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San Joaquin Valley Oral History Project  
Recorded History

INTERVIEWEE: Jim Shaw  
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INTERVIEWER: Curt Asher  
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9:30 a.m.  
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Sillect Avenue, Bakersfield  
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CA: Okay. This is Curt Asher and I am interviewing Jim Shaw in his office at 3223 Sillect Avenue, Bakersfield at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, December 4, 2014. Jim could you state and spell your name, please?

JS: Jim Shaw. J-i-m S-h-a-w.

JS: Where and when were you born?

JS: I was born on September 29, 1946 in Estherville, Iowa.

CA: Estherville, Iowa. Could you tell me about your early life growing up, about your family and where you lived and moving and how you came to California?

JS: I have vague memories of Estherville, Iowa. It was a little 6,000 population town in Iowa. And we moved out when I was about six years old to Seaside, outside of Monterey. My dad was a builder and got tired of the cold, snowy winters there and decided to go to sunny California, the Land of Milk and Honey. After just one year out on the coast, up there at Seaside, we moved to Fresno, California. So that is where I grew up and went to school. I was in Fresno, California until I went to work for Buck Owens.

CA: Oh, I see. Okay. Did you have a big family?

JS: Just one brother and one sister.

CA: One brother and one sister. How did you learn to play the keyboard and do you play other instruments as well?

JS: It's my main instrument. I got interested...I took piano lessons. I started at the age of seven. My Mom and Dad rented a little Wurlitzer spinet and all of us took lessons. And I got tired of it. Actually, what it was, I had a teacher teaching me how to read music. Every lesson she played a little song, "This is the song we are going to learn this week." And I had a very good ear. So I would listen to what she played and when she left, I would just use my ear to remember what she played and I would play the song. I got better and better at it. As the songs got longer and more complicated, I got better and better at that. Almost a year went by and I never had learned how to read music and she did not catch on until one day when I made some little mistake and it was slightly different and she said, "Oh, no. You were supposed to be playing this note." And she pointed to a note on the paper. And I said, "Hmm. What do you mean?" And I stalled around.

She said, "Hmm. Well, let's just try a different piece of music." And she pulled out a piece of music she hadn't played before and she said, "Go ahead and play this one."

And I couldn't. I was busted.

And she said, "Have you been just doing this by ear all of this time?"

And I said, "I guess I have."

And she said, "Well, we will have to start all over again."

And then I was angry that it was no fun. I didn't want to start off with the baby stuff. I could play better than that. I told my mom and dad I wanted to quit. I didn't like piano lessons.

Flash forward when I was 14 or 15 years old, I decided I wanted to play in a Rock and Roll band.

CA: I see.

JS: Then I started playing on my own.

CA: But did you ever learn to read music?

JS: Never did. That is really sad. I really wish I had.

CA: A number of the musicians I have talked to around here don't know how. It is a gift, I guess. Right?

JS: I love jazz and I started trying to play Jazz the last four or five years, which was quite a stretch from Country. And I know I should just take six months here and just stop and learn how to do it. I am still stubborn, at the age of 68.

CA: Do you play other instruments as well?

JS: I play bass. Actually I played bass in a Rock and Roll band for a while. I picked that up ear and then when I was in college, I decided that playing six nights a week in clubs would be a great way to put myself through school. And a friend of mine pointed out that there are not a lot of places to do that in clubs with Rock and Roll, but there were a lot of places in Fresno, seven or eight nightclubs that had Country music six days a week. And I said, "I know nothing of Country, but that sounds interesting. So when I started exploring Country music, I realized there were lots of bass players. They usually were the singers in the group. And there were very few piano players, so I dug up a version of "Last Day" by Floyd Cramer which was a huge hit record at about that time, a Country instrumental. And I sat down and learned how to play it by ear and wrote various components out and kind of used that for my little toolbox. I was very limited, but I came across a band playing Country music on the weekends in Lemoore that was so desperate to hire me as a piano player. And I caught on really quick and we had a couple of little band changes, within about a year and a half, so I was working with one of the better known Fresno night club Country singers.

CA: What was the name of that band?

JS: It was the Tommy Force Band. Ancient history, earlier on, it had been Tommy and Ted Force (the Force Brothers.) And they just did not get along. They fought constantly. Everybody worried about it. And they were just oil and water. Ted moved to Bakersfield and Tommy stayed in Fresno. The Ted Force Band played in Bakersfield many, many years. Later on, at The Blackboard after Buck was there, Ted Force was a big name, and I was with his brother, Tommy, in Fresno. I paid my dues. Learned, by jobs, learned how to play. He was a singer who insisted on playing in the perfect key for his voice, so if the song came out in the key of D, and he said, "That's a little too high for me." He wanted me to play in C sharp/D flat. That was the key we were going to play it in. As a piano player, it was WHOA, you know. That's difficult. But, it was terrific training for me because I learned to play in all keys. And he made me do that. And so, later on, in my professional career, I was glad I had all those hours, four or five hours a night, six nights a week doing all that...all the old standards, learning that stuff.

CA: So you played with the Tommy Force Band and then you played, did you play with another band before Buck?

JS: Yes, the last year or so, after I left Tommy Force, I started my own band. And it was called the Country Revolution. I didn't use my name in it. I wasn't the lead a singer. I just played piano on the side and nobody knew it was my band. I hired four other people and we had our own TV show there on Channel 24 in Fresno and played seven nights a week there, I think, and after hours on the weekends until 5:30 or 6 in the morning. And I was making a ton of money! (Laughs.)

Being the band leader and doing all that work and I was going to Fresno State College at that time to become an Industrial Engineer. I had, I think, 98 units by the time I dropped out. But when I was going to graduate and become an engineer, at very best case I was going to make \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year. And at that time, I was making \$450-\$500 per week in 1969. And so I thought this was pretty cool. But in the back of my mind, I was always a very practical person. I

knew that I had stumbled into something that was good. I always thought music, being a musician, especially a live musician in the clubs and stuff like that, was like gunfighters.

CA: How is that?

JS: There is always a young gunfighter coming along to prove, knock off the old guy. It is strange. In music, the old guy is 40 years old.

CA: Right.

JS: He is not truly old. But, you know, the girls like the young up-and-comers. I was realizing that I might be making good money now, but I better be smart with it and have something a little bit better to fall back on. And so, I needed to get that college degree and have that degree. And also, I wasn't the greatest musician in the world. I was really good at playing the right thing at the right time, which musicians call being commercial. Trying to play what the song requires, what the singer requires. And musicians joke about the kind of guy that plays everything he knows on every song. He knows all these wonderful things and dang if he is not going to play them. So I used to joke, well I am playing everything I know on every song, but I just don't know very much.

