I was offered a job. This is really funny. They put a new radio station up in Indianapolis in 19 and 40. And they offered me a job playing on this station, and my brother and sister. And because we lived 40 miles away, my Dad couldn't get us there every week. So we had to decline the job. And later on, the ~~guy~~^{person} who took the job was a guy by the name of 'Little Jimmy Dickens.' Took the job and he played in Indianapolis in like 1942 and 3. And, let's see, he had a guy with him called 'T. Texas Tyler.' Those two guys had a show on in Indianapolis and I used to listen to them and then later on Jimmy Dickens and I would talk about this."

PT "Do you remember what the station was?"

VR "Yeh. WIBC! A 50,000 watt. That would have done me a lot of good in those days. Then a little bit later, I didn't play music for a while 'cause I was in the Marines... in the latter part of World War II. I went into the Marine Corps and when I got out, country music was going real strong, and I didn't get into it until '54. I had played all my life, and won some contests when I was a kid. But I wasn't really into it, 'cause I was like other kids, I liked to play games... But the only thing we really had. Being the oldest of 13 children, the only thing we actually had to play with was musical instruments. We had no toys or anything like that."

PT "So you came back from the Marines..."

VR "Well I got out of the Marines and I stayed in Washington, D.C. for a long time, and I worked there. ~~And~~ well, then I got to know, oh, Jimmy Dean

Roy Clark, and Patsy Cline was there then. She was the girl singer for Jimmy Dean, and they were a real... honky-type band in those days; and then later on... the guys that's playing with Don Reno now, ~~the~~ Buck Ryan, was playing fiddle for him. Then Billy Grammer from Nashville was one of the people there then... ~~See~~ See that was the only outlet for country and bluegrass music, a real heavy outlet was around Washington, D.C. 'cause you had so many displaced persons there from everywhere.

This one man by the name of Connie B. Gay started... he quit a government job in 1946 and started a radio station called ~~WABC~~ WARL. It was a 10,000 watt station, but it outstripped both the NBC and CBS ^{50,000 watt} stations ~~there~~ there, your WABC and your WTOP. But because it played country music it did the job for everyone."

PT "So, did you get in with a band there?"

VR "Well, we had a bluegrass band that eventually became, I think, the "Country Gentlemen," now. But I was in it real early."

PT "Who were some of the other folks in it?"

VR "Well, there was a boy, the banjo player's name was Graham King, the guitar player's ~~name~~ name was John Kelly. I got some pictures of us. And there was a man and a woman in it at that time, named Lucky and Juanita Saylor. When I left, I left that in 1954. And then I came to Indiana to work, and I moved to Indiana ^{then} in 1955. Six months later I moved, I went back and got my family and moved out here. But we played on a lot of radio stations. There was no money in it, but we could plug the places we were going to play. Things like that. It was really a good pasttime. We had a lot of fun.

"But in '54 you didn't sell bluegrass. You couldn't get anybody... I hate to say this, but radio station WOWO would ~~not~~ not play any bluegrass or country music until they were forced to by the popularity of the 'Beverly Hillbillies' and 'Foggy Mountain Breakdown.' This broke the ice. And then, I guess, they figured if it was good enough to be shown on national T.V. then WOWO had not ought to overlook it."

PT "They were really into the cowboy and western stuff."

VR "Well not too much of that, even. It was more or less what they considered Pop and Rock."

PT "Well, they did have the Downhomers. They were a bit swingy."

VR "The Downhomers weren't wo; they were WKJG."

PT "No they were..."

VR "Now you're talking about Nancy Lee and the Hill Hoppers. The Downhomers..."

PT "They were on the Hoosier Hop."

VR "Yeh, they were on the Hoosier Hop."

PT "Then Kenny Rogers."

VR "Kenny Roberts." ...

PT "I wanted to ask you about another group. I've just ~~heard~~ ^{heard} their name. ~~the name~~. The 'Green Valley Boys.' They were on radio in Indianapolis."

VR "The 'Green Valley Boys' are a Michigan group. They ~~played~~ ~~are~~ are in business now."

PT "This was a band that ~~played~~ ^{played} on radio in Indianapolis."

VR "This may have been another... I know of three different 'Country Gentlemen' bands. And I played in one of those. In Fort Wayne. It was a Fort Wayne located band ^{that was} called the Country Gentlemen, run by Ray Kaiser. He was a square dance caller and band leader. I played ~~with~~ ^{for} him for about six years."

PT "Where was this?"

VR "This was from '57 till ~~about~~ 1962, including."

PT "I was going to ask you if you'd done much fiddling for dances, or were they ^{more} a show band."

VR "Oh, we did dances for so many years. I ~~finally~~ ^{finally} had to give it up. ^{because} ^{really} I got to be a job... we would work

PT. "This was Ray Kaiser and the Country Gentlemen."
VR "Yes, he passed away here like three years ago."
PT "Did he do singing calls?"
VR "Yes, he did a lot of singing calls."
PT "Did he do a lot of the old patter calls?"
VR "He did a lot of stutt. I don't remember..."
PT "Let you stretch out on the fiddle."
VR "Ohyeh, he did a lot of those. What we

called hoedowns. He did a lot of singing calls."
VR "What I did... we only had... like when we would
do square dances he would a lot of times not
play bass ~~so~~ so we would use drums and
then I would have to put all, you know, this is
where I got into playing everything 'twins' and
playing it hard as I could to get a lot of volume.
'cause we only had 3 people. So I got to playing
some of these tunes, like we would do 'old

Notre Dame', and I would just rock the far out
of that with the twins. Or it had do
'Wreck of Old 97', or whatever he'd do. We'd
do a lot of... one he called was [sings] 'The
first two ladies cross over ^{order} and I did that in
E. He wanted it done in E, and so, I broke
some people up the other day ^{that could} because a square dance
caller had never heard anybody play that who could
play that in E. We were playing over in
Kendalville ^{at} the square dance for the 4-H. This
guy, first he objected to me jazzing these things
up, but the people loved it. When I left, he
got another fiddle player and he expected him to do
that. But he wouldn't do it. He was a western
swing ~~person~~ person, a real good fiddle player."

a circuit like once a month we'd be at Bryant
once, then Sturgis Michigan, then Hartford City."
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