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*Utah State University*

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Jennifer J. Haertel  
*Utah State University*

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URBAN PIONEERS: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BLURRED  
LINES OF AUTHENTICITY WITHIN UTAH'S  
FOLK MUSIC REVIVAL

by

Jennifer J. Haertel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

American Studies

Approved:

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Stephen Siporin  
Major Professor

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Lisa Gabbert  
Committee Member

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Lynne McNeill  
Committee Member

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2014

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## ABSTRACT

Urban Pioneers: A Journey Through The Blurred Lines of Authenticity

Within Utah's Folk Music Revival

by

Jennifer J. Haertel, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2014

Major Professor: Dr. Stephen Siporin  
Department: English (American Studies)

This paper has described the collection of oral histories as part of the Urban Pioneers research project started by folklorist Polly Stewart as a way to document the urban folk music revival in Utah during the 1950s-1960s. Additionally, this paper has detailed how the revival in Utah fit into context within the national movement, especially in terms of the search for authenticity by the majority of revivalists - including a thorough discussion of their own reexamination of experiences that led to an understanding that the authenticity they had been chasing had never existed to begin with.

(69 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Urban Pioneers: A Journey Through The Blurred Lines of Authenticity Within  
Utah's Folk Music Revival

Jennifer J. Haertel

The Urban Pioneers Project is an oral history collection project focusing on the experiences of folk music revivalists in Utah in the 1950s and 1960s. Urban Pioneers was started by folklorist Polly Stewart when she retired from her teaching position at Salisbury University in Maryland in 2004. The project was spurred by her realization that there was virtually no record of the folk music revival in Utah aside from the personal recollections and ephemera of those who had taken part in the movement.

The Urban Pioneers Project consists of thirty-two interviews with twenty-seven informants. Informants were found by references given by previous informants, as well as by responding to a call for interviewees given by Stewart at the Urban Pioneers Reunion Concert, which was held in January 2007 in Salt Lake City.

This paper establishes the Utah revival within a national context while discussing the issue of authenticity within the local revival. In doing so, this paper pieces together many of the stories collected as part of Urban Pioneers in a way that makes the collection more accessible as a whole in order to paint a picture of the revival in Utah. This paper contributes to a greater understanding of the era and utilizes oral history interviews in order to discuss the role of authenticity in revival, as well as in the perceptions of the revivalists themselves.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this paper to the memory of Polly Stewart. Without her foresight, the Urban Pioneers project would not exist. Without her friendship and mentoring, I doubt I would have made it to this point in my academic career.

I would like to thank my committee - Steve Siporin, Lisa Gabbert, and Lynne McNeill - for their continuous encouragement and advisement of this project, Dr. Kathryn MacKay at Weber State University for teaching me as an undergraduate that my voice mattered, and my father, Kevin Bott, who ignited my love of revival music and instilled in me a deep sense of the importance of listening empathetically to the stories of others. I also want to thank Michelle Lovejoy, whose friendship and support have enabled my ability to find the time and clearness of mind needed to actually write this thesis and the Rancher Cafe, The Hubb, and Delta City Library in Delta, Utah for allowing me to camp out and write for weeks on end.

Jennifer J. Haertel

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## INTRODUCTION

Since beginning my research on the urban folk music revival, I have often been asked where my interest in the revival movement comes from. I suppose it seems strange to those asking that a woman born in the mid-1980s would have an interest in the music and politics of the 1950s and 1960s. However, I have never found my research interests to be that odd since they have always simply been personal interests of mine that I have been blessed to have been able to study academically. I grew up listening to the music my dad enjoyed listening to. Our favorite performer has always been Bruce Springsteen. My dad instilled in me a love of songs that tell a story and that seem to have a stronger meaning beyond what is typically played on pop radio.

When I was ten years old, Dad gave me a CD of Bruce Springsteen's album *Nebraska*. It was far from my first exposure to "the Boss," but I immediately fell in love with the haunting stories and the way the acoustic guitar and wailing harmonica brought out the desperation of so many of the troubled heroes' struggles. This album, along with Springsteen's *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, led me down a quick path of tracing Springsteen's inspirations, and I excitedly discovered Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, among countless other revivalists and revolutionaries.

These singer-songwriters infiltrated the core of my being and, as a junior high student (and still today), I felt drawn to the left-leaning social consciousness developed in the stories and songs I listened to day and night on the CD player in my bedroom. I took up playing guitar and harmonica though never played well enough to gain much confidence in my performance beyond the walls of my room in the basement. As a

youngster, I would often have political debates concerning current affairs with many of the adults in my life. But, after 9/11, my strong anti-war sentiments, among other ideals, were not always easily accepted by the conservative people I realized I was surrounded by in suburban Utah. I felt isolated much of the time and was beyond ecstatic when I found a home studying social history under Kathryn MacKay at Weber State University.

When it came time to decide on an undergraduate thesis topic, it seemed like a no-brainer to choose something related to the music and era I loved so well. Dr. MacKay and I discussed ways to individualize and focus my research so that it could be more beneficial to future researchers. We decided that I should research and write about 1950s and 1960s singer-songwriters and antiwar protest locally in Utah. Aware of folklorist Polly Stewart's research and upcoming article on Utah's urban folk music revival in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, MacKay encouraged me to introduce myself to Stewart (Stewart 2006).

I immediately wrote to offer my help on her project and asked for guidance in return. In March 2006, when we met, Stewart had completed interviews with Bruce "Utah" Phillips, her former bandmate, and Rosalie Sorrels, her mentor. These were the two Utah revivalists who had reached national fame as performers. Upon receiving my introductory email, Stewart quickly and enthusiastically took me under her wing and invited me to help with the reunion concert she was planning in January 2007 at Highland High School in Salt Lake City, which led to our teaming up for the bulk of fieldwork that was to come.

This essay will describe the Urban Pioneers research project - including the historic reunion concert - since its beginning in 2004 by Polly Stewart, continuing through my joining in 2006, and ending with the Marriott Library's digitization of the materials we acquired, as well as the depositing of the physical materials in Special Collections at the Stewart Library at Weber State University. The goal of this paper is to bring to light the importance of the Urban Pioneers research project to the history of the state of Utah, and to the picture of the national revival era - not to mention the incredible personal importance felt by so many of the individuals involved.

Stewart and I conducted interviews with twenty-seven informants from the project's beginning until 2011, with most of the interviews taking place in the summer of 2007. The interviews are significant because they are the real bulk of documentary evidence of the urban folk music revival in Utah. The interviews reveal how performers became interested in folk music and learned to play, the politics and aesthetics associated with their personal experiences, and the importance of the movement to their personal identities as young people and musicians. Discussing their recollections, I am able to illustrate the complicated concept of authenticity and its role in the experiences of Utah's revival performers.

#### NATIONAL CONTEXT

Before I venture too much further into the revival in Utah, I'd like to discuss very briefly the national revival and the key points of interest to this paper and the local

revival. Stewart defines “urban folk music revival” and its related terms in her 2006 article on Utah’s revival:

The term [is] applied to any performance in which the traditional instrumental or sung expression of a cultural group, whether urban or rural, has been appropriated, modified, and presented to audiences wider than the originating group. Inevitably, outsiders are involved somewhere in the process - as collectors, arrangers, producers, performers, or audience members. (Stewart 2006, 221)

It is hard to put exact dates on the span of the urban folk music revival in America.

According to Ron Eyerman and Scott Barretta, “the United States experienced two waves of folk-song revival activity a little more than twenty years apart, between the late 1930s and the early 1960s” (Eyerman 1996, 501). The revival era that I focus on here is what could be described as the second wave, and it is interesting because, as Alan Jabbour writes in his forward to *Transforming Tradition*:

If things have not changed or faded or disappeared, clearly there is nothing to revive. Thus when we speak of revival, we imply that something happening in the present somehow simultaneously resurrects the past. (Rosenberg 1993, xii)

I say interesting because the revival of the late 1950s and 1960s revived both the first wave of folk song revival as well as traditional music from the South and West.

In 1958, when the Kingston Trio popularized the song “Tom Dooley” and, essentially, brought folk music into the mainstream of American consciousness, they did so by depoliticizing the genre. In the 1930s and 1940s, the first wave of folk revivalists were left-wing intellectuals using folk music to incite political action, pulling from the traditions and methods opened up by the International Workers of the World (IWW) and Joe Hill. “Activists reinvented traditional music as a political force by interpreting it as a

depository of the ‘people’ or the ‘folk,’ and as providing an alternative to manufactured, mass-mediated forms of cultural expression” (Eyerman 1996, 501). Tired of the state of the world and the sterilized sounds coming from Tin Pan Alley, the revivalists, like Pete Seeger, sought to change the world through folk music. In our 2009 interview, Stewart touched on this idea of folk music as a tool for social change and world peace and the political problems tied to holding these views. As Stewart explains, Dr. Harold Bentley, a professor at the University of Utah and mentor of Rosalie Sorrels, was one of the people who believed in the power of folk music:

[A]nd so was Alan Lomax. And so was Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers and all of them were leftists. And, for some people, “internationalist” is a word for “Commie” and, if you said “anti-fascist,” what some people understood that to mean was “communist.” So that there was a big divide. And so that was not really a fair assessment because there were people who were just good old all-American patriotic people, and Burl Ives was one of those. (Stewart 2009)

During the Red Scare, many folksingers were forced to stop performing and supporting folk music because their politics put them at risk of unemployment and criminal investigations. Record companies refused to support their music due to the pressures of the time. And then, in 1958, the Kingston Trio sanitized the image and single-handedly made it possible for folk music to return to the public eye.

With McCarthyism fading, the Old Left began to return to the work they had started years before, this time setting up infrastructures that allowed for folk musicians to not be reliant on big commercial record companies. Additionally, young Americans began attending colleges and universities in record numbers, which meant that there was a whole new generation “looking for something to do and for ideas about how to make

sense of this newfound freedom” (Eyerman 1996, 522). Places like Izzy Young’s Folklore Center in New York City allowed young people access to a whole array of resources on everything “folk,” including records, magazines, and even a place to perform or listen to concerts. Pete Seeger began publishing *Broadside* in 1962, and the magazine quickly became a “major voice of the topical song movement” (Eyerman 1996, 527).