But, I really tried to play and make it sound like the record. And so, I did, I was a straight ahead, decent musician, but I knew I was never going to stand out and be a star, so I had to get my college degree and plug away at that and meanwhile, if I could put a bunch of money in the bank working with this band, that would be awesome. So that is what I was doing coming up at the end of 1969.

CA: So, did you finish? Did you get your degree eventually?

JS: No. I didn't.

CA: You didn't.

JS: A huge big thing happened in October of '69 in Fresno. A guy named Doyle Curtsinger, who played ?Lynder merandas? got an opportunity to go to work for Buck Owens and the Buckaroos. And Buck was a huge star.

CA: How did he get the opportunity, do you know?

JS: That band, the RonDons played the Vegas circuit for the decade before that. They played Reno, Winnemucca, Vegas. All that with Tahoe. Nevada, I should say.

CA: Right. At the casinos.

JS: Right. They were the guys that played in the lounges. They would rotate bands all night. All night. Twenty-four hours a day. And early on in those days, one of the bands alternating with him often, was Buck Owens in his early days. So he knew those guys and he knew Doyle, liked

his playing. And later on he needed a bass player, he came to mind. He got in touch with him and hired him. So, everybody was talking about that.

CA: Did you know him from Fresno?

JS: I knew him from playing out there at a nightclub called The Place.

CA: That was in Fresno?

JS: Yes, on White's Bridge Road in Fresno. And Ron Peterson of the RonDons, and two others who had been with him for 10-11 years. Doyle left in October and I took the opportunity to hire when their band broke up at that point and that was the end of the RonDons. And I hired their guitar player who was Don Lee (Don Lee and the RonDons) for my band.

So meanwhile, Doyle was heading out on the road with Buck Owens, who was a big star at that time, and it was a really cool deal. And every now and then he would come back to town to visit. And a couple of times I ran into him and he told me about this terrific recording studio that Buck had built, a world class recording studio, state-of-the-art, in Bakersfield. And that is the studio that is at 1225 North Chester. And he had taken an old movie theater and gutted it out. At the time, he started construction as a sidebar as an 8-track recording studio. During that period of construction, they came out with the 16-track. The building was modified, patched up and modified to become 16-track and to add a 16-track recorder.

CA: I don't know what that means, exactly.

JS: A multi-track recorder uses a big fat wide piece of tape instead of a stirrer tape that had two tracks on it for left and right. This one had 8 tracks or 16 tracks or later 24 tracks where you could record the drum on one track, the snare on another with the bass and acoustic guitar. And you could add stuff later. And that is multi-track recording, which came along in the late 60's. It turned the recording industry on its ear in a way. That's another subject. But I heard about that and I thought, "Well, greedy capitalist that I was, I need to record our own albums (LP, vinyl) and switch it around most days at the studio there. And sell that at the nightclub and use the TV show to sell it, and I could sell a bunch of albums, maybe."

So I asked Doyle, next time he recorded (he was going back and forth to record on a regular basis). Buck did a lot of recording. He had recorded all of his projects, all the people who signed with him, you know, Buddy Owen, Susan Raye, all of his other acts and entertainers, and he had to do two or three albums a year, plus a lot of other stuff. So I asked Doyle, "Can I ride along with you and meet the engineer? See this place? Get the brochures and prices and everything?"

And he said, "Well, I am not allowed to bring visitors."

I said, "Oh, I understand that. They don't even have to know that I came along." I said, "I'll just come in like I came in off the street and when you are all done, we'll ride back together."

And he said, "Okay, sounds good."

So, this would have been March 7th or March 8th, I believe. The reason I know is I found the old track assignment sheet in the reel of tape on the session. Buck was recording that day. So we got there, and this is a story I have told many times, and Buck told this story, too. It is in his book. But, he wanted a piano in there for a session. The Buckaroos did not ever have a piano in them. There were just guitars, Bob on the ? and steel. And they would record in the studio, but not traveling. And he would always record in Los Angeles and he had a few people to choose from. But he was looking for a Bakersfield or somebody nearby that could do all his recording sessions on the piano. Someone told him that a good piano player is a guy named David Frizzell who was Lefty Frizzell's brother. And David was a talented singer and guitar player and did know a little piano, enough to get by.

CA: Was he living here?

JS: I believe at the time, he was. But that is a good question. I don't know if he came up from L.A. or somewhere else or not. But Buck had hired him to see if he would be willing to be that guy and unfortunately, the very first song and the very first session that day was a song called "New Orleans Cajun Queens." It was a real trivial little song. It had a strange chorus and went (hums some notes) weird, weird song, and then right in the middle of the song, it modulated to a very ugly key and continued on doing the same thing again and David Frizzell was lost, as he should have been! It was a tricky song. And so they were trying to record this and he had to keep stopping in the middle of it because David can't play the chords and Buck is getting madder and madder and more and more frustrated and finally says, "Let's take a break."

And Doyle goes over to him and says, "You know, there is a piano player from Fresno out front."

CA: Wow!

JS: And Buck says, "There is? Really?"

"Yeah," he says, "he is a regular piano player."

So, I hear all this later, after the fact. I am sitting out front. I have gotten my brochures in hand and I am killing time, because I've got to wait a few hours, sitting out with the secretary. All of a sudden, the door bangs open and this is all in reception in front, and turn around to see this big star Buck Owens, he looked eight feet tall to me at the time. "Whoa. Whoa." And he said, he said, "Gee, you are a piano player?"

I said, "Yes."

And he said, "Can you play that song?" I don't know why he thought I would know it. Maybe he thought the doors were open. I don't know what he thought. But that's what happened. He came out, like something that would happen in a B movie, when the standby, there is a name for that in plays, but I don't know what the standby is called.

CA: Understudy?

JS: Understudy! You know, gets the big opportunity. And all I could figure to say was “Yes. Sure.”

And he said, “Well, come with me.” So we go, the two of us go from the front room into this little other room, and went upstairs and different directions and then into the control room and out into in the studio and there’s a bunch of people just sitting around. I didn’t know who any of them were, but it was the Buckaroos, Don Rich, Doyle, Jerry Wiggins on drums and a very uncomfortable, miserable-looking David Frizzell. They were just standing around there. So he asked, “What is your name?”

I said, “Jim Shaw.” I get introduced.

Then Dave says, “We’re going to try something else.” Oh, yes, sure, absolutely. So he says, you know, “Do you want to run this down?” And I still didn’t know what he was talking about. I never heard this song. So I said, “Yes.”

So he was cocky, and he said, “Okay, here we go. Okay, this is in the key of F. Hmmm. I’m thinking, Yikes, okay.”

It comes to the middle, they modulate. Oh, Man! So I am trying to keep it straight in my brain.

And he said, “Are you ready to do one?”

And I am thinking, “Holy Cow!” And I said, “Yeah, okay.” And I don’t know how, but I got through that without making a mistake, just playing rhythm. (Hums a beat.) Just doing what needed to be done. And so we get done, and he says, “Can you hang on and do the rest of the session?”

And over behind him, I see Doyle on the bass on his little stool over there behind the little divider looking at me with these big eyes, kind of like, “Don’t tell them you are with me. He’s afraid I am going to get him in trouble.” Which is silly, but he is thinking I’m going to say, “Well, yeah, I have to stay because I drove down with Doyle.”

CA: (Laughs.)

JS: Doyle was afraid he would have been in trouble for bringing a visitor.

So, anyway, I just said, “No sure, I would be happy to stay.”

And he said to Dave, “You know, Dave, sorry it did not work out. I will be happy to pay you for this session.”

And Dave said, “You don’t have to do that.”

And he said, “Oh, yeah, yeah, we’ll do that.”

So anyway, we did a couple more songs which were much simpler and he said, “Can you, would you like to be doing sessions down here?”

And I said, "Absolutely." I told him what I did and where I played. And so that would have been March. I remember we only did just... I was coming down three days a week, sometimes four days a week, but I just stuck to two or three sessions. All of a sudden, for three weeks there weren't any because they went to Europe. They went on a European tour at the end of March.

And then, everything fired up again and I remember Don Rich saying, "Oh, I had to go to Europe." He acted like he was irked. He didn't like going there. But anyway, so he phoned me and at the end of May one day in my apartment in Fresno, I got a phone call. It was always the secretary, the gal that was the secretary for the recording studio calling saying, "Will you be able to do a session Tuesday morning, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah." And I'd say, "Sure." But this morning she asked, "Can you hold for Buck, please?"

And it was Buck. So I said, "Okay."

I never hardly talked to Buck. I would go into the session. He would come into the room and do his business. Then he would walk out of the room. I would stop look ahead, our relationship was not a lot of conversation. So he would say, "Are you available to come on down tomorrow about 10:00? You need to be here. Come on down." I would say, "Sure."

I remember I wore my suit. (Laughs.) This seemed auspicious. I didn't know what was going on. And ironically, at the time, that was probably kind of a weird, strange thing to do because there was not a suit to be seen around there. But flash forward a decade or two, Buck was always, and the guys around here, wearing suits because you needed to look like money. It was part of his thing. You put on suits and ties, like I am today. So that might have figured in on things.

But, anyway, I showed up and he and Don Rich, Don Rich was the leader of The Buckaroos, of course. We went into the control room and sat in the chairs behind the recording console and he got right to the point and said, "I was wondering if you would like to join the Buckaroos."

And I kind of wondered if that was what it was going to be, but still, "Wow."

And then they laid out the deal, the contract, the money, what it entailed. I got a base salary that included going to, he could use me 150 days a year on the road. That would be included and I would go back twice a year to record the Ranch Shows. I would get paid extra for the Hee Haw shows directly from them. I would get all the recording sessions extra. I would get residuals on this. I would get album stuff, per diem, profit-sharing, health insurance. Ya-da-ya-da-ya-da. I am kind of computing it out."

And he said, "And of course, you'd have to move here."

And I am thinking that I am going to have to drop out of college. Wow. You know, I never wanted to be a musician. And this is only going to last who knows how many years? And then where am I going to be?

And so anyway, he ended up his spiel and asked if I had any questions. I had a few. With something that he said after **every** interview (I didn't know that at the time) but it was my first (over the decades I sat in on many). And he always said the same thing: "Now I don't want you



to decide right now. I want you to think about this and I want you to call me back and let me know.”

And what I found out through the years is what I am supposed to say is, “I don’t need to think about this. Absolutely.”

But I said, “Yeah, okay. I would like to think it over.” (Laughs.)

I don’t know if it was my imagination, but they kind of looked at each other. But anyway, I went home. I have always been a real practical conservative person. I got out a legal pad. I drew a line down the middle of the page, put Pro and Con on there and wrote it all down. And I thought, “Holy Cow, this is a big decision!”

I think I had said 96-98 were the scores in engineering. And I was going to take a pay cut, not a huge pay cut, but a bit of a pay cut. Then I started writing stuff down. And then I got down to the one thing that popped into my mind. It was going to be exciting. I knew that the first week I joined, I was going to be on the Ed Sullivan Show.

CA: Wow!

JS: And I wrote down on the bottom of the list in quotes, “If I don’t do this, will I kick myself for the rest of my life?” (Laughs.) And I thought, “Oh, crap! I got to do it. I got to do it.” So I took the job and just jumped into it. It was mind-boggling. I had to tell the guys in my own band. They got someone to take my place. It was a big deal.

CA: That is great. So, you answered a lot of my questions. When you came to Bakersfield, it was about 1971?

JS: 1970. I had to move in June.

CA: You moved here. Yes. Can you describe it? I mean from a musician’s perspective. What was it like in Bakersfield by then? Was there still a big music scene here? And do you remember the clubs and things?

JS: You have to understand that I moved into an apartment, the Village Apartments off Chester and Second there for a while before I got my own permanent place, bought my own. But we basically went on the road quite a bit. Then, when I was home we were in the recording studio. I don’t think I ever went out to a night club.

CA: Is that right?

JS: I don’t think I ever did. I certainly didn’t go out to the... I don’t think so. I was aware when I saw Mark Yeary for the first time he was 15/16 years old and just went on the Jimmy Tomason TV show. I guess I watched a TV show at 5:00 when we were aware of a few musicians. Buddy and I (Buddy Lawrence, Buddy Alan) and I went out to Merle’s house and I met the Strangers through playing together various places. The local scene, really, I am ashamed and sad to say I just never connected with it or knew about it just because we weren’t in the same circles.

CA: I see. So, the circle that you were in was more of a national or LA-based?

JS: Yeah. I toured twice a year and at times, spent five or six weeks at a time in Nashville. I was in recording sessions for a lot of people. And it was more of a national level and when I was home, I didn't feel, I just hung around. I read. I did my own projects and didn't connect. Local people would come in and dance and record at the studio and later on when I became—I started wearing a lot of different hats later and that comes later, but I made it to recording sessions and things with some of the local people.

CA: I see. Okay. How did you...I guess you sort of described how you got interested in performing Country music. You were initially in a Rock Band. And then...

JS: I did it for the money. Just for the opportunity to play six nights a week. I earned, I made at that time when I started, twenty, twenty bucks a night. Again, minimum wages were a buck and a quarter. Twenty bucks a night was a pretty big deal.