The second wave of revivalists put great stock in “discovering” traditional artists and getting to know them personally. They also found inspiration in current events surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and other social movements of the time, which led to the writing of their own original songs. These songs became less about a “we” or the “common man” than with the first wave and the Old Left. Solidarity was a thing of the past and introspection and the use of “I” had become prevalent in the second wave. Folksinger and topical songwriter Phil Ochs sang, “I am just a student, sir. I only want to learn” (Eyerman 1996, 535). Ellen Stekert described the young folksinger as “more self-concerned and less socially concerned, despite the irony that social (protest) movements introduced many to their first folk, or folk-like, song” (Stekert 1966, 96).

Ellen Stekert, in her 1966 article “Cents and Nonsense in the Urban Folksong Movement: 1930-66,” describes four distinct groups within the second wave of the revival: First, the “traditional singers - singers who have learned their songs and their style of presentation from oral tradition as they grew up” (Stekert 1966, 96). Second, the “imitators” - although, in her introduction to her chapter, she said she would now call this group the “emulators” (Stekert 1966, 90). These people “dedicated their lives to

replicating the sounds, the lifestyle, and the appearance of the traditional singers” (Mitchell 2007, 10-11). The third group named by Stekert is the “utilizers.” “This conglomeration of people is loosely held together by the fact that they have taken folk material and have altered it in the light of accepted city aesthetics.” She specifically names the Kingston Trio as part of this group. The fourth group, the “new aesthetic,” is not easy to define, “but the sound they make is that which in the early Sixties could be heard coming from coffeehouses whose clientele scorned the Kingston Trio and felt art singing too sterile and inhibited.” Stekert goes on to name Peggy Seeger as an outstanding example of this “new aesthetic” (Stekert 1966, 98-99).

The reason Stekert felt compelled to classify factions of the revival was that, in 1966, she felt it was necessary to “clarify the squabbles within the folksinging circles about who was ‘valid’ and who was not, who ‘should’ sing folksongs, and how they ‘ought’ to be sung” (Stekert 1966, 88). Gillian Mitchell writes that the urban revivalists were concerned with authenticity because they had grown up surrounded by films starring wholesome singing cowboys like Gene Autry, as well as the photographs and images of poor Southerners and Westerners by Dorothea Lange and Ben Shahn, among others. Revivalists associated authenticity with this sort of “simple” rural life and envied the depictions for their apparent wholesomeness when compared against the modern urban lives they were living. This upbringing shaped “their romanticized, but genuine, well-intentioned, respect for, and interest in, the music and culture of the people, black and white, of the South and the West - regions which seemed to them semi-factual and

semi-mythical” (Mitchell 2007, 46). The issue of authenticity affected performers’ self-identities and their views of their compatriots with such weight that many attempting to emulate the traditional performers viewed themselves in a way that bordered on self-hatred. Mitchell quotes folksinger Oscar Brand as he stated:

[M]any of the young singers cannot forgive fate for having started them off in urban environments. They want to *be* sharecroppers, they want to *be* dirt farmers, they want to *be* blind Negro street singers. Since this is denied them, their rage is boundless, and it is turned upon anyone who reminds them of their own roots in modern life. (Mitchell 2007, 94)

Mitchell describes the criticism, which could not have helped the personal identities of individual revivalists, happening within the revival period, saying:

Groups such as The New Lost City Ramblers, an ‘old-time’ music group which devoted itself to the reproduction, or imitation, of traditional Southern songs and instrumental music, took their mission of promoting their chosen style of music very seriously, and were usually disdainful of the commercial folk performers. In turn, they were accused of being ‘inauthentic’, and were constantly being called upon to justify their appropriation of a musical culture that was not their own. [...] Arguments over the ‘authenticity of imitators versus traditional musicians abounded throughout the revival; imitators were never permitted to forget that, no matter how much they resembled the traditional performers, they would always be considered derivative by factions within the movement. (Mitchell 2007, 94)

Authenticity and divisive judgements were also an important piece of the urban folk music revival in Utah. Performers viewed their own identities and their local contemporaries through a complicated lens of authenticity, but this lens also affected how they viewed and passed judgement on performers in the national spotlight. Authenticity, and the criticisms associated with supposed authenticity, seem to have been such an ingrained part of the revival that it only became clear to Polly Stewart through our fieldwork that each faction of the local revival had been a valid part of the greater



phenomenon. Here in Utah, Stekert's four groups were well-represented, but, due to personal taste biases that Stewart had not yet reexamined from an academic perspective, she did not recognize the local groupings immediately, and this point became one of our favorite topics of discussion when presenting our research as it progressed. I believe all four groups could be found in Utah but, because of the limits of our research, Stewart and I were only able to interview mostly emulators and utilizers, which I refer to interchangeably as "ethnics" or "authentics" and "commercial performers," respectively. With a wider base of informants, I'm sure that we would have seen many examples from all four of Stekert's categories.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION: POLLY STEWART

I interviewed Polly Stewart in March 2007 and April 2009 to ask about her growing up in Utah and her experience in the urban folk music revival. Stewart was born on July 27, 1943 in Salt Lake City, Utah and grew up in Salt Lake, attending local schools. Stewart grew up singing Burl Ives songs with her family as a means of entertainment on road trips.

In 1959, Rosalie Sorrels and her then-husband Jim moved into Stewart's neighborhood with their children. As a teenager, Stewart babysat the Sorrels' children and became interested in the jam sessions Rosalie and Jim held on their porch in the evenings. In 1961, Stewart graduated from East High School. In the fall, Rosalie and Jim Sorrels formed the Intermountain Folk Music Council (IFMC), the purpose of which was to "promote folk singing in the state of Utah and to give concerts and bring performers

in” (Stewart, March 2007). Stewart served as newsletter editor for the IFMC, and under the tutelage of Rosalie, Stewart soon developed into an accomplished folksinger. She performed around Salt Lake at various events, including the IFMC’s first concert, a memorable event at Orson Spencer Hall Auditorium, which was her first big concert, though not the first time she “had ever sung before an audience because [she] had sung some folk music in high school” (Stewart, March 2007).

The influence Rosalie Sorrels had on Stewart’s development as a folk singer cannot be overestimated, as Stewart recounted to me in our 2007 interview:

Rosalie Sorrels was a very popular performer who was very much in demand and people would be calling her up all the time asking her if she would go sing. And if she didn’t have time, she kept a little stable of people that she would call on to go fill these engagements. And I was one of the people she would call. And so I got to be on TV, I will never forget it. It was in the spring of 1963 and there was the local university station which was already called KUED. And some - here was some deal with Uncle Roscoe who was a local storyteller - TV entrepreneur. He was there, and I can’t remember all, but I was supposed to sing some songs, and so I did. (Stewart, March 2007)

To Stewart, this television performance was a very important one because she “got this experience of being able to perform in connection with a larger production” (Stewart, March 2007). This also led to singing for many more audiences and, Stewart recalled, “these things were largely because of Rosalie’s [...] impresarioship, her fostering of my developing talent which was a very wonderful thing” (Stewart, March 2007).

In the fall of 1964, following the dissolution of the Utah Valley Boys over artistic differences, two former members, Bruce “Utah” Phillips and Dave Royslance approached Stewart about forming a new group with them called Polly and the Valley Boys. Phillips

provided the musical resources such as typed lyric sheets and old 78s to learn songs from by ear. Phillips was lead singer, lead guitarist, and occasional mandolinist; Roylance played five string banjo in both Scruggs style and melodic style. He also played flatpick guitar and sang bass on harmony. Stewart played autoharp and rhythm guitar and sang harmony to Phillips's lead, but also did solo vocals. It was in this format that Polly and the Valley Boys played concerts hired by people who came across the band's hand-drawn mailer or knew of them from reputation. The demise of Polly and the Valley Boys came when Stewart earned a fellowship to attend graduate school at the University of Oregon in Fall 1966.

Once in Eugene, Oregon, Stewart performed as a solo performer and with a jug band. However, after her graduation and leaving to teach at Salisbury University in Maryland, Stewart gave up singing and playing except in rare occasions as a teaching device in her folklore classes. She did not return to Utah to live until after her retirement from Salisbury in 2004.

In 2004 and 2005, Stewart conducted interviews with Utah Phillips and Rosalie Sorrels, which began the Urban Pioneers research project with the goal of recording oral histories from revival performers. The project was conceived by Stewart after reading an advance manuscript of *Folklore in Utah*, edited by Dave Stanley and noting that there was no mention of the revival. Upon realizing that there was no reference to the era in the book simply because there was no actual record of the revival, aside from performers' personal stories or ephemera, Stewart set out to change that fact, worried that, once the

performers were gone, all of the memory and knowledge would be gone for good as well.

During their second interview, Phillips suggested to Stewart that they should put on a reunion concert. Stewart agreed because she recognized that a concert would be a great way of getting everyone together in order to collect their oral histories - and it most certainly was (Stewart, March 2007).

### THE REUNION CONCERT

On January 24, 2007, seventeen of Utah's revival musicians performed to a sold-out auditorium at Highland High School in Salt Lake City. Utah Phillips and Rosalie Sorrels headlined the concert. Also performing were Uncle Lumpy, a bluegrass band comprised of Hal Cannon, Tom Carter, and Chris Montague; The Rosewood Trio (Mac Magleby - who also designed the gorgeous cover art for the concert program and posters, Gloria Rowland, and Pete Netka); Polly and the Valley Boys; The Stormy Mountain Boys - the longest continuously performing band of the revival in Utah - (Cary Howard, Ryan Orr, Tim Morrison, Art Hansen, and Brent Bradford); Heather Stewart Dorrell and Barre Toelken each gave solo performances - Dorrell accompanying herself on guitar, Toelken unaccompanied. The event was emceed by folklorist Dave Stanley, who gave a historical context to the evening as well as introducing each group or performer.

When asked by Hal Cannon how the concert performers had been selected, Stewart replied, "I thought about my own memory, really. And I thought about the people that used to hang around at Jim and Rosalie's. And, of course, I thought immediately about Polly and the Valley Boys." After running through her memory, she "ended up

getting representatives of all the people who had some sort of connection with the Rosalie Sorrels-Bruce Phillips, sort of, constellation” (Stewart, December 2007).