CA: Did you like Country Music?

JS: Oh, yes. It is not like it is, "Gee, I had to play Country Music." I really didn't know what it was and then I was surprised to find a bunch of songs that were on the Pop charts had been Country songs. "You Are My Special Angel" was as twangy as they get. But a huge Pop hit. "Tiger by the Tail" was a pop hit. You found a lot of Country songs, probably. I had no problem with it. I loved the Buck Owens stuff and really got into it.

CA: In the early years, most of the musicians that played Country music around here lived in Bakersfield, but that had changed by the time you...many of them were living in different areas and things?

JS: Nashville? You mean the Nashville ones?

CA: Well, I guess Buck was a Nashville figure by then, but there must have been...

JS: Well, the only one that comes to mind is Merle, but he moved up to Northern California. For a few years there, he was off there down at the mouth of the Kern River there in that big house. But, you know, a lot of those early people, but before my time, Dallas Frazier and Jean Shepard and those people, sometimes they lived out in Shafter or Delano or Visalia. Not necessarily in Bakersfield. But, of course, Bill Woods and all those guys lived here in town.

CA: Okay. Do you think that having a lot of migrants from Oklahoma and the Southwest and the Plains helped build the music scene here?

JS: Oh, absolutely. And tons has been written on that by Buck and Merle and Bob Price, people like that. Yes, it was a hotbed. It was interestingly enough, I don't know if it has been addressed, but there were probably other cities of them, but there had to be a lot of this going on in Fresno, too, I am thinking. Why Bakersfield? I don't know. But, it seemed to be the epicenter.

CA: Do you think that the reason it was the epicenter might have been because of Buck being here, later?

JS: Well, we are talking about the Bakersfield Sound. Up until Buck, there would have been some success. But if you think about it, all over the country, all over the United States there are little towns and people that have a certain amount of success, you know, the big fish in a small pond. And they might have had a hit and some a couple of hit records, you know, whether it is Faron Young or Hank Williams or something like that and some little places they come from and that is what Bakersfield was before. I mean, you had Maddox Brothers and Wills coming in the area. You had certain people from the area. But nobody was paying attention to Bakersfield until Buck Owens got in and just went huge. I mean, we are talking about consecutive number one records and this was before Merle Haggard by a few years, a couple of years. The fact that Buck did it the way he did it down there at Capital with the original. Ken Nelson thought, "Hey." He was smart enough to say, "I got a sharp guy who writes his own songs, has a good, hot band and if I just stay out of this guy's way, he makes good records."

Normally, that wouldn't happen. You just basically bring in musicians, studio guys, you tell them what to do, and you blend in the blender. Here's how to make music and you give him your sound. And Buck just hit the jackpot with his system for Capital Records and Ken Nelson. They used to say Capital was built on the Three B's: The Beatles, The Beach Boys and Buck.

Buck's success was the reason Merle Haggard, when Ken Nelson found out about Merle Haggard he hits the door open for Merle. Hey, his he has a great band, writes great songs, he is a great singer, I'm going to let Merle Haggard have his way. And sure, Buck's success helped that. Merle, would have made it anyway. There's no doubt about it. He is the best. But the door was opened for him. And those two guys, I mean, if they hadn't have happened, I am sorry if they had been treated like everybody else has happened in this town, it wouldn't have been a famous thing.

CA: So what is it, exactly? How would you...

JS: Let's compare it to the Austin Sound. That came out Urban Cowboy and the Outlaw thing. I mean, if we take Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson out of there, I mean, come on. Yeah. Dallas Frazier. There is terrific talent, awesome terrific talent that wouldn't have happened.

So going back to your question, what is it that made it different is it was these two guys using their own bands. It was fresh. And I think it was fresh in a way of The Beatles coming in from Pop music was often over-produced, and lost and bland and unexciting. When you have a four piece group like the Beatles, and you've just got four instruments and they are sharp, edgy and every instrument is playing the right thing. And there is space. You can hear the instruments. You can hear the space between the notes and between the instruments. And, and everything is just right. And The Beatles weren't the best musicians in the world. I mean, Ringo was ballast as the drummer. Think about it. Somebody could say, "Oh, you could have got a better drummer. You could have got so-and-so a session drummer, you know. And a bass player. You could have got so and so. He's one of to the top bass players in the world. Guitar player?"

George Harrison is good. You could have got, you know....Then they wouldn't have been The Beatles!

Those four guys went together, and this sound comes out, and it is exactly like, to me, what happened with the Buckaroos. That sparse, edgy, frantic sound. Buck being a huge fan of AM radio realizing that, "I want to go with the edgy, sharp sound that just pops out of the radio." He was very astute with his sound. He didn't smooth it out. And I really thought it was almost Rock and Roll at the time. And a Bakersfield record would come on the air and one or two beats (hums a beat) and I could hear, "Oh, that is Bakersfield." Totally different sound. Jangly and edgy and exciting.

And later on, the Merle songs the same thing. The color, the sonic, talent, the sound of that thing was just totally unique from Nashville which has the best Country musicians in the world. But they all got stuck in that big blender. Still does a lot. Somebody comes up with a bright idea and every student in town seems to follow in the afternoon.

So, the Bakersfield Sound, I think, was Buck Owens and then Merle Haggard doing their thing. And I don't want to make other musicians angry. You asked about the Bakersfield Sound. If it hadn't been for those two, they would have been like their same counterparts in Fresno or Stockton or Sacramento. Everyone had a small little circle of guys doing good and maybe getting on their local TV shows and maybe having a hit or helping write a song somewhere. And they did something. But that is pretty much the end of it, generally.

CA: So, the radio and the television played a big role in the development of West Coast Country music.

JS: Oh, absolutely.

CA: But what was your experience with television and radio? I know you mentioned that you were on a television, a local TV show in Fresno when you were...

JS: Yeah. Well that was live. And sadly, I don't have single a copy of what it looked like. I am sure I would probably cringe at the thought. It was on the vein of what they did on a lot of the Country shows at the time were doing, the Porter Wagoner Show. I am blanking here. But he didn't have a lot, his girl singer being Dolly Parton. There were a lot of those little Country shows at the time.

The Ranch Show and Hee Haw, of course, were a huge step up.

CA: That was a national show.

JS: The Ranch Show was done in a very assembly-line process. We pre-recorded all of the music for both those shows in our studio. So we went back there and it was just rigorous, just one song after another. Da, da, da. Since we were just doing the lyrics live, you know, we were doing a song every six or eight minutes. We would spend three days and do 13 shows for The Ranch Show. It was just a lot of work. It was no fun.

CA: What about Hee Haw?

JS: Hee Haw, we spent a little more time. But it was the same thing. In one afternoon we did all 13 pickin' and grinin's. One afternoon to do all the openings and closings for the shows. And then for the cast songs, we would spend the day and do 13 cast songs with Buck. On another day, when we weren't there, they were doing 13 cast songs with Roy. And then we would spend a couple days doing just Buck Owens songs. And so when they had all the pieces they needed from us to edit the show together, they said good-bye and we would go home.

But in my first years there, my first three tapings maybe, three or four tapings, the Buckaroos were the house band, meaning if so-and-so came on and didn't have their own band with them because of scheduling reasons, or they didn't have their own band or were just a solo act, or whatever, the Buckaroos would back them. And we would go out there and play live. And the good news was I got to back everybody from people who weren't even singers, like I backed Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. Got to meet them. Dennis Weaver and just actors. I met and hung out with the most fun, exciting stars ever. I loved it!

But that made us have to stay there for the entire five week taping, many times just sitting around in a motel room on call.

CA: And that was in Nashville?

JS: It was all in Nashville, just sitting around a hotel room. So, during this period of time, of course, Buck would go home. He would be done. And he couldn't do any recording because we were stuck. So he renegotiated his Hee Haw deal on his next contract saying the Buckaroos would be only backing him and his acts and we would go home. And they put together the Hee Haw Band which was Charlie McCoy and all those guys. And the good news is that we got paid exactly the same amount. We got paid by the show. And we were out of there in ten days instead of five weeks and did all our stuff and left. And so we did that twice a year for 17 years. So it was like a second home to me.

CA: That show brought a lot of fame to people that I don't know if, you had mentioned earlier like the Hager twins and Susan Raye and other singers in that period were, you know, cutting their own albums. Did Buck bring them to fame?

JS: Yes, Buck brought them to Hee Haw. Buck brought Lulu to Hee Haw.

CA: Oh, yeah.

JS: We made a joke about we wanted a big fat, funny gal or something like that. And he said, "Well, I know a gal that sings. And he introduced her and brought her in. He brought several people in. I actually brought in a guy named Grady, I don't think the name matters so much. He was a preacher, a preacher who told funny stories. I met him on an airplane, but we would, there were many people that their entire career was based on Hee Haw. All those comics, you know. Archie Campbell and those guys had a regional career doing various music festivals and stuff. The Stringbean and stuff like that. But they didn't really make it until Hee Haw.

CA: You know, Grandpa Jones was a great banjo player prior to Hee Haw, wasn't he?

JS: Absolutely. And did he sell a lot of records and make a lot of money? No. But, you know, the strength of Hee Haw really opened things up for him.

CA: Did the relationship between Roy Clark and Buck – was that a good relationship?

JS: It was fine, but there was not a lot of overlap, if you think about it.

CA: Oh, really?

JS: What I explained to you on the early tape, there was virtually one day of overlap at a taping, where Buck and Roy did a pickin' and grinnin', openings and closings, and that is about it. If you think about it, you never hardly ever saw them together on the screen at the same time. Then they had a couple of fights that were documented in Roy's and Buck's books and I was witness to and I would take sides on that. There were two different versions of it. Roy at that time was very unprofessional and irresponsible. (Laughs) I am sorry, but everybody on the cast knew it. He would show up late for tapings and make everybody sit around and wait. And he had some issues at the time and we usually did that overlap day on our last day of taping, because what it was is our last day of taping and Roy's first day of taping. Where we would go jump on a plane and go home and he would do all of his stuff with the cast. We had airplane reservations. And we had been gone from home for a long time, and wanted to go home and play with the baby's mama and we were ready to go. And doggone it, we had to get done. If we got on schedule, we could get done by 3:00 and the flight was at 6:00 and we could make it and Roy Clark is no place to be seen. And so there were a couple little incidents on that.

Buck, ask anybody from the producer and everybody down, Buck was a consummate professional his entire life. Get there. Do the job. Get the job done. So, in general, they got along fine.

I think that Buck had something to do with Roy doing his job, too. But his book, I read that he brought him in. But, terrific talent. Roy Clark, if he had a career without Hee Haw he didn't seem to have a record career. He was kind of like a Wayne Newton, huge in the live shows but he just couldn't seem to get a big record. I think he has only had a couple of big hit records.

CA: You know, I need to follow up on that.

Drugs in the 70's were a big problem. I am wondering if that affected the Hee Haw show at all or were there any issues with drugs and alcohol and things like that?

JS: I am telling you there were, but they worked around it. I don't know if anybody was ever fired from there because of it, but yes, during the time there was, you know, during the time when cocaine was a big deal, I witnessed some real inefficiencies in our schedule. And the Buck Owens batch, we were all pretty much straight arrows for various reasons and didn't get involved in that. Knock on wood, thank goodness.

But yes, some of the people that were on that show were a mess. A few of them. Not very many.

CA: You have described working with Buck Owens a little bit, but if you could talk more about him and what made him so successful. What do you think are the qualities that have made him such an iconic figure in Country music and also an incredibly successful businessman? Could you talk about that?

JS: Yes. He would be the first to say when someone asked him and mentioned how lucky he had been in the business, he would say, "Yes, that is right. The harder I worked, the luckier I got."

And I would confess that going back to that era, you can't, you know, everything he did worked well in that era.

If you took it all away from him and had him start all over again, he would have done it again because he did it surely from hard work. He can't identify with the possibility because he is the first guy to say that he was a stylist. He wasn't the best singer ever. He had a great high tenor voice. But, a lot of other singers you thought would have been better. He wasn't the best song writer in the world, but he understood what people wanted. He kept it simple and understood. He knew things like, "If I play this song nice and easy and make it easy to play, the guys will be playing it in the clubs in a couple of days after they hear it on the radio." You know, I know the fancy chords. But there is no use throwing them in on every song.

He knew what he was doing. He knew what songs worked good on the radio. Had a love for radio, so he ended up buying a lot of stations and starting an empire. But, we would go to a town, and it is exhausting to travel. We traveled flying commercially. Before that, he drove around in a camper. And he liked to go to the hotel and sleep, you know, and catch up on your sleep, But he, you know, first thing in the morning he would go up and visit the local morning show and meet the disc jockeys and hobnob with them on a live show. And every shift, if he could, he would pop over there and he'd see those disc jockeys. And then when he left, he would write them a hand-written post card and he would keep in touch with them. Hand written notes.

He worked hours and hours and hours a day and never stopped. He was very disappointed with his other acts that he signed later that they didn't work as hard as he did. He just didn't understand why they didn't. But he made it happen. And that is why he was a great businessman, attention to detail.