The concert was a great success that could be illustrated not just by the fact of sold-out ticket sales, but also felt by the almost tangible and electrifying excitement in the auditorium. Stewart’s mother was in attendance and likened entering the auditorium to “walking into the best party you’d ever been to” (Netka 2007). The performers were lively and obviously glad to be there. The audience laughed at jokes about the era and about getting older - at one point Utah Phillips commented on the content of the lyrics, “we sang a lot about death then. We were younger; it didn't seem so imminent” (Wadley 2007). At the end of the evening’s program, the audience rose and applauded so enthusiastically, one would assume the preceding performances had been given by much bigger names - which, I think, goes to show just how important the urban folk music revival was to so many Utahns, and still is.

In my interviews with Stewart, I made a point of asking her about her feelings about performing with Polly and the Valley Boys again and how she felt about the concert overall. In 2007, she described to me the difficulties the band discovered while rehearsing, including the fact that Phillips and Roylance did not arrive until the day before the concert, therefore leaving them very little time to practice. Additionally, Phillips’s health problems - congestive heart failure and “something akin to carpal tunnel” - led to the band having to sit rather than stand during their performance as well as Phillips having to play in a style that used strumming primarily instead of the picking

he had originally done. Roylance had “stopped playing bluegrass banjo and was doing a much more muted style of banjo, and he didn’t have a resonator on the back of his banjo”

(Stewart, March 2007). Stewart continued on:

I had not played the autoharp for so long that I really [...] did not have the muscle ability that I used to have. And so, we were pretty pitiful, actually, as performers. But it didn’t really matter because the important thing was that we were there on the stage together, performing three of our old songs and we avoided songs that required a lot of spectacular instrumentation. (Stewart, March 2007)

Stewart explained that, in the Sixties, they were quite good musicians but, since they had not played together as a group for so many years,

it was musically not very satisfying but, you know, from a historic perspective it was okay, it was the best we could do. And, you know, the audience was so live that night, we couldn’t do anything wrong. They loved us and I was glad we were there. [...] [F]orty years does take a toll on a body and a soul. So, you know, we were three different people when we got together and I thought it was very sweet that we did get together, just for this one performance. But, you know, [...] nobody pretended that we were recreating the past. (Stewart, March 2007)

The levels of musicianship varied greatly at the concert. Some of the groups had practiced quite a bit in preparation for the concert and the Stormy Mountain Boys have been continuously performing since the 1960s. Some of the performers had not performed in any real capacity since the revival. So, I believe, although Stewart is being self-critical here, the description is an honest one. The important thing is that she notes the concert was not really about musicianship but about a reminiscence and nostalgia, which is discussed in more detail below.

When Stewart was asked by Hal Cannon and Patrick Brennan in an interview from December 15, 2007, what she thought the reason for the success of the concert had

been, she replied that “in a very good way, it touched an old nerve, an old area of emotion that people had forgotten about.” She thought that the concert had brought to mind “an era of tremendous optimism [...] full of hope for change in the world” (Stewart, December 2007).

The concert’s program included an introduction to the Urban Pioneers project and its importance, historical information about each artist or group appearing in the concert, and - perhaps most importantly - an invitation to “Utah musicians and singers who were performing folk music in the 1960s” to “set up an interview with Polly” (Stewart 2007 Urban Pioneers). Almost immediately after the concert, Stewart’s email inbox was flooded with requests from musicians wanting to tell their stories. Tom Drury had not been aware of the concert until afterwards when his friends Patrick Zwick and J. Stephen “Steve” Barnes told him that they had been there and wondered why Drury hadn’t been a performer. Drury immediately emailed Stewart. Stewart later explained her oversight to Hal Cannon:

I completely missed the commercial side. And I did not include them because I didn’t know where they were - I sort of remembered some names. I remembered the name of Tom Drury, but I didn’t know if he was- where he was, and I didn’t think about him as part of that, because he really was not part of the Rosalie Sorrels thing, which I was mostly interested in. And, after the concert, I got an email from Tom Drury. And he said, “You missed me!” (laughing) And this opened up a conversation that was very productive. We have eight or ten hours, or maybe more, fifteen hours of recordings from guys who were in that whole commercial side, which was a wonderful thing. (Stewart, December 2007)

And, so it was that Stewart began receiving requests for interview slots and that the real volume of our fieldwork began.

## MY FIELDWORK EDUCATION: FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT

The very first interview I participated in was the one I conducted with Polly Stewart on March 9, 2007. This was the first interview experience of my life and the resulting interview is slightly embarrassing for me to listen to now, though I am exceedingly grateful for the patience with which Stewart responded. The recording is full of awkwardly long pauses while I searched my notes for further questions or wrote down important details. There is an incredibly mortifying moment when Stewart had to remind me to ask her about her time with Polly and the Valley Boys. But, that interview is also chock-full of important information about Stewart's growing up and her time in the revival in Salt Lake City, and, at the time, this interview was the only full-length interview with Stewart about those experiences. I am glad to have interviewed her again in a much less cringeworthy follow-up on April 21, 2009, in order to pick up on many of the details I had missed initially, leading to a much more complete picture of her time as a revivalist.

On March 12, 2007, I was able to act as sound technician-photographer while observing Stewart as interviewer when we went to the home of Art Hansen (of the Stormy Mountain Boys) in Sandy, Utah. I was immediately struck by Stewart's confidence and easy way of drawing out information in a friendly and conversational way. She had a remarkable way that I have been envious of and witnessed in so many various situations when she seemed and, I am sure, genuinely was, deeply interested in the details of every conversation, whether in an interview setting or just chatting with



someone we ran into. This was a wonderful tool in her interviewing skill set that seemed to come so naturally to her. In this way, she was able to turn an interview that had begun with short answers into what sounded like a lovely reunion chat between old friends, even if she had not known the informant previously. I have no way of knowing if this was something she had practiced purposefully, but it seemed to come so easily to her that I was constantly a bit in awe (Hansen 2007).

Growing up, I had always been fairly shy and unsure of myself in new situations, traits that were unhelpful and affected my initial interviewing skills, though I did improve through observing Stewart, as well as conducting my own interviews with Stewart acting as sound technician. After her death in 2013, I was given a letter she had written in 2009 on my behalf. In it, she describes my progress as a fieldworker:

I saw how quickly Jennifer developed an effective interview technique. Starting out with a list of relatively closed-ended questions and no follow-up, she blossomed into a seasoned interviewer who could circle back to questions partially addressed, open up new areas of interview on the basis of what the interviewee was saying, and so forth. She has an attractive fieldwork persona.

Since our teaming up in 2007, I had always felt that she had given me undue credit when introducing me as her partner in the Urban Pioneers project. But, in reading this letter and in a number of the conversations we had in late 2012, I now understand she had been sincere about my contributions to the project. In addition to my interest in the commercial performers, I was able to navigate the changing technologies available to us for recording our interviews - we began using an old Marantz cassette recorder with a microphone on a tabletop tripod and headphones, and we ended up loving a much simpler system that

consisted of an iPod with a plug-in microphone. We essentially went from carrying around a kit that required a number of steps to set up (and remember), and fit into a bag the size of a piece of carry-on luggage, to using a simple one-step system that fit in the pocket of my jeans. I used a Nikon digital camera to take photographs of informants which was also rather small and easy to use.

### UTAH SINGS OUT!

As Stewart and I went about collecting oral histories, a number of things became quite apparent. Utah's urban folk music revival was significant in its own right, but also reflected a microcosm of the national revival at the same time. First, the revival in Utah mirrored the national revival in the ways young people became interested in and learned to play folk music. Second, there seemed to be three distinct age groups which acted quite independently from the others, though they also came together at times and drew from similar resources. Stewart did not name these age groups, but it was her who pointed them out initially during my first interview with her. Third, just as in the national revival, the idea of authenticity had been of great importance to quite a few Utah revivalists, and the classifications described by Stekert were present at the local level as well.

In her 2006 article, Stewart described three ways in which the urban folk music revival in Utah was special and destined to happen. First, it is important to note that Salt Lake City is geographically the literal crossroads of the West. The highway system makes

it virtually impossible to get anywhere in the West without going through Salt Lake City.

Second, Utah has (and had) a very particular cultural environment:

For one thing, the fine arts, performing arts, and letters, fostered and supported since pioneer times by the LDS church, resonated subtly throughout the postwar period with parallel but unheralded artistic traditions played out by disaffected locals and by outsiders who were traveling through Salt Lake City or who came to stay. The underground arts scene was avant garde, irreverent and raffish. A second source of cultural contribution to the urban folk music revival in Utah, in keeping with the state's long scholarly tradition of research in folklore, is the folksong collecting fieldwork that Mormon scholars of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s had done under the aegis of institutions. The Utah folksong tradition was richer than that of other places because of early LDS mission policy, which in early days fostered the immigration of a wide variety of people from elsewhere in the world. (Stewart 2006, 222-223)

The third “ingredient” for the revival in Utah was “its artistic resources: its singers, songwriters, and musicians.” There was simply an abundance of very talented individuals who felt compelled to take up folk music (Stewart 2006, 222-224).

Stewart had begun her research by interviewing Bruce “Utah” Phillips and Rosalie Sorrels. When I joined the project and the post-concert interviewing began, she allowed me to choose whom to interview first. I had been awarded an undergraduate research grant to support the transcribing of some of our interviews, which was probably why Stewart let me make the choices in the beginning. Not quite knowing where to begin, I ran through my memory of the concert and selected from the program the performers I had enjoyed most. I began with a few members of The Stormy Mountain Boys (Art Hansen, Brent Bradford, Cary Howard, and Hal Cannon). I chose these members because, although there were some younger members performing as band members at the concert, these men had been with the band in the 1960s. And, even

though Hal Cannon did not perform with The Stormy Mountain Boys at the concert, he had been a founding member before going on to form other groups during the revivalist period.

When Stewart mentioned the email exchange with Tom Drury, I decided that, since he represented the “commercial” side of the local revivalists, it was necessary that he be interviewed as well. Drury, in emails following his interview, suggested many other interviewees for us to consider. He suggested that Steve Barnes, Al Reeder, and Dick Wallin be contacted and offered me contact information for them. In the course of interviewing these commercial performers, the name Pat Zwick kept coming up, and I decided it was also important to contact him. Stewart had his phone number and suggested I give him a call to set up an interview. This was the general way we went about selecting the remaining interviewees as well. An informant would mention bandmates and friends from the Sixties or say something like “if you really want to know, talk to this guy.” And so we would, which led to us having a fairly balanced representation of commercial and ethnic performers from Utah’s revival era.

One of the first questions we always asked was about their interest in folk music - How did you become interested? How did you learn to play? So many of them replied similarly to each other, as well as typically of the national movement. Either they had grown up listening to Burl Ives, or they had heard the Kingston Trio on the radio and were just hooked - or both. The majority of our informants either saved up to buy banjos and guitars (if there wasn’t a guitar already in the home) or they were given instruments

as gifts by their parents. These blossoming young musicians then took to their bedrooms to practice by ear the songs they loved, heard either on the radio or played repeatedly on 78s until they were well mastered. Some took formal music lessons from older revivalists like Bruce Phillips at Southeast Music in Salt Lake City, which in turn earned these middle-class youngsters rebellious lessons in labor history and other left-wing topics. As soon as they had learned songs well enough to perform, the revivalists would get together with friends to share what they'd learned and to pick up other songs and styles from each other. There was an enthusiasm about the process that was contagious, and folk music appreciation clubs sprung up in high schools and on college campuses, most notably at East High School, Highland High School, and the University of Utah.

Just as the second wave of the national revival also included many of the Old Left from the first wave, the urban folk music revival in Utah had three separate generations participating at the same time. In Utah, the generations were not quite fully split by generations. The first group included, primarily, Utah Phillips and Rosalie and Jim Sorrels. These individuals collected folksongs from traditional singers and fostered the talents of younger artists, as well as presenting concerts. The second group consisted of Polly Stewart, Mac Magleby, and their age mates. These were folks in college at the height of the revival. They looked up to their mentors but were not so far apart in age - maybe ten years younger at most - that they could not socialize within the same groups fairly easily. The third group was the youngest but also perhaps the most enthusiastically active in the folk music scene. Heather Stewart Dorrell - five years younger than her

sister Polly - along with Hal Cannon, Brent Bradford, Tom Carter and many others were in this group of high school kids. They were the ones taking lessons from the oldest generation, peering excitedly in through doorways while the older crowds played, and forming clubs at their high schools so they could cram as much folk music into their lives as possible.

#### THE ISSUE OF AUTHENTICITY IN UTAH'S REVIVAL

As much as age seemed to define many aspects of revivalists' experiences, one thing seemed pretty constant. Authenticity was a haunting issue that led to changes in personal taste, as well as the ways in which these musicians viewed themselves and each other. Regina Bendix describes the search for authenticity as "fundamentally an emotional and moral quest." She writes that "the quest for authenticity is a peculiar longing, at once modern and anti modern" (Bendix 1997, 7). Without modern innovations such as the 78s so many of the revivalists gained much of their material from, as well as the modern and mass-produced instruments they played, the revivalists would not have been able to attempt to reproduce the music of the South without traveling there. And, even then, there is no guarantee that they would have discovered as great a cache of artistry as was already available to them due to the collecting efforts of academics and enthusiasts of earlier generations, especially in Utah.

Bendix continues:

[Authenticity] is oriented toward the recovery of an essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity, and whose recovery is feasible only through methods and sentiments created in modernity. (Bendix 1997, 7-8)

Neil Rosenberg also comments on this kind of anachronistic dilemma, saying revivalists “view the tradition’s past not only from an ideological viewpoint but also from a new temporal and experiential viewpoint, and almost always from the viewpoint of a different class” (Rosenberg 1993, 196). Utah revivalists must have been affected by an acute awareness of Utah’s rough and tumble Western history while growing up as urban and suburban kids. I am sure that this juxtaposition of growing up in a place that no longer fits the image of its past, along with the captivation with the South and West that had swept the nation, is what Bendix is referring to as realizing loss only through modernity - the recovery of the music and, to some extent, lifestyle, only feasible through modern means. Suburban and urban young people played songs they heard on recordings bought in a music store downtown, but the music was from that past or mythical place for which they longed.

I should clarify here that the folk music revival was made up of many genres of music that could fall under the umbrella term “folk music” but include many sub-genres such as bluegrass, old-time (named for the early rural recordings by record companies in the 1920s), and pop music. The term “pop music” refers to any music that is generally popular, which in the 1950s and 1960s included “folk music.” “Folk music” typically refers to the broad spectrum, though can become a bit confusing depending on who is speaking. Similarly, each performer’s definition of what was authentic varied. Most commonly, revivalists refer to folk music and old-time music interchangeably, though the line between pop/commercial and authentic folk becomes a bit blurry. Most performers

refer to bluegrass separately, though it was very much an important part of the revival nationally and in Utah. Authenticity is tied to the different styles of music, though a song or group of a particular style may not have been considered to be authentic while another song or group of the same style could be. For example, the Kingston Trio's version of "Tom Dooley" was not generally viewed as "authentic," but there are renditions done by other artists like Pete Seeger that seem to have been valued as having more authenticity simply because of who did the performing and how they presented the song. Pete Seeger was an artist who was viewed by many younger revivalists as very authentic despite his upper class roots.

Hal Cannon, in a joint interview with Rosalie Sorrels and Polly Stewart by Doug Fabrizio on KUER as part of the series *Radio West*, tried to explain what made (makes) folk music so appealing. After thinking for a few seconds he replied that "authenticity is the word, but it's authenticity of spirit" (Sorrels 2007). Fabrizio had framed his question in terms of authenticity meaning purity, which in his phrasing was synonymous with simplicity of tune or lyrics and could be an easy assumption, but one that Cannon did not feel fully described the tie he had to folk music.

In the interview Stewart and I conducted with Tom Carter, it became clear that there was a deep emotional tie to the music each performer deemed "authentic." Carter tried to put into words exactly what it was that had drawn him to old-time music (the music he had felt to be most authentic at the time). Together, Carter and Stewart worked



out what they seemed to think was an adequate description but what I, as an outsider, still found unclear as a definition, though I did recognize the power the music had to them:

PS: Well, there's something about the sound as well. I mean it's really —

TC: Yeah.

PS: I mean, it's not brilliant.

TC: No, it's —

PS: There's some other kind of content in it —

TC: It's pretty —

PS: That brings tears to your eyes in a way that bluegrass can never do. (Carter 2007)

Carter agreed with Stewart's assessment and continued onto another topic. This exchange may not seem very illuminating, but I believe it is the struggle to put into words a feeling that overtook both Stewart and Carter at the time of the revival, but also so many years later at the time of this interview, that illustrates the importance of the last line. These two revivalists and scholars, so many decades afterward could not fully verbalize why the music meant so much, only to say that it had (and still has) the power to bring the listener to tears.

Later on in the Fabrizio interview, Sorrels continues Cannon's statement about the power of folk music:

It exists in a lot of different disciplines, but the heartfelt tone, the song that spills from the heart to the mouth and has authenticity, but also it's music to me that people make because they need it, and they can't buy it, and they can't get it any other way but to make it when they need it. And there are a lot of things that already exist that fit that bill, and people take them over and change them a little. It needs to be changed. It needs to stay alive that way. (Sorrels 2007)

I think what Sorrels is referring to here was the legitimacy of those in the revival to perform traditional songs, or to change the lyrics in order to reflect something more

current - such as the way Joe Hill changed lyrics to popular songs in order to make them relevant to the union cause. Sorrels is also pointing out that folk music, like any other aspect of folklore, must be dynamic and able to change with the times. If something cannot change to fit the needs of the people, it will die out. Therefore, what is defined as “folk music” is constantly changing, whether that means which traditional songs are sung, or the instrumentation used, or including the singer-songwriters as contributors to the genre. (Toelken 1996, 40-49)

Although it is hard to know where Toelken would place revivalism, revivals are a valid and important phenomenon worthy of academic study in their own right. Mitchell, referencing folklorists Sheldon Posen and Neil Rosenberg, argues that:

[F]olk revival must be understood as something quite distinct from traditional folk music *per se* - revival entails a distinct understanding of music, a distinct repertoire, and involves a unique cross-section of people, and must thus be understood on its own terms, rather than via unfavorable and over-simplified comparisons with traditional folk music communities. (Mitchell 2007, 95)

In his chapter entitled “Starvation, Serendipity, and the Ambivalence of Bluegrass Revivalism,” Rosenberg writes that revivals are important “because they tell us about our own unexamined assumptions concerning the other things we study” (Rosenberg 1993, 194). Just as Stewart and Carter, among others, had been blinded by their own perceptions of their experiences as authentic performers until reexamining the era later as academics, it is important to recognize the entirety of that period. Rosenberg writes that by maintaining such strong views without rethinking them, we end up shunning large

portions of historical experience. Rosenberg points out that the term “revival” is problematic:

It is true that when we look carefully at revivals we often find that the things being revived (1) haven't completely died out - that is, however moribund they may be they don't necessarily require revival - and (2) are made into something different by the revival process; that is, revival kills, maims, or mutates them. Moreover, frequently many of the people involved in revivals are outsiders who are reviving things novel to them. I would argue that, granting the accuracy of these observations, we are still dealing with people for whom, and events in which, revival is the predominant motive, the underlying reason for action. And the word's connotation of religious fervor captures an essential aspect of the phenomenon: the verve, zeal, energy, and fervor of revivalist involvement. (Rosenberg 1993, 194-195)

This passage also captures one of the key features of the urban revival, which is the passion for the music felt by performers nationwide, including Utah. This passion, I think, comes from a need for authenticity. Rosenberg writes that “Revivalists perceive the music system as threatened, moribund, or unappreciated - usually for ideological and aesthetic reasons” (Rosenberg 1993, 196). He states that, although revivalists often “disagree among themselves about their visions of authenticity,” the standards they attempted to establish were very important to them (Rosenberg 1993, 196-197). Establishing a single standard for authenticity within the revival would have been impossible because revivalists seemed unable to even agree on one definition of what folk music was. As I mentioned above, “folk music” in the revival functions as a kind of umbrella term including genres like bluegrass and old-time - and even popular music - because of the vast popularity of the revival among young people, which led to huge commercial successes for many bands and their management.

In 2004, Stewart asked Phillips for his thoughts on the term “urban folk music revival” or each word on its own - however he “wanted to go at it.” She had phrased it this way because she recognized that the terms may mean different things to different people. Phillips replied:

I guess, I think they’re real things, urban is a real thing and the commercial revival became an urban phenomenon because that’s where the people were who would buy the records. The people who were, at that time, who were in the rural areas were still makin’ their own music. See? So, it was that part, the commercial revival was the urban phenomenon. (Phillips 2004)

He goes on to attempt defining the music itself but ends up describing the problem of what was seen as folk music in the revival, as opposed to the academic view of folk music:

Well, folk music, now folk music is a bit more problematic. In that, we caved into and accepted for that ten or twelve year period a media-driven definition of folk music. Which, for me, bore full fruit when I played the Kerrville Festival for the first time down in South Texas, and asked the driver who was driving me into town from the airport if they sang folksongs at this festival. He said, “everybody does.” And it turned out that what they meant by folk song was that you wrote it. They had no concept of cooperative ownership of a song. They had *none*. I’d sing an old song and they’d say, “when did you write that?” And, none, oh man. So we adopted a commercial, you know, driven, a capitalist-driven notion of folk song. [...] So, folk music in the context of what was happening then, no, that wasn’t folk music. What I was learning, I was learning folk music, I was learning from all these people. You know, and I was learning by ear, not by book or by record. (Phillips 2004)

Even Phillips’s view of himself as authentic is problematic, though, because what he viewed as authentic folksongs were typically cowboy songs and songs that would have been part of the first wave of the revival that included many left-wing labor songs, especially those written by Joe Hill, or songs, at least, modeled after these types. Phillips

was neither a cowboy, nor a displaced laborer of the turn of the century. He became deeply involved in union organizing and left-wing politics as an adult, but he was not innately a part of the traditional groups whose music he “learned by ear,” nor did he perform the songs in their original contexts, which leads to an academic folklorist having to categorize him as a very enthusiastic imitator or emulator. This classification probably would not make Phillips very happy. However, the classification must stand because he was an outsider and, as Stewart states, the defining quality of revival (as opposed to traditional) music is that “inevitably, outsiders are involved somewhere in the process” (Stewart 2006, 226).

Many revivalists, as we can see illustrated by the incredible passion for the music discussed by Phillips, Sorrels, and Cannon, took folk music very seriously. Sorrels dedicated much of her time to collecting folk songs in Utah and Idaho, in addition to performing and fostering young talent. Bruce Phillips went to great lengths to be sure the songs he composed entered into the folk tradition, at least in the way he saw it, and were sung by as many people as possible. He truly saw himself as an authentic folksinger, as someone who would fit into the group Stekert labeled “traditional singers”:

Plumbers define plumbing, carpenters define carpentry. The fellow doing the carpentry out front, he knows his tools, and so he has the axe, he can define what that is. I'm a folksinger, so I define it, thank you. You know. I mean, I never abdicated that to, to non-folksingers. Folk song isn't owned by anybody, it's owned by everybody. It has nobody's name on it. It shows evidence of oral transmission, it exists in different versions and that's pretty close. (Phillips 2004)

His song “Rock Salt & Nails” is one of his most widely performed songs. Versions have been done by Waylon Jennings, Joan Baez, and Flatt & Scruggs, among others.

Tom Carter was a member of that youngest generation of Utah revivalists and played in a number of bluegrass and old-time bands. At the time of our interview, it quickly became clear that Carter had spent a good amount of time reexamining the problem of authenticity in his own experience during the revival. As a high school student, Carter struggled to really live the lifestyle:

It had to do with this whole sort of sensibility. I mean, it was a lifestyle as well as a music, you know - in some ways it came back to haunt me later on. But it was part of this, you know, you dress the part and where you started wearing kind of thrift store clothing. Kind of picking up old - I remember when I was first in high school, I started wearing these kind of old tweed jackets and stuff. [...] And it wasn't like country at all, and it wasn't like, you know, the bluegrass stuff, it was really different, the whole sensibility. And so it had to do with, you know, your clothes and your politics, I mean, which were sort of, you know, say, of lefty kind of stuff. And this nostalgic, you know, kind of like, Franklin D. Roosevelt's back again. (Carter 2007)

What Carter is describing is a passion for the music that really infiltrated every aspect of his day-to-day life. In Stekert's revivalist groups, Carter would surely be described as an imitator or emulator because he truly desired to become a Depression-era traditional singer. He viewed his playing of old-time music to be, in many ways, more "authentic" than other strands of the revival because "bluegrass didn't have the same politics":

so it was still kind of almost like mainstream compared to the stuff - I mean, we really thought what we were doing was sort of radical. You know? It was like, the bluegrass guys thought that they were reacting and being more authentic than the folk music guys. But we thought we were *really*, like, really out there, you know? (Carter 2007)

Stewart immediately picked up on Carter's reference to what he called "folk music" as being what we had defined as "commercial" and, which was the group Stekert labeled as the "utilizers." The definitions become a little confusing and overlap each other,

depending on who was doing the defining. For instance, “folk music” is understood as a genre of music that includes traditional instrumentation and perhaps traditional lyrics (though the lyrics could be original compositions by a contemporary performer and still be considered part of the genre). But, this can be ambiguous since “folk music,” academically, anyway, is understood to be traditional music handed down through traditional methods in its original context, or to a traditional audience. So, the idea of something being “authentic” also becomes quite muddled and can change from informant to informant. Stewart confirmed Carter’s recognition of a hierarchy of authenticity within the local revival by saying:

You know, Jennifer and I worked out a distinction between commercial and whatever else was going on. And the commercial - you know, there was a huge industry locally of commercial performers, and Tom Drury was the most famous of them. But there were a lot of them. And they saw themselves as *very* different, and they called us ‘ethnics.’ (Carter 2007)

This was a very key moment in our fieldwork because it helped us to understand much better the structure and existence of a kind of hierarchy of perceived authenticity amongst revival musicians in Utah. It had been fairly easy, once we realized a difference, to distinguish between the “ethnic” performers (essentially anyone who fell under the Phillips and Sorrels umbrella and viewed themselves as performing something “authentic”) and the “commercial” performers (basically anyone else), but the distinction really brought into light just how complex the idea of authenticity really was at the time, and continues to be upon historical examination.

In an article written in 1969, R. Serge Denisoff described the rift between the two broader groupings, “ethnic” (also referred to interchangeably as “authentic”) and “commercial.” He labels the authentic side “ideological” and states that “the ideological position saw folk music in the context of social change [...] and was therefore isolated from the mass media. The commercial saw folk music as fundamentally an art form advocating ‘art for art’s sake’” (Denisoff 1969, 195). Tom Drury, the most famous of Utah’s commercial revivalists, was interviewed by Stewart and I in March and April of 2007. Drury recognized the divisions caused by perceived authenticity at the time as well. The revival community in Utah was fairly close-knit and Drury said that he was part of it, but not fully accepted by the “ethnic” performers:

I knew Bruce [Phillips] and Jim [Sorrels] and Rosalie [Sorrels] very well but it was like we were on opposite poles. It was like “Hey! He’s doing this for money and, you know, that’s not cool - you’re not ethnic enough.” (Drury, March 2007)

Stewart asked him at that point about his living, “So all the time anybody in Salt Lake was being kind of ‘pure,’ you were out making a living?” Drury replied with a sense of pride:

Yeah. I made my living for, like, thirty years singing. I never got rich, but I basically paid for my existence with my music and met an awful lot of interesting people along the way too! (Drury, March 2007)

This was a very interesting revelation because Drury was the first interviewee we had talked with who had not had any other career outside the arts. Because the local self-identifying authentic performers shunned the idea of making money from their music, they, apparently, eventually had to sort of give up the music and get “real” jobs after



college. Many, though not all, became academics of some kind. Some continued to play on their off time primarily for enjoyment, while others - like Stewart - packed up their instruments almost completely. This is quite a contrast to the experience of Drury and those performers in his cohort who performed in a variety of groups, working other jobs only as a means to saving money in order to tour.

Our first interview with Drury is essentially a long list of famous name-dropping, coupled with adventurous stories of close calls with full-on stardom. Drury went on USO tours in Vietnam with Ronald Reagan's daughter, met Randy Sparks and was invited to join the New Christy Minstrels, toured Europe and appeared on TV in Germany, and essentially started commercial folk singing as entertainment in Salt Lake bars - namely Grogan's and Gino's. Drury "partied" with the Kingston Trio at a house party in Bountiful, and one of his bandmates played rhythm guitar for Elvis Presley. (Drury, March 2007)

Most of the local authentic performers, when asked about their own songwriting, admitted that they did not typically write songs. I was surprised to learn that the majority of them had never written a single song. It was surprising to me because my personal view of authentic performers on the national level included topical songwriters, like Phil Ochs, who wrote in the tradition of Joe Hill, which just goes to illustrate further how complicated authenticity was to define. I asked Drury about songwriting and learned that politics, even at the height of the revival period, dictated what could and could not be

recorded if one was hoping to gain success and support from recording companies. Drury said:

I tried to stay away from writing too many really questionable protest songs because I was always performing and, any time I did something a little questionable, I caught a lot of flack for it, so I tried to make mine just suggestive on the edge without totally diving into the red hot water. (Drury, April 2007)

Drury would perform his own songs as well as songs made popular by national performers, but his view of song ownership differed greatly from that of Phillips who also performed a mix of traditional songs and his own compositions. As discussed above, Phillips viewed songs as the property of no one in particular, which tied in with the perspective of other “authentic” like Woody Guthrie who said:

I get my words and tunes from the hungry folks and they get all the credit for all I pause to scribble down ... music is some kind of electricity that makes a radio out of a man and the dial is in his head and he just sings according to how he’s feeling. The best stuff you can sing about is what you saw and if you look hard enough you can see plenty to sing about. (Eyerman 1996, 501)

Like Guthrie and Phillips, Drury also got his inspiration from current events and his surroundings. He wrote songs about the walk on the moon, John F. Kennedy’s assassination, and even just about longing to come back home to the mountains from California. Where Drury stands out as particularly part of the commercial set are his ideas about song ownership. He told me the story of a duo wanting to record his song “Colorado Mountain Boy”:

Somebody stole that song and recorded it. They called me and asked if they could record it and I said, “Sure.” And they said, “Can we put on there that we wrote it too?” and I said “No.” - “Well, why?” and I said, “Because you didn’t and I’m funny about my songs!” (Drury, April 2007)

This duo tried to soften his decision by explaining the company they wanted to record for wouldn't sign them unless they could prove they could write songs. This information just served to upset Drury further, declaring "But you didn't!" (Drury, April 2007)

Because the writing of songs (or not) did not seem to hold much in the way of determining authenticity, I interviewed Stewart in 2009, hoping to gain some clarification on a definition, or at least a more solid list of qualities, seen as authentic. After we had talked to Tom Carter in 2007, and I had done some more reading on the national revival, I realized that revivalists who felt so inclined, after having a number of years to reexamine their own opinions on authenticity in the revival, may have had some better insights into what they saw as authentic at the time and why. So, when I talked to Stewart on record again in 2009, I was hoping she might have been doing some thinking about this that could prove enlightening on the issue of authenticity in the revival, and she had. I phrased my question about what had guided her views on authenticity together with one about her feelings about the youth movement at the time and whether she had felt swept up in the idea of folk music being the "in" thing at the time. Stewart's reply was rather telling, at least as far as Stewart's experience goes, but I think that it probably bears similarity to the experiences of many other revivalists on the "ethnic" side. She suggests that age may have been an important factor in her attraction to what she saw as authentic folk music:

I think I was a little too old to be profoundly affected by the youth movement of the early '60s because I was already - I had grown up with Burl Ives and already had a kind of a springboard to the quote "authentic" folk music movement that Bruce [Phillips] and Rosalie [Sorrels] were working in. And so I was always just a bit disdainful of Peter Paul and Mary and even Joan Baez because a lot of people on the authentic side thought that she'd been compromised pretty early, even

though her first album was accompanied by the guitarist Fred Hellerman who was one of the musicians in the Weavers. So, anyway, the question, I think, is sort of a multi-pronged question, but I saw myself as a little bit senior to the youth who were clamoring for Peter Paul and Mary, and I was not impressed with them. (Stewart 2009)

She continues on to say that she “was mighty impressed with the Kingston Trio” when she first heard them because the sound of the five-string banjo was so new and “it’s that wild sound that is just stunning and it’s electrifying” (Stewart 2009). However, she did not state that she viewed them in any sense of being authentic because “that was while I was still singing Burl Ives songs, and I did not become a snob until about 1961 when I was brought into the sort of orbit of the Sorrels and Phillips gang” (Stewart 2009).

Stewart describes the process of her becoming a “snob”:

I was conditioned, because of my association with Rosalie [Sorrels] and Bruce [Phillips] and that group, not to be impressed with any of the up-and-coming singer-songwriters. And I was even skeptical of Bob Dylan when I first heard him, and I used to argue against him. People - we would have discussions about the relative merits of these artists and I, you know, I thought he was - I said “well, you know, his name isn’t even Dylan, it’s Zimmerman!” You know, I was kind of a smart mouth about that, and I didn’t trust that he was a singer-songwriter not doing traditional material and so it was just the snobbery of my association with the authentics. (Stewart 2009)

While Stewart found herself with a growing dislike for the performers becoming most popular on the national scene, she also found herself being compared to them. At the end of each of her “five or six concerts while at the University of Utah,” “invariably, a crowd of people would come rushing up afterwards saying, ‘Oh! You have such a beautiful voice! You sound just like *Joan Baez!*’” (Stewart 2009) Stewart complained:

This was the greatest compliment they could offer and it was an insult to me. And so I had this constantly sort of mixed feeling. I was just very very ambivalent

about the whole movement and I wanted not to be associated with the popular performers. (Stewart 2009)

And so we see the desire to set oneself apart from the commercial performers as something being of great value to the authentics. This is also very apparent in Tom Carter's belief that the old-time music he was playing was really "radical," especially when compared to the bluegrass many of his age-mates were playing (Carter 2007).

I asked Stewart to speak specifically about her admiration of Hedy West, a national performer she had mentioned before:

Well, about Hedy, she was the daughter of a radical Southern scholar activist whose name was Don West, and he devoted his life toward left-wing political activity with the aim of improving the lives of Southern mountaineers. And Hedy grew up - she would have been maybe five years older than I, and so, let's say she was born in 1938, so she was - because of her father's politics and his activism - she got to know people of all colors in the context of using music to effect social change and, in a way, that was authentic to me. But also the fact that, because she was from the South, there was a family tradition that she grew out of and which singing played a part, and she also had access to a lot of traditional singers and so she played the banjo in the most wonderful way. You know, it was unforgettable. It was really unforgettable. She had an excellent musicianship but she also had an extraordinary singing voice, and so, all of these things just - I found, I mean, that's one reason I liked her so much. She was just - I was just flattened by her. I mean, I just thought she was the greatest. (Stewart 2009)

Here we can see that, at least for Stewart, some of the most important pieces to the authenticity puzzle were the importance of left-wing political activism, contact with traditional singers, being from the South, and outstanding personal abilities in playing and singing.

When I interviewed Stewart in 2007, she had commented that, to the authentics, a “commercial, slick performance was not where it was at.” In 2009, she expanded on this, saying that she had been referring specifically to Randy Sparks:

Randy Sparks would take some existing recording and kind of tart it up. He had - the New Christy Minstrels had eleven voices and so it was a very massed sound, a lot of - a very thick sound and it just was orchestrated to the Nth degree [...] and it was a very slick, pre-arranged everything so that there was not any spontaneity in it. (Stewart 2009)

Sparks was the epitome of not authentic. The sound he promoted stands in a direct lineage with the polished Tin Pan Alley songs loathed by the first wave revivalists, but, I believe, the music promoted by Sparks and the local commercial revivalists like Drury can also be compared in a continuum with the onslaught of boy-bands and Disney pop stars flooding the charts, starting in the 1990s. Although their aesthetic was disdained by the ethnics, Drury and his compatriots loved the theatrical qualities of the New Christy Minstrels’ stage presence and the huge sound they were able to produce (Drury, March 2007).

## CONCLUSIONS

The Urban Pioneers project, and, as a means of reporting the understandings of authenticity within the revival, this paper, are significant in adding to the understanding of Utah’s social and cultural history in the 1950s and 1960s, and to the wider view of the national urban folk music revival era. The diverse participants and the complexities of their understandings of themselves through the lens of authenticity have contributed a great deal to the appreciation of this period as more than simply the time of a pop music

fad. This era was of great importance to the politics and development of an entire generation, the effects echoing still today - as can be noted by the enormous success of the reunion concert and the support and enthusiasm for our project.

Although striving for authenticity had been an astronomically important part of the urban folk music revival - both in the ways the revivalists viewed their own identities but also in ways used to accept or reject each other - it appears that upon reexamining their own experiences, many revivalists - nationally and here in Utah - have accepted that authenticity was, in actuality, not something that really ever existed. Authenticity, and their attempts at defining it, had permeated virtually every performance and conversation taking place in the revival era. The commercial performers, though they were less concerned with the issue of authenticity, were acutely aware of the divisive consequences resulting from the authentic performers' quest for authenticity.

Stewart summed up her awareness of authenticity as she understood it when we talked in 2009:

I really think that we were in a bubble. I think that we were - had this misbegotten idea that there was such a thing as authenticity. Since then - and you've probably studied in your study of folklore that authenticity has been knocked into a three-cornered hat - there's no such thing. [Regina Bendix, in *In Search of Authenticity*] shows that folklorists in the '60s were chasing a will-o'-the-wisp and the folksingers who thought they were authentic didn't really understand what they were doing. You know, the term - the defining term that I use for revival music is taking music out of its ordinary performance place and performing it for somebody else. We were doing revival music but we didn't understand it. What we didn't like was commercialization. [...] You remember Tom Carter's interview where he speaks quite movingly of his yearning to - you know, he went to the South. And he lived among the trees and whatever he did and he did his damndest to become one of them, and you could tell from his discourse that he kind of didn't see it that way anymore. (Stewart 2009)

Stewart extended her analysis of how perceptions had changed over the decades since the revival to the reunion concert in January 2007, saying that “it was obviously some old geezers getting together for a reunion, and it was for nostalgia - and it was for the ‘60s, not for the Southern hills” (Stewart 2009). Although each performer at the time of the revival was an authentic revivalist, the value had been seen, not in revival, but in actual replication of the traditional performances. As time has passed, it has become clear that the struggle to *be* authentic in the ways they wished was an impossible goal, but Stewart’s revelation hints at an understanding of the value of the revival movement in itself. The performers may not have succeeded at what they had hoped, but their experience was one of great value to many people, including themselves.

During the revival, although it is hard to nail down a complete definition of what they saw as authentic because of differing opinions, it seems that there were three main qualities associated with an authentic performance or performer. First, a deep hatred of commercialization was key to being authentic; if someone could (or even would) make money with the music, they were automatically labeled “commercial” or as one of Stekert’s “utilizers” and, therefore “less than.” Second, having been from a rural area or, at the very least, having done an extensive amount of travel in a rural area strongly linked a performer to the idea of being authentic. And, third, as Tom Carter describes above, politics were an important indicator. Many revivalists who were concerned with authenticity were also concerned with social justice and other left-wing political ideals. Inevitably, these two concepts became linked in the minds of the revivalists. And, as we



saw with Carter's experience with turning his back on bluegrass - traditionally a politically conservative musical style - and with Stewart's description of Hedy West, these revivalists sought out styles of music that were more political and, therefore, in their minds, more authentic.

As time has passed, those who had taken part in the revival have had time to rethink their perceptions of authenticity. Many have come to the conclusion that what they had thought was authentic might not be and, in fact, that perhaps nothing really is. Utah Phillips, as I discussed above, saw himself as an authentic folksinger and was fairly accepted as such among local revivalists. However, if we use Stekert's categories, I see him as an emulator. But, perhaps it is most important to allow the revivalists to define themselves and their own perceptions. As time went, those who did the most introspective examination on the revival and the issue of authenticity were Carter and Stewart, who went on to say that authenticity had been a myth. Much like the broader field of folklore, these revivalists had put much stock into defining something that, at least currently, has been marked as something that cannot really exist, or "knocked into a three cornered hat" as Stewart said. So, perceptions change, but the values did define the revival period and therefore cannot be overlooked when discussing that time.

#### AFTERWORD

Polly Stewart's original goal for the research she set out to collect was to simply collect as much as possible about the urban folk music revival in Utah and to make that research available to future scholars. She recognized the importance of the revival era and

was most concerned with the fact that, if someone did not collect the data, that whole piece of history would be lost to the ages. So, she took it upon herself to collect and invited me to join in on the adventure. Working on this project with Stewart has been a tremendous honor. I treasure the experiences and knowledge gained as a result of working under such a generous teacher, as well as the personal relationships I still maintain with many of our informants.

In 2012, we were invited to work with Alison Regan and Amy Brunvand at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah in conjunction with the Mountain West Digital Library in order to digitize our materials and to develop an online exhibit for our Urban Pioneers project. Stewart passed away in February 2013, leaving me to finish delivering the materials to the library. Regan and Brunvand continued their work, and the exhibit is now online for public viewing ([www.lib.utah.edu/exhibits/folkmusic/index.php](http://www.lib.utah.edu/exhibits/folkmusic/index.php)). Our physical materials are housed in Special Collections at the Stewart Library at Weber State University.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A.

## URBAN PIONEERS ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

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## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE INTERVIEW

POLLY STEWART INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER BOTT  
9 MARCH 2007, SALT LAKE CITY

JB: So, today is March 9th, 2007. I'm sitting here in Salt Lake City at the home of Polly Stewart, whom I'm interviewing. My name's Jennifer Bott, and it is 2:35 P.M. So, tell me a little bit about when and where you were born and raised.

PS: I was born here in Salt Lake City, July 27th, 1943, and I was brought up here in Salt Lake City. I went to local schools and I went to the U.

JB: Cool. And what were you studying at the university?

PS: I was a history major.

JB: Cool. How did you get started performing in the folk music scene here?

PS: Well, when I was a child, my parents had - and my uncle and aunts - they - all the uncles and aunts on my dad's side of the family (electronic interference with tape) were interested in Burl Ives. And, so, we listened to Burl Ives records and my family had an album and then my uncle and aunt had an album, and so we all learned these different songs. And when we were traveling to the canyon (electronic interference with tape) - Provo Canyon - on weekends we would sing these songs and I - we later understood that this was a ploy on the part of my mother to keep us from destroying ourselves in the back, but anyway, we not only sang songs on the way up, but when we got up there, with all our cousins and all, up in the canyon, we were always singing. And, so, we sang a variety of songs and the ones that I was fondest of were these Burl Ives songs. And when - when I



got to be in high school, up the street from us, there moved in a family. We lived on Second Avenue between O Street and P Street. And on the corner of P Street and Second Avenue, in 1959, there moved into the - that house a family named Sorrels. And we became aware of them because of their angelic looking children. They were - they looked like, like, like fairy children. They had beautiful blonde hair and they were very, very ethereal looking children. But what was more interesting to me was that on the porch, in the evenings, they would sing and they had lots of friends that would come and sing with them, playing instruments. And it was the guitar (pause) and it was just so much like the Burl Ives that I used to know and singing along and all that kind of thing. I just was fascinated by it. And so my folks invited Rosalie down for an evening and she - we got to know her and she just was very friendly and very open, very kind. And, pretty soon I was spending time up there on the porch with the others and I got to be a babysitter and, you know, I was just basically sort of hanging around. It was a neighborhood thing. And when I graduated the spring of 1961, Rosalie and her husband Jim formed a group called the Intermountain Folk Music Council. And it was - its purpose was to promote folk singing in the state of Utah and to give concerts and bring performers in. And, so, our first - and I was - well was the newsletter editor actually - of the IFMC. And we, every month, we got together and we had mailing parties. It was a great deal of fun for a seventeen year old, sixteen year old. And, so, in June of 1961, they - the IFMC - produced its first concert in Orson Spencer

Hall Auditorium and I was one of the singers. And there were lots of different singers, and, so that was my first experience - I had - It was not the first time I had ever sung before an audience because I had sung some folk music in high school and I sang Burl Ives songs, my favorite one was "The Fox." And so I sort of had a little bit of a repertoire, but mainly I just was just like a sponge, sort of learning all of these new songs that were floating around. So that was how I got started singing folk music in Salt Lake City. It was under the tutelage of Rosalie Sorrels, who I must say was an extremely generous and thoughtful impresario. She really wanted people to develop their talents and she was extremely generous with her time, helping people to become secure and feel okay about singing publicly. So that's really how I got started.

JB: So, you were playing mostly guitar and singing?

PS: Yeah. I did - I started out by accompanying myself on the guitar. Our family had an old Stella. It was given to my family by my uncle, my bad uncle, my bad uncle Kilton who took great delight in corrupting people's children. And so he gave the guitar to my brother, my older brother Peter, as a reward for Peter learning a number of not very nice songs - which Uncle Kilton taught him. The most famous one was probably the one called "Roll Your Leg Over the Man In the Moon." Anyway, Peter was twelve, so he taught - he learned these songs and he learned how to play and so Uncle Kilton gave him the guitar, this Stella. It was an old steel string. And later on, I learned it. I picked it up and taught myself chords from

a book that we had about teaching yourself how to play the guitar. And so pretty soon I was playing C, I was playing G, a not very well F, and D, and, you know, things like that, but - so I was just learning. And I was just strumming very simply. And so I later on learned to sing things unaccompanied. But my first instrument was the old Stella guitar.

JB: So, when you started performing - where and how did you do this?

PS: Well, as I mentioned, I sang at a high school assembly or two in high school. And then after I graduated, we had this spectacular, wonderful concert at Orson Spencer Hall. And that was the first public venue. Later on, I got a lot of help from Rosalie with singing out because she was very much in demand and people would be calling her up all the time asking her if she would go sing. And if she didn't have time, she kept a little stable of people that she would call on to go fill these engagements. And I was one of the people that she would call. And so I got to be on TV, I will never forget it. It was in spring of 1963 and there was the local university station which was already called KUED. And some - here was some deal with Uncle Roscoe who was a local storyteller - TV entrepreneur. He was there, and I can't remember all, but I was supposed to sing some songs, and so I did. And so I got this experience of being able to perform in connection with a larger production and being - taking orders from people about what to sing and where to stand and all that kind of thing. And I also got a chance to sing for various live audiences and these things were largely because of Rosalie's entrepre

— her impresarioship, her fostering of my developing my talent, which was a very wonderful thing.

JB: So you were primarily performing the songs of Burl Ives and - did you have other ones?

PS: Well, I, - later on - as soon as I joined the IFMC, I - as soon as I started singing out with Rosalie and her husband Jim, I learned lots of other songs and I learned the - there was - Joan Baez was just getting started and I sang some of her songs. And I had a couple of family songs that I sang. Let's see, I guess Burl Ives songs were really the main - the really the main repertoire back in the early days. But sooner - soon enough - I really picked up a lot of other - you know, when you come to a group of people singing, somebody'll sing and you'll like the song that they're singing and so you learn it. And so there's a lot of trading back and forth. There's a certain etiquette about how you get permission to sing a song that somebody has introduced into the group. But, Bruce Phillips, for example, wanted people to sing - wanted everyone to sing his songs and he said you don't need permission to ask. He believed it was important for a folk song to become a folk song, that is, to go into the oral tradition - without ownership - or, authorship. So I very soon was learning some songs that were written by Bruce and I just had - oh Hedy West was one of the people I just was so admiring of in the early Sixties. And so I was just like a sponge, you know, sort of picking up songs here and there. I also read - I studied a lot of songbooks and listened to a lot of records and

so I just got a kind of a repertoire that way.

JB: So, you were going to high school at the time. Were you working also?

PS: Well, I should say, I graduated from high school in the spring of '61. So, then I went to the university in the fall. And I was - I had little jobs all the way through college. I spent quite a lot of time working at Sears, Roebuck and Company, working eighteen hours a week and, believe it or not, the money that I earned at Sears, which I would save most of, I would get eighteen dollars a week and I would put fifteen dollars in the bank and I had three dollars for my pocket money. It was paid every Friday and with that money that I saved, I was able to pay my tuition and books. I mean it was just an astonishing - it was a different world altogether. So, yeah, I had little jobs all the way through college.

JB: Did you have any specific feelings toward any of the national performers?

PS: Well, I soon learned that Burl Ives was kind of a - to be looked down upon. And so I stopped singing Burl Ives songs and I also learned that Joan Baez was contested and I learned that Peter, Paul, and Mary were definitely looked down your nose at because in the - you know, the aesthetic I was developing under the tutelage of this group here in Salt Lake, was that commercially successful, slick performance was not where it was at. And so I had - I guess I would say - I'm trying to think who I did have respect for. Well, the New Lost City Ramblers and I didn't know enough about their sources to realize how heavy their debt was to artists who were performing in the Twenties in field recording situations in the

southern Appalachians. But - And I didn't realize how derivative they were. But I didn't realize what urban folk music was anyway. I mean, to me it was all just singing, just folk music and I didn't really have a scholarly perspective on it. started learning ballads just 'cause I thought they were beautiful. And, at the time I was starting to sing, I had two voices. I still do actually. One is a kind of a very soft soprano, a very lyrical soprano singing voice. And the other is a - that's a "head tone" voice - and the other is a "chest tone- which is a much more of a deeper tone and it's good for quite a different kind of repertoire. So I was singing two types of repertoire - one with the head tone and one with the chest tone. (long pause) So do you have some other questions?

JB: I think that probably (drops off)

PS: Well, you know, one thing you could ask me is about how I got involved with Polly and the Valley Boys (JB: "Oh, right") because that is a very big part of my career.

JB: Yeah. How did you guys get started?

PS: Polly and the Valley Boys was formed in the fall of 1964. So, I had been singing about town for over two years, really two and a half, really three - over three years, and I had achieved a quite a bit of local success as a girl folk singer. So, in the fall of '64, when the old Utah Valley Boys had broken up and three of the guys had gone to form the band called Salt City Bluegrass Boys with Mac Magleby, there were two leftover guys - Bruce Phillips and Dave Roylance - and for a while

they were trying to sing as a duo and they played with a couple of other musicians but they weren't really coming together very well. And, so in the fall of '64, they came to me and asked if I'd like to join them and be their girl singer in this - what we - would be - our instrumentation was suitable for both bluegrass style music, although we were not a bluegrass band, but a string band - an old-time string band. We had a mandolin. We had a couple of guitars. We had an autoharp. We had a banjo and we had a Jew's harp and a tambourine and various kinds of things to make different types of music. And, we had a very eclectic repertoire which was - some of it was Bruce's own material that he wrote, some of it was stuff that he got off of records and I remember I spent a lot of time copying words down off of old 78s that he picked up at a record shop downtown. And some of it was just here and there, you know, some of it was what I understood to be old-time music, but it was really - and there was a little bit of bluegrass music in there as well. We sang some works of Bill Monroe. We sang Uncle Penn. We sang Molly and Tenbrook - things that Bill Monroe had written for bluegrass. So, we had a - but basically it was a repertoire that was suitable (electronic interference with tape) for a string band, a mountain string band. (pause) So, you can go through the - where we sang out.

JB: Right. Yeah, so where did you guys perform?

PS: We - Bruce Phillips was our agent, our manager, and he got us gigs at various outdoor festivals. We, in the summer of '65, after we had been rehearsing for

several months, he composed the text for a - an advertising flyer and I did the artwork, it was all hand - hand artwork, line drawing, and it was then reproduced on an off-set printer and it was a mailer, a flyer that we'd send it out to all of the social clubs and a lot of churches and stuff and we got a few gigs out of that. One thing we didn't really understand is that if people saw that brochure, they wouldn't really understand what our music sounded like and we got one memorable date with the Utah - the local Veterans of Foreign Wars for their New Year's dance, and they thought that we were a country-western dance band. I don't know how they thought that but they were hire- they hired us ear unheard and we got there and not only were we not a dance band but also, it was very clear to some of these people in the audience that we were folksingers, and to them, folksingers were "commies" and doing violence to the American way of life and stuff like that. So we had a lot of sort of - that was one of probably - the worst night of our career was that New Year's Eve. We sang in various different kinds of churches, outdoor picnics, private parties, public concerts. We sang at The Abyss down in the basement of - just below the - what is today is the Capitol Theater. It was the Capitol Theater then, but it was not an opera house. And, so we just sang around. We had a couple of concerts that we gave and we gave various concerts at the university, you know, just all over the place. We had a gig every week or so for a couple years - the year and half that we were together in Salt Lake. What caused us to break up was that I graduated from the university and I got a fellowship to



go to the University of Oregon and so I left to go to graduate school in the fall of 1966. And so I - you know, that -I - my absence ended the Polly and the Valley Boys.

JB: Did you continue to perform once you reached Oregon?

PS: Yeah, I did a lot of solo work and presently I got connected up with a jug band and this jug band had a lot of gigs in a local tavern and sang at various arty places. And, so, the first year that I was there, I became known as a solo singer, but also as a member of this kind of raucous jug band that played in these bars. So - Yeah. And I actually kept on singing publicly singing folk music and I kept - I learned - I learned many more songs, both solo and jug band songs. And, then my repertoire just sort of stopped growing and I didn't really learn anything after I came to - I hardly learned anything at all after I came to teach at Salisbury, at Salisbury State College, after I left graduate school at Oregon. Eugene was a very fine town for this kind of music, but Salisbury was not. And, so I'd say that I didn't really learn any new songs except maybe one or two Doc Watson songs in Salisbury in the middle-Seventies and after that I stopped learning because - I mean I stopped performing and that was really the - my singing career as a folksinger really came to a stop, not that I ever had much of a career, but I mean, my public performance of folk singing came to a stop, and the only times I would sing or play after that would be as a teaching device for my folklore classes. Once in a while, in the spring, when I taught the course, I would give them a

demonstration of some of these things as part of their curriculum. But, basically, that was it. So, I didn't sing at all for twenty years.

JB: So, in the Urban Pioneers concert that you put on - how was that playing with the Polly and the Valley Boys again?

PS: Well, it was very weird, we - we did not - we had not played together for forty years, or really more than forty years, and neither of the guys came to town until the day before the concert. So, they got there - both of them got there in the morning of Tuesday, the twenty-third, and the concert was Wednesday, the twenty-fourth. So, we had one rehearsal and I could see that we were - it was hard for us because Bruce Phillips who was our guy, one of our guys, had had terrible health problems and congestive heart failure, he'd almost died not very long before and he was - he had to take care of himself and one of the he'd done is that he was no longer standing up to perform, he was sitting down. We'd always stood before, so we had to quickly adjust to sitting down. And, another thing was, he had something akin to carpal tunnel syndrome go wrong with his playing hand, his strumming hand, and so he had had to teach himself a whole new way of playing guitar which was just strumming instead of picking individually, so that a lot of the musical performance that we did back in those days was not available to us. Dave Roylance had stopped playing bluegrass banjo and was doing a much more muted style of banjo, and he didn't have a resonator on the back of his banjo, for example and - which was good 'cause we were playing a lot more

softly. And, my own playing - I had not played the autoharp for so long that I really had started - I did not have the muscle ability that I used to have. And so, we were pretty pitiful, actually, as performers. But, it didn't really matter because the important thing was that we were there on the stage together, performing three of our old songs and we avoided songs that required a lot spectacular instrumentation. Dave is an ext - had - when we were back in the Sixties, was one of the best banjo players around and he could do many, many styles and he was a very, very wonderful player, but none of us had played together and none of us had really practiced quite as a - as a group together. And, so it was musically not very satisfying, but, you know, from a historic perspective it was okay, it was the best we could do. And I - you know, the audience was so live that night, we couldn't do anything wrong, they loved us. And, I was glad that we were there. So, we had a little comeback that lasted ten minutes. (laughs)

JB: So, which three songs did you pick and why did you choose those?

PS: The three that we chose, we chose two Bruce Phillips songs and one other one and to tell you the truth, I would have to - I cannot - I can't remember which ones we did. But, they were all three songs that were - we did "Amelia Earhart's Last Flight" by Red River Dave McHenry. And, I'm sorry I just can't remember the others. But we threw them together and we did them and we did without the pyrotechnics which had been one of the hallmarks of our performance. I didn't do the usual kind of autoharp solo which I had been - I had been a fairly decent

autoharp player at one point but the autoharp that I thought I was gonna use was not functional any longer and the autoharp I borrowed was out of tune and I didn't get a chance to tune the thing. So, it was - you know, it was really not artistically a very satisfying performance. But, anyway the songs that we performed were easy - were songs that did not require a lot of solo work and so it was alright. We did the best we could. (pause) So, that was the end of Polly and the Valley Boys. You know, I'm glad we did it, but forty years does take a toll on a body and a soul. So, you know, we were three different people when we got together and I thought it was very sweet that we did get together, just for this one performance. But, you know, it's - it's not - we - nobody pretended that we were recreating the past.

JB: Had you guys kept in touch at all?

PS: No.

JB: ...through the years or?

PS: No. I didn't get in touch with Bruce until - I saw Bruce - I left Salt Lake in '66 and I saw him in '79, when he was living in Spokane and I was doing field work on a folklore project in northern Idaho, so Spokane was not very far away and I went over and visited him one afternoon. I saw him again in '89, when I happened to be in Salt Lake visiting my family over Christmas and he was down here for a concert. And, so, I got to visit with him then. And then I didn't see him again until 2004 - 2004, 2005. I interviewed him twice. And so it was a - now, Dave I didn't have any contact with at all hardly. I had corresponded with him very - you know,

every ten years or something like that, but that's all I knew about him. So, we really had not seen each other for a long, long time and we'd lived in different parts of the country for all that time.

JB: So, what had gotten you started and sent you to go interview him? - to interview Bruce Phillips?

PS: Well, I had begun a project of oral history - recording oral history of the artists who had performed in Salt Lake in the 1960s folk music revival era. And, the reason I had done that was that I realized that there was no documentation of them and there was no archive of their memories or their ephemera, their photographs or anything like that, and I realized that if - once they died, it would be lost. And, so, I wanted that not to happen, so I took it on myself to go start interviewing people and the first people that I thought to interview were Rosalie and - Rosalie Sorrels and Bruce Utah Phillips, and so that's how I got embroiled in this concert because Bruce - I was interviewing him for the second time and he just - you know, we were talking about the old times and he just got very enthusiastic and said, "Oh, we oughtta have a concert of all these old guys!" So, that's how that happened. So, there you go.

JB: So, you mention wanting to record their experience. Did you feel disassociated in any way? Like - you say "they" a lot when you discuss (drops off)

PS: Oh! Well, that's a good point. Yeah, I don't - I don't deny that I'm distant from this older time. It - you know, they say you can't go home again. And my years of

doing - my time of doing this old-time music with - and the - the revival music was all tied up with various other things that were happening in my life at the same time and you can't just do the one and not remember the other. And some of these things were painful to me and I just didn't want to go back and revisit them. And, so, I sealed myself off as much as possible from that and so I did - because Bruce had expressed a desire to have a concert, and I realized it would be an excellent way of gathering material and furthering my own project aims. I did not have the enthusiasm for it that I know that other people did and I'm glad that other people had enthusiasm for it and I'm glad that they reformed themselves and - you know, that two of the groups, Uncle Lumpy and the Rosewood Trio, really did a lot of work over the several months in advance of the concert to prepare for that concert and it was really wonderful. And, you know, the Stormy Mountain Boys were rehearsing all the time anyway. So, it was artistically very good for them.

JB: Were you personally acquainted with all of them before the concert? Or, was it kind of a tight-knit community at the time?

PS: No. I didn't know - see, it doesn't seem like a big age difference but there were really three age groups. There was the - what I am now characterizing as the sort of older group and that was Bruce, Rosalie, Bruce's husband Jim (meant Rosalie's husband, Jim Sorrels). Then there was this middle group and I was in that and then there was this younger group which was five years younger and Heather, my sister Heather, and Hal Cannon and Bruce - er Brent Bradford and all of those

guys were in that younger group. Oh, and in the middle group was Mac Magleby. So, when you're twenty years old and somebody's fifteen, that's way, way different in age. And, so I didn't know - I knew how - I knew my sister obviously, 'cause she was my sister but I didn't know Hal, except to see him perform once in a while. I didn't know Brent Bradford at all, I'd never met him at all. And yet, he was very significant. You know, that younger group had a huge (electronic interference with tape) artistic impact on the high school scene. But it was something I was oblivious to because, well, I was in college, what could I say? So there you go. So the only people I knew - I knew Dave, Bruce obviously - I knew Mac Magleby. I knew Hal Cannon because he later became a folklorist and I knew him professionally but I had only known him slightly when he was a kid my sister's age playing back in the Sixties. So, I got to - it was a privilege for me to meet Brent Bradford and all of his guys and to meet - again I knew Tom Carter of Uncle Lumpy but I didn't really know Chris Montague at all. I knew his name but I didn't know him personally 'cause he was again a young kid who was way too young for me to pay any attention to (laughs) back then. So. So, you think you got enough to go on there for a while?

JB: I think so.

PS: Alright.

JB: Thank you.

PS: You're very welcome.  
(End Tape)