CA: So he had attention to details, a strong work ethic, and sort of...

JS: Drive.

CA: And song selections that were sort of simpler to play by the other musicians. How was he to work with? That is just a...

JS: Oh, it was interesting. He could terrorize you and be really hard on you. And he could be the greatest. And this all came from his quest for perfection. And he expected the best from his people. And the positive side is that he brought out the best in them. And sometimes it wasn't easy.

But, you know, he always apologized later on if he was unfair to you. Always apologized. And made it right. If somebody had only seen the downside, I can tell they would think he was a real ass. But when you got to see the whole package, yeah, I would do it again in a heartbeat.

CA: Why would they say he was an ass? Because he was temperamental?

JS: If you only saw one side of him. If he was being disappointed. If somebody wasn't doing their job right, he had no patience.

CA: I see. Okay.

JS: He would blow up. But he expected everybody to be professional. He wanted everybody to do it like he would. He would be the first to go out and do the job first. It wasn't like he was just sitting back with his feet up on the desk telling them, "Hey, this is the way we are going to do that."

CA: Who were some of the other artists you worked with in addition to Buck? You have mentioned several already, but...

JS: Well, I worked with, I mean we toured, we met tons of artists and so I knew them, but worked with them? The Buckaroos backed at various times Audrey BEAR?, Johnny Lee. We backed Charlie Pride. Just recently Darrell ????. Lots of people at the Palace. Brad Paisley, of course, a few months later. Tons and tons of people.

CA: Has the music changed? I know you mentioned Charlie Pride. I often think of this, like he was a black Country singer. There are none now. I don't know if...

JS: There is one.

CA: There is one?

JS: Darius Rucker. But yeah. It's pretty slim pickings out there. And you are right. And, you know, where is the black female? I don't know. I hope we will see this change.

CA: Have you found that the music has changed a lot in the time that you ...

JS: It has gone through several cycles and right now, I hate it.

CA: And why do you hate it?

JS: Oh, it is not Country. It is bad 80's Rock. But I get it. It is just the way it goes. And the younger demo comes in you know, they've seen it before. And it evolves, and it gets really,



really bad (and not Country) and then somebody comes out wearing a white hat like Al Jackson and hey, it really was Country and they revise it. So it goes through these cycles.

And I can't watch the awards shows anymore. To me, it is pyrotechnics, made for short attention spans. There is nothing Country about it. But I am not upset about it. They don't care what I think about it. I am 68 years old. And I am not out there buying the product or downloading, or streaming or whatever. I am not the guy they need. They need a 19-year-old girl, the 22-year-old boy. They need to do whatever they need to go out to them. Whether they are doing that correctly or not, I don't know. But that's what they have to be trying to do. They need to leave me aside and I can find my music elsewhere around town. But I'm hoping we will see that much as real Country music.

CA: I guess speaking of a person who sort of followed in Buck's footsteps to try to revive was Dwight Yoakum. Did you know him pretty well? Could you talk about him?

JS: Sure. Well, when he bobbed up with his first song, he was just an interesting phenomenon. But then we started hearing him carrying Buck's torch, and he became more interesting to us, Buck got playing his cassette in the recording studio the first time we were kind of aware him, and then he was playing at the Fairgrounds and came in and met Buck. And Buck went out on stage and sang with him that night, up on stage. He was the guy that brought Buck back. All the other guys were saying, you know, "Where is Buck?"

Keith Whitley did a song, "Let's Bring Back Buck." They were talking about Buck literally and also figuratively. Let's, you know, let's bring back the real Country music.

And so, Dwight was very instrumental in that.

CA: You talked about Merle Haggard before, too. What was the relationship with you guys?

JS: Oh, Merle, you know, I believe I engineered a few of his recordings at the recording studio. And he used to work in our studio. And I saw him and worked with him eight or ten times. He is a hard person to be a friend to, I believe. And I wouldn't consider myself a friend. I was always sort of Buck's boy. (Laughs) That is a relationship. It is tricky and interesting. Sometimes I had to be the bearer of bad news, the messenger.

CA: What kind of bad news? What do you mean?

JS: Oh, I don't know. One time comes to mind after a session when we had been in the studio all night long. When daylight was coming, I decided to go ahead and pull the bus up front and I "kicked him out of the studio" and said, "Sorry, we are going to have to pull the plug."

And so anyway, there is much conjecture you mentioned about it. But you know the thing about Buck and Merle's talked about, talked about. There was always a huge mutual respect between the two. Did they butt heads? Absolutely. There was something between them that was just because they were both so competitive. It was a competitive thing. It was like two guys, you know, they could be golfers or whatever, you know, and you got something going on there that

is an undercurrent there that sometimes is the friendly thing and then the thing that is a little more.

But, Buck confessed several times to me, and I passed it on to Buck before Buck passed away. I had an opportunity once to say, "Buck said, truly said that he thought that Merle was the best singer in the country. He thought that Merle was the best singer/song writer that ever lived. He didn't say "Country." The combination of voice and song writer. He was the best ever.

And would I say that he was jealous? I don't know. I think Merle, being that guy, had to be, you know that left-brained, right-brained thing people talk about? Buck had to have both. I don't know if Merle could have been the genius he is and been a terrific business man. I just don't know if he was really wired that way.

CA: But Buck was that way though, wasn't he?

JS: But he wasn't the "genius" songwriter/singer/musician guy. He was a guy that was analytical and figured it out.

CA: I see.

JS: Merle just does it.

CA: When you said he was hard to be friends with, what do you mean by that?

JS: He might be great to be friends.... He might be very easy to be friends with. I didn't find it easy to be friends with him and I...

CA: Because he doesn't talk much?

JS: That could have just been me and like I say, the situation. (Laughs.)

One incident happened. We were... there was a thing where Buck and Merle and Dwight played at the Fairgrounds and, in some town. I think it was in the late 80's. They did a thing out at the Fairgrounds where they all played together. Merle did his "Beer Can Hell." And that afternoon as we were setting up, Merle comes driving up, had a big Hummer Hum V. Came walking up to Buck and I just standing on the lawn and just the three of us there and we were chatting and Buck said, "Have a sit."

And Merle hadn't said anything to me. So Buck said, "Well, you know Jim, don't you?"

And Merle said, "Oh, yeah, of course." Then he turned back to Buck and said, "You know the problem with piano players?"

And Buck said, "No, what's that?"

And Merle said, (pardon my language here) "Their left hand fucks up everything."

And Buck had to just jerk, "Yeah, okay." And I just kind of laughed and smiled.

A few more pleasantries, and off he walked.

Then Buck turned to me and said, "What was that all about?"

I had never played piano for Merle, so and I said, "You know, I don't really know."

But I think it has something to do with I mentioned a couple of times that I was on the other end of a business deal with us and Merle and I know his piano player, Mark Geary had a very strong wild, crazy left hand and maybe he got irritated with him a few times. (Laughs) I don't know, but that kind of sums up my relationship with Merle. But I admire him because he and Buck, even and the Buckaroos and the Strangers are polarized. Their work was so different.

I got myself into a huge trouble one time when there was a local guy named Herb Benham.

CA: He was a columnist?

JS: Yes, for *The Californian*. He was doing a huge interview with me many years ago.

CA: With Merle?

JS: With me.

CA: Oh, with you.

JS: And we were talking about why, who all they were doing. I don't know. It was an interview that was going to be in his column, in the paper. And never trust a journalist. That is just another reason why I don't. (Laughs) So far you have been... I am not worried about this one because this is making a face here.

CA: Right. I am not going to use it for...

JS: Not me. I am just saying... You know, it was shame on me because I was not careful enough. We did an interview and then we sat and chatted for an hour. At Dagny's Coffee Shop downtown or something. And we were talking about Buck and Merle and how different they were. And the Buckaroos and the Strangers. And he said, "Why were the bands different?"

And I said, "Because of Buck. Buck hired me because I was a dependable guy. I was going to show up for the airplane. I was going to show up for the recording studio. I was never messed up or be drunk or taking drugs. I was just going to do the job. Well, I was okay. I knew enough that he could teach me the way the music he needed on his records because it wasn't jazz. It wasn't classical. It was straight ahead.

Merle hires the very best guitar player, the best guitar player. End of story.

And another time during the conversation I said, "We are all like insurance salesmen. We wear suits and ties, we live in suburbia with swimming pools." And I said, "We look like insurance salesmen."

And then later on in the conversation, he said, "So do all the Strangers move up north when...."

I said, "No, no, some of them still live in Bakersfield. Don Marks, for example, lives in this thing off the ball park off State Street. He has been there for 20 some years."

Okay. All that information gathered together. The article comes out and he puts Jim Shaw said, in quotes, in quotes, "The Buckaroos all live in Suburbia with swimming pools. And the Strangers all live in trailers."

CA: Oh, man!

JS: Well, I saw this in the paper and thought, "EEK! These guys are my friends. I mean, I know these guys." So I called up a couple and said, "You know, I made a ...."

They said, "Jim, Jim, Jim we know how writers are. We know you never would have said that."

CA: Wow!

JS: So, anyway.

CA: Yes, that is the kind of thing that makes you gun shy a little bit, doesn't it?

JS: That is why when Buck would do, if Buck was doing an interview with you, if the guy would say, "Do you mind if I tape this?"

And Buck would say, "I pretty much insist on it." And he would say, "And by the way, I am starting my tape recorder now at the same time."

CA: Oh, really? So he was very careful about protecting the..."

JS: Oh, well, Buck could say, "Well, I never said that."

CA: Yes, yes. Did he ever have any incidents...

JS: He never had to use that, because I think it made people stop and think.

CA: I see. Yeah. Do you think the lifestyle of Country musicians has changed in the past few years?

JS: Well, I think, I think in the old days, you know, Rock stars, who you know, had their self-indulgent, crazy lifestyles. Country people are more grounded and, I think, as a ....

At that time, the Country market was not even 10% of the pop market. There was not a lot of money in it. Nashville was different. Nashville had friendliest people who loved music. And Nashville always wanted Country Music to be like Pop. We want the record sales, we want the gold, we want the name sellers.

And Buck always said, "Be careful what you wish for, because right now the big money people are not interested in Country music because there is not enough in it for them." And we know, right now it's people who love Country music. And sure enough, when Country music got bigger, all of the attorneys and accountants from New York moved to Nashville and the managers and started showing them how the Pop people do it to get the numbers. They got the numbers. But then, their record, pretty soon they would start picking the songs. And the artists started getting into that lifestyle we were talking about. Too many of them had a two or three year run. They spent all their money on production, to you know, nothing's left over at the end.

Buck didn't do that. Buck invested his money in radio stations and real estate. So anyway, you have the lifestyle.

CA: What were the best and worst parts about your life as a Country musician?

JS: Well, I can't answer that question because I kind of feel like my life isn't a life of a Country musician.

CA: No?

JS: It is just a life.

CA: Of a musician?

JS: At this point in my life, I am only playing two weekends a month with the Buckaroos at the Palace. And the rest of the time I am taking care of, you know, record masters, publishing, and stuff for Buck. Things are great at the Crystal Palace. Doing jingles and stuff. My own business. Taking care of my own properties and things.

So I have never felt that I had a life as a Country musician. We always, like I said, we were the insurance salesmen when we got on a plane and flew to the dates and flew home. We didn't have the road stories on the buses. In fact, at the end, when Buck went on the road in chartered jets...

CA: Oh, really.

JS: And it was awesome. I mean, you were sleeping in your own bed at night.

So, you know, I am just kind of disappointed that now I can't tell any of those good old boy stories. I don't own a pair of cowboy boots. I am just not the right guy to talk to.

CA: Okay. How did you get into the business end of this? What is the story on that?

JS: Very early on, when we would do a recording session, Buck had his own studio and we would do all the over-dubbing and the other guys, everybody was anxious to get home. "Hey, Chief," (that was what we called Buck, was "Chief.") Anyway, he would say, "Chief. Do you want to come with us and need us for anything else?"

"No, I guess I am good. You guys can go." Bam! Out the door.

And I was single. Didn't have family to account to. And I was fascinated by recording. So just very early on, up until the end, my, after I moved to Bakersfield and was in the Buckaroos, in early release, I asked, "Would you mind, I promise I won't bother anything. Can I sit still over here in the corner and watch how they do this? I think it is so fascinating to see how you do that."

Man, his eyes just lit up! And he got up on this chair and said, "Here, come here." Pushed this big captain's chair. And he said, "Here, sit here." And he grabbed a little folding chair and pulled it up and sat next to me in a folding chair and said, "Here, let me show you. Here is what we are doing." He was so excited to share his excitement with somebody else. So that became the norm and so pretty soon, more than a dozen or two recording sessions, he said, "Okay, Jim, let's get the fiddle parts."

And he says, "Okay, Jim, you know what I want. You know what it's supposed to sound like. I am going to head over to my office later and he said, "Good. How does the fiddle sound?" I would still be working with the engineer. But I would make sure it was in tune and with the parts and do the "production."

So I kind of eased into being a producer that way. So the next one I got co-production credits and he let me be a producer. And in the same way, I would want to do stuff a lot of times at night and so I started catching on and I learned how to be an engineer.

And I wanted to catch this by myself and a mike and do some recording and put the tape on and then about '72 or '73, and he said, "Jim, how would you like to... Bob Morris was running our publishing company at the time (our double bass player) and the guy who wrote "Made in Japan" and "Buckaroo." He was leaving to go back home, to Arkansas. And he had been running Billy Buck.

And Buck said, "How would you like to get into publishing?"

And I said, "Buck, I know nothing."

And he said, "Well I am going to give you the hat to wear and so anyway, I learned publishing and that became the deal. I just started getting hats and that was the joke. When we bought a TV station, Jim came and said, "Here is your TV hat."

And So Doyle Curtsinger was there longer than me. I mean, I became the leader of the group. And someone said, well you know, "Why didn't Doyle do this? And Buck wasn't about seniority at all. He was about interest, you know, and passion. And just sadly, Doyle, was at a point at that time in his life, or the other guys, they didn't have the passion for it. They just wanted to do their job and go home.

CA: Right.

JS: So timing was lucky for me.

CA: So, Buck Owens Industries. He has a lot of different kind of diverse businesses, doesn't he?

JS: He did. He did. When he died, it was pretty big.

CA: Like what? What did he have all together? I mean, what kinds of things besides the radio stations?

JS: He had four stations in Phoenix. The ones he let go for a tremendous amount of money in the mid-90's, and then the stations here. He had a TV station, KUZZ TV 45. He owned his own publishing company, the number one Country publisher in the world in the 70's.

CA: When you say publisher, music?

JS: Music publishing. He owned the rights to the songs. He wrote songs and many other songs he owned. He owned, this is a monstrous thing, he owned his own masters. He got his masters back. When a master put together again for an entire record, he owns that record. Merle doesn't own his own. It is owned by Capital Records. Buck negotiated them back and got them back. That is huge.

CA: Oh, yeah.

JS: And Buck - magazines, Kern Shopper and Home Preview and Camera Ads and Real Estate. A lot of real estate all over the place, the Crystal Palace. Back in the old days he had his own travel agency, his own graphic art department, ad agency. He did everything himself.

CA: Amazing.

JS: Booking agency. He had a huge booking agency, Lomac Artists, which means Collin McFadden did all the booking on Hee Haw. All the acts were booked through his booking agency.

CA: Well, Jim, you have answered a lot of my questions. Can you think of anything I haven't asked you that you would like to talk about at all?

JS: I could probably go all day and night.

CA: That is fine. I am anxious to hear...

JS: You know, I would like to mention that people always talk about Buck and say how hard he was to work for, you know in the businesses, in our businesses, that still belong to him years after his death. But, I mean, there are still a ton of people in this building that worked for him for many decades and that says a lot for Buck.

CA: Yes, he influenced a lot of musicians and artists didn't he? And not only influenced them, but actually gave them their start in music. I mean...

JS: Well later on, he influenced, I mean, more, not literally, you know. He gave me a connection with him. He fired them up and gave them good advice. Me, I have witnessed many of the talks he had with Trace Adkins or Garth Brooks. Garth Brooks bought his record masters back through Buck's advice. And believe, he owns his own masters because of Buck.

CA: Wow!

JS: And that's why Garth came to Buck's funeral. He owed him a huge debt, and he knew it. Buck tried to talk to him about it. Not letting, you know, record labels and publishing companies and big business take advantage of him.

CA: He had a reputation for really caring about his fans to some extent, I guess. The story was that the last...

JS: Yes, he had fan clubs everywhere.

CA: What about the day he died? I guess he was actually showing, he had shown someone the Crystal Palace before it was open.

JS: No, no. Actually, the story was that he was feeling sick that night. He wasn't feeling good, which was the night he passed away. He told me he, "Jim, you are going to have to do without me tonight." Grabbed his bag. He told me as we were ready to go onstage. So I headed up on stage and he headed out the door to his car. And around the corner came a couple who said, "Oh, Mr. Owens. We are so excited to see you. We have come all the way from Oregon. The last time we came through here you weren't playing. You were sick, so we made another trip from Medford (or wherever it was.) We are so excited to see you tonight."

And Buck didn't have the heart to tell them he was just leaving, AGAIN. And so he said, and the reason, how would I know this story? Right? Because the next thing I know, I am onstage. I am onstage and I turned around and I see Buck walking up on stage. And I say, "Hmmm. I thought you were leaving."

And he smiles and he gets up there, gets his guitar and he starts doing a show. Okay. Cool. He is feeling better.

Well, he told the story. He said, "These two people (he pointed over to the railing over there), I met them. They are from Oregon. I was leaving. I was leaving tonight. They were going to announce that I wasn't going to be here tonight. But they told me..." So anyway, they made a big deal about it, so that is why I know the story.

So about an hour later, Buck had Terry sing a song. Then he turned the guitar around, came over to me and patted me on the shoulder and said, "Hey, Jim, I am heading on out."

So, I said, "Good night, Chief."



So, yeah, I always thought that, I don't know if Buck was humanitarian in the big sense. But he was wonderful with people and the person sense.

You know, he would say, "We need to do this for the people." I don't care about them now. But if he saw a person there and they wanted to try to talk with him or do something like that, he couldn't do enough for them. When they had a face and a name, he couldn't do enough."

CA: I think that's about it, Jim. Are there some other people you would recommend I talk to for this project on The Bakersfield Sound? And it doesn't have to be the early people, anyone who has been involved in the music industry here.

JS: Even out of town?

CA: Sure.

JS: Well, you could get a snippet of, if you are interested. Lee Furr was an engineer during...

CA: How do you spell that?

JS: L-e-e F-u-r-r.

CA: Okay.

JS: He was the engineer at the studio together, for about a two year period. He could tell you, maybe, a few anecdotes. I can give you all of his information.

Doyle has lost his hearing and I just don't know. It might be difficult for him to talk. But, Doyle Curtsinger was the bass player. It is so sad how many of them are gone.

CA: That is why we are doing this project. Because we want to try to get as much information as we can get documented before everybody is...passed on.

JS: I will try to get you Buddy's connection. Buddy Lawrence. Let me see what else I can come up with.

CA: Did he have any other children? Or just Buddy?

JS: No, he had Buddy and Michael with his Bonnie Owens, his first wife. And with Phyllis (Buford), he had Johnny.

CA: Are they around here?

JS: Johnny is. And Mike and Buddy live in Phoenix.

CA: Okay.

JS: I am not sure that Johnny would remember. He is quite a bit younger. But he might. I would be happy to give you his phone number.

CA: Okay. All right. Well, I guess that will do it. Thank you very much.

JS: You bet